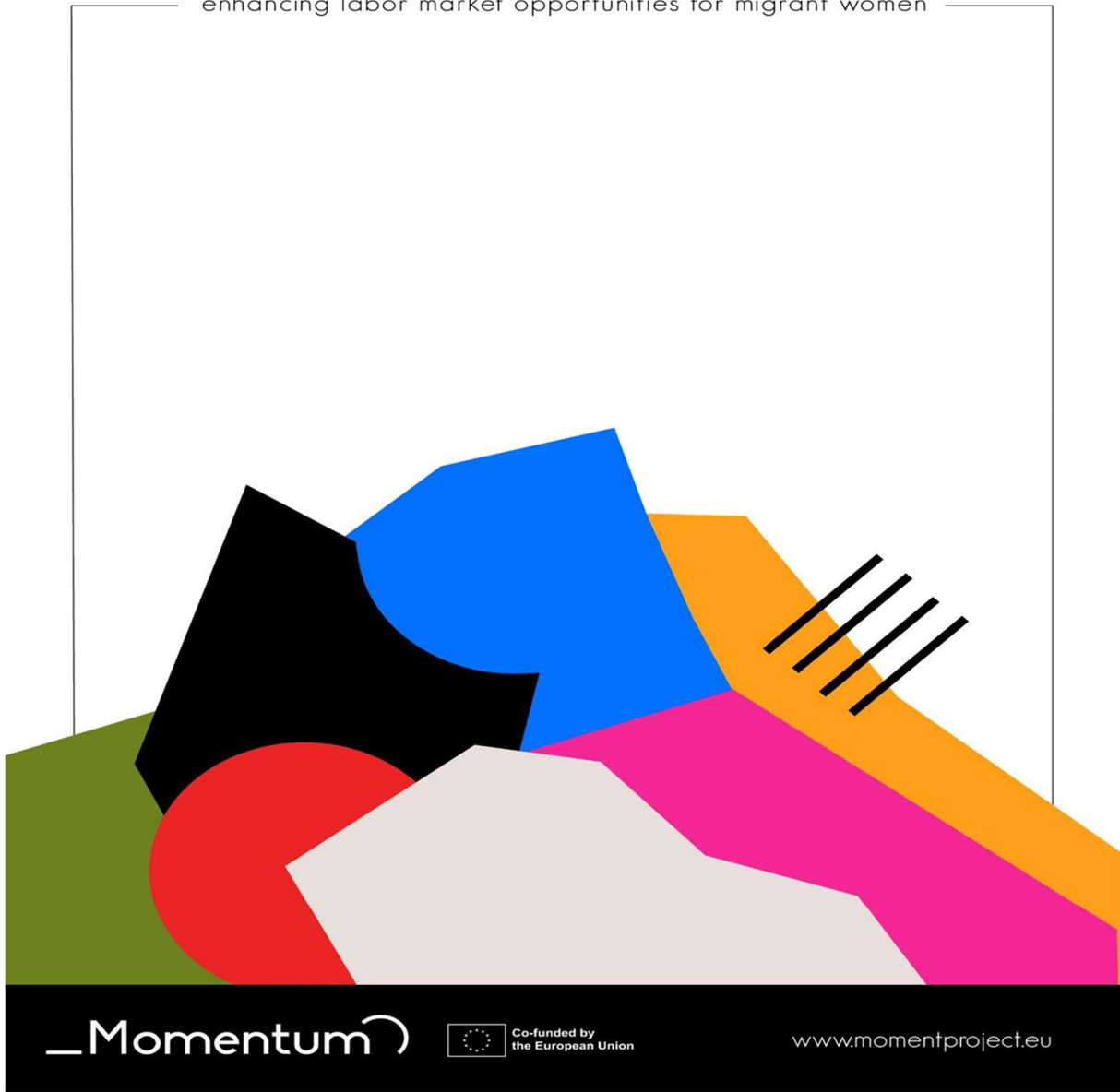enhancing labor market opportunities for migrant women

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D2.2 Primary research finding report

WP2 Mapping of obstacles hindering access of young TCN women to vocational training and labour market, with a focus on social economy

Date 12/08/2022

Public

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Abstract: D2.2 „Primary research finding report" highlights all the relevant findings of the preliminary research conducted for the WP2 of Momentum Project - Mapping of obstacles hindering access of young TCN women to vocational training and labour market, with a focus on social economy.

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v 0.1	10/08/2022	Draft	EURICSE	First draft, allows feedbacks and comments
v0.2	12/08/2022	Draft	AAH	Executive summary and comments on structure
v1	12/08/2022	Final	EURICSE	Final draft of the report

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Description
TCN	Third Country Nationals
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
MA	Master Degree
BA	Bachelor Degree

Partners List Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Description
AAH	NGO actively promoting integration of migrants and refugees by providing training and employment consultation, especially through the Community Center in Athens
YMA (former YMEPO)	National body responsible for designing and monitoring the implementation of national migrant legislation in Greece
Veneto Lavoro	Body for labour market policies & services coordinating labour market policies, including targeting migrant and refugees
EURICSE	Research institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises, focusing on social economy
Irecoop Veneto	Vocational Education and Training provider, having 443 social cooperatives-members employing 28146 people
Red Cross Spain	NGO working extensively with migrants and refugees, combating social exclusion while providing training for employment
CISE	Body created by teh University of Cantabria to conduct specialized research, and training activities for enterprises, focusing on social entrepreneurship
Cantabria	General Direction of Cooperation for Development designing and monitoring the Cantabrian Regional Strategy for migrants and refugees assistance
IH Network	Organization with 16.000 members around the world, promoting a collaborative ecosystem to sustainably impact society through social entrepreneurship and its branches
IH Lisbon	Branch of IH Network with experience in working with migrants and refugees
IH Budapest	Branch of IH Network with experience in working with migrants and refugees

Executive summary

The "MOMENTUM of Cooperation - Breaking silos, promoting young TCN women's access to targeted vocational training and labour market opportunities through social economy" (henceforth MOMENTUM) project is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union. It is implemented by a diverse partnership in 5 countries -Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Hungary.

The main scope of the MOMENTUM project is to **improve access of young TCNs**, with a focus on refugee women 18-35 years old, to vocational training and labour market opportunities, reducing the structural and cultural obstacles they face, through improved collaboration among key stakeholders.

Particularly, the project aims to:

- **map and address obstacles and barriers** on vocational training and employment support provision to young TCN women, with a focus on refugee women.

- **remove the structural obstacles** faced by young TCN women in accessing targeted vocational training and employment support **through a multi-stakeholder collaboration framework.**

- **provide integrated services** of local language, vocational training and employment support to young TCN women through a targeted and gender-sensitive approach.

The main target groups of the project are individual TCN women 18-35 years old (with a focus on refugee women), grassroot migrant and refugee organizations and associations, public employment services providers and authorities, social enterprises, CSOs and vocation training providers and policy makers at national, regional and EU level.

Through the implementation of the MOMENTUM project <u>in the 5 EU countries</u> the following outcomes will be produced:

1. 60 key stakeholders will have improved their cooperation to promote access of young TCN women in integrated services.

2. 250 young TCN women will be engaged in confidence building activities through group sessions; 175 will have received personalised employment counselling; 150 will have improved language skills; 125 will have acquired employability & social economy skills, supported through mentoring sessions.

3. 50 employers will have improved their capacity to integrate TCN women into their workforce.

4. 75 public authorities will have enhanced knowledge of gender-sensitive and whole-of-government approaches to the integration of TCN women.

The project is organized in 5 work packages:

WP1: Management and Coordination of the Action which includes all activities related to the proper and effective monitoring and managing of the project, the internal procedures and communication of the partnership as well as actions related to policy exchange and advocacy at European level.

WP2: Mapping of obstacles hindering access of young TCN women to vocational training and labour market, with a focus on social economy aims at mapping the obstacles and gendered needs faced by young TCN women (with a focus on refugees) in accessing vocational training programmes and the labour market in partner countries and at identifying the needs and challenges for improving collaboration among the different stakeholders to facilitate access of TCN women in targeted training opportunities and the labour market through social economy as an emerging, migrant women-friendlier sector.

WP3: Setting up and pilot testing a multi-stakeholder collaboration framework to remove structural barriers for TCN women's labour integration focuses on the design of a concrete collaboration framework among stakeholders outlining roles and processes, finalizing the framework in the context of participatory labs and pilot-testing the co-developed integrated collaboration framework, through a case study of collaboration at EU level, involving the diverse actors required, breaking the working silos, and focusing on the development of a targeted and sustainable programme on social economy for TCN women, with a focus on refugee ones.

WP4: Provision of integrated and gender-sensitive vocational training and employment support services to TCN women. As part of this WP, partners will involve and engage all types of stakeholders

required at local level, and identify persuade and provide services to young TCN women, including advanced local language courses and a targeted training programme aiming to empower beneficiaries and increase their employment opportunities in the labour market, especially in social economy organizations. Finally, an impact assessment will be conducted measuring the project's contribution in promoting social and economic integration of targeted TCN with a focus on refugee women, involving all target groups.

WP5: Dissemination, advocacy and sustainability of the message "breaking silos, promoting young TCN women access to targeted vocational training and labour market opportunities through social economy" runs throughout the project and includes activities aiming at raising awareness of stakeholders about the need for integrated collaboration to reduce the obstacles faced by TCN women, and of young TCN women, especially refugee women, about the value of vocational training in finding sustainable employment with a focus on social economy. In addition, WP5 includes activities promoting policy influence and activities ensuring sustainability of the project results through diverse tools and methods, such as national policy and transferability workshops.

The present document was produced as part of WP2 ("Mapping of obstacles hindering access of young TCN women to vocational training and labour market, with a focus on social economy") and lays the foundation for the implementation of WP3 ("Setting up and pilot testing a multi-stakeholder collaboration framework to remove structural barriers for TCN women's labour integration").

EURICSE designed a research methodology, including data collection tools (questionnaires and interview guides) and guidelines for partners in the 5 countries to effectively carry out the data collection activities. The methodology and tools have been presented in "D2.1 Research methodology and relevant protocols for primary research."

The present document includes the findings of the primary research activities implemented in each country. The first part of the report is devoted to the presentation of the Momentum project and the different national contexts (Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Hungarian) in which it is implemented in relation to the issue of migration, employment and integration. The scope of this section is to help readers understand the findings which are linked directly to the reality of each national entity as well as to stress the significance of findings common in all different contexts. Desk research was conducted for all 5 countries by EURICSE with the support of all partners.

The second part of the report focuses on the research methodology and the research activities carried out in each implementing country from March to June 2022. In short, the qualitative research included:

o 52 in-depth interviews with TCN women in total (11 in Italy, 11 in Hungary, 10 in Spain, 10 in Portugal and 10 in Greece) from various countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Venezuela Afghanistan, etc.

o 12 focus groups in total (1 per country and 2 extra) with representatives of grassroots migrant /refugee associations, and representatives of VET providers,

o 5 interviews with representatives of public employment services in each implementing country (23 in total – 3 in Portugal).

In addition, a quantitative research activity was conducted which entailed the design and translation of an online questionnaire which was distributed in all 5 countries leading to the collection of 93 responses in total.

All data were transcribed, translated into English, anonymized and shared with EURICSE, who carried out the analysis of the data and the drafting of this report.

The last part of the report is devoted to the findings of the analysis across the national contexts. Taking into consideration the large amount of data collected and the limited space to present the findings, it was decided to focus on identifying common themes, but also significant divergencies among the countries of implementation.

The findings are organized in two main parts; the barriers faced by TCN women and the level of cooperation among stakeholders.

Regarding the barriers, findings indicate that barriers are multiple and of different nature. Several barriers related to the individual women were traced, such as lack of skills, low motivation or trauma. At the same time, several external and context related barriers were identified, such as the perception of inclusion as a process requiring migrants to adapt to the new society exclusively, and low representation of migrant population. Nevertheless, data analysis revealed good practices

promoting integration. The identification of barriers and their analysis together with the good practices provide significant insight for the design of actions to remove these barriers.

In addition, data analysis highlights the need for the design of skills assessments tailored to TCN women and the need for officially recognizing the existing or acquired skills through certificates. It also provides important information on the skills needed in the market today, both hard and soft.

As far as collaboration among different stakeholders is concerned, networks are formed in all countries of different character-formal or informal- to address specific or common issues and cases and have multiple benefits for stakeholders, such as keeping up to date regarding policies, sharing tools and ideas, advocating, forging synergies etc. One of the limits identified by the research is that most of the synergies are project-based and stop after the completion of implementation. Significant support from public institutions and actions for the sustainability of projects results are identified as the main ways to overcome this limitation.

1. Introduction

The project "MOMENTUM of Cooperation - Breaking silos, promoting young TCN women's access to targeted vocational training and labour market opportunities through social economy" through a gender-sensitive and multi-stakeholder approach, brings together CSOs, Public Employment Services, VET providers and employers at local level to reduce the structural and cultural barriers faced by TCN women in accessing targeted and adapted to their needs vocational training and employment opportunities. It focuses on refugee women aged 18-35 in the 3 EU countries most affected by migrant flows (Greece, Italy, Spain) and 2 additional EU countries, one with a positive approach (Portugal) and one with a critical approach to integration (Hungary). Based on a co-designed multi-stakeholder collaboration framework, MOMENTUM aims to break the working silos in service provision and promote a whole-of government approach to skills development and integration, responding to TCN women's multiple vulnerabilities. As a result, it offers integrated services, combining advanced local language courses, targeted vocational training, and employment support.

The following outcomes are expected to be produced by the end of the project: Improved cooperation of 60 key stakeholders in 5 EU countries through 5 Participatory Labs and 29 workshops promoting access of young TCN women in integrated services. · 250 young TCN women engaged in confidence building activities through 25 group sessions; 175 will have received personalized employment counseling; 150 will have improved language skills through 280 sessions; 125 will have acquired employability & social economy skills and will have been supported through 250 mentoring sessions. · Improved capacity of 50 employers in integrating TCN women into their workforce. · Enhanced knowledge of 75 public authorities on gender-sensitive and whole-of-government approach in TCN women's integration through 7 policy meetings.

This document is the first Deliverable of WP2, namely "Primary research finding report". This report highlights all the relevant findings of the preliminary research conducted for WP2 of the Momentum Project - Mapping of obstacles hindering access of young TCN women to vocational training and labour market, with a focus on social economy.

The objectives of WP2 are to:

- Map the obstacles and gendered needs faced by young TCN women with a focus on refugee ones in accessing vocational training programs and the labour market in partner countries.

- Identify the needs and challenges for improving collaboration among: a) CSOs working with migrants and refugees, b) Public Employment Services, c) Vocational Education and Training providers, and d) social economy organisations, with the aim of facilitating access of TCN women with a focus on refugee ones in targeted training opportunities and the labour market through social economy as an emerging, migrant women-friendlier sector.

To analyse the above-mentioned issues, the partners involved in the research activities have carried out interviews and focus groups and disseminated an online survey. In total, the partners of the five countries (Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece) carried out 52 in-depth interviews with TCN women, 12 focus groups with representatives of grassroots migrant/refugee associations and VET providers, 23 interviews with representatives of VET providers in the field of social economy and entrepreneurship and public employment services. Lastly, the survey designed by Euricse reached 93 social economy organisations committed to the work integration of young TCN women.

All the materials resulting from the research activities of partners and subsequently analysed by Euricse provide the knowledge base for the integrated collaboration framework of the project (WP3). The research findings will not only inform the subsequent project actions - especially as concerns WP3 - but have a wider scope, as they will also provide useful insights on the topic of labour integration of TCN women in the European context, such as good practices that may be applicable in similar contexts.

1.1. Structure of the document

This document is organized as follows: each territorial context in which the research was carried out is briefly summarized to better understand the findings, secondly the methodology is introduced, and finally the main results of the data collection and some considerations and possible final strategies are presented. The analyses considers two main spheres: the barriers faced by the target entering the labor market and the networks, level of collaboration and cooperation detected between entities involved in the issue.

2. Methodology

The research activities, as planned by the GA, were conducted in the five implementing countries (Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Portugal) with the objective of gathering information regarding: i) needs and challenges of young TCN women - with a focus on refugees - in accessing vocational training and the labour market, ii) the current level of cooperation of VET providers with other actors, and needs and challenges in developing targeted training programmes, iii) the current level of cooperation of public employment services with other stakeholders for the provision of targeted support for young TCN, iv) the barriers faced by social economy organisation to integrate young TCN women in their work environment.

The data was collected and anonymized by local partners, as seen in the following table using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Euricse conducted the analysis and drafted the deliverable D2.2 Primary research findings report.

Table 1: Research activity per project partner

PARTNER	COUNTRY	ACTIVITIES
AAH	Greece	2 focus groups with grassroots migrant associations and CSOs 5 interviews with public employment representatives 10 interviews with TCN women
CANTABRIA	Spain	5 interviews (Local Development Agency, Public employment service, Association of municipalities)
CISE	Spain	2 focus groups with VET providers
Red Cross	Spain	1 focus group with grassroots migrant associations and CSOs 10 interviews with women
HI BUDAPEST	Hungary	1 focus group with grassroots migrant associations and CSOs 1 focus group with VET providers 5 interviews member of public employment services 10 interviews women

HI LISBON	Portugal	1 focus group with grassroots migrant associations and CSOs 1 focus group with VET providers 10 interviews women 5 interviews with public employment representatives
HI Network	Portugal	1 focus group CSOs, job counselors and relevant stakeholders
Irecoop	Italy	1 focus group with grassroots migrant associations and CSOs 1 focus group with VET providers 11 interviews with women
Veneto Lavoro	Italy	5 interviews with staff members of public employment services

The research findings are based on the results of the survey for social economy organisations, interviews with the project target and the staff of public employment services, of the focus groups with VET providers and representatives of CSOs and grassroots migrants/refugees' associations, all conducted between March and July 2022 in the five project countries.

The data was gathered following all necessary information provided by Euricse for the selection of participants in each research activity and the methods for the data collection. Moreover, Euricse provided a list of questions to run the semi-structured interviews, the focus groups, and the in-depth interviews. All data was collected, transcribed and translated by partners under the constant supervision of Euricse.

The sample representing the target group was selected by local partners trying to include participants with different identity characteristics such as nationality, age, education, family size and presence of children, along with other elements identified as relevant. Similarly, subjects involved in focus groups were selected among the ones considered by partners as the most influencing actors and stakeholders operating in the territories. To facilitate participants' attendance, focus groups took place not only in presence but also online and in hybrid mode. All the organisations involved in the research activities carried out interviews and focus groups relying on their own different skills,

abilities, and competencies, delving into and focusing more attention on the themes and issues perceived as more significant for each specific context and according to the interviewer's knowledge of the territory.

Tab 1: Target group, nationality and education

	Total	Nationality	Education
Italy	11	9 Nigeria, 1 Ghana, 1 Mexico	1 illiterate, 6 high school, 1 MA, 3 primary
Hungary	11	1 Russia, 1 Afghanistan, 1 Pakistan, 1 Argentina, 1 Pakistan, 1 Namibia, 1 Tunisia, 1 Colombia, 1 Jordan, 1 Tunisia, 1 South Africa	2 Bachelor, 6 MA Student, 2 BA student, high school
Spain	10	4 Venezuela, 1 Guatemala, 1 Cameroon, 1 El Salvador, 1 Colombia, 1 Nicaragua, 1 Honduras	2 high school, 8 BA
Portugal	10	1 Bangladesh¸ 1 Brazil¸ 1 Kenya, 2 Iran, 1 Sri Lanka¸ 1 Nepal, 1 Ukraine¸ 2 Pakistan,	3 primary, 3 high school, 4 BA
Greece	10	1 Uganda, 1 Uzbekistan − Russia, 1 Iran, 1 Ghana, 2 Afghanistan, 1 Bangladesh, 1 Cameroon, 1 Albania, 1 Egypt	2 primary school, 4 high school, 4 BA

Note: BA= Bachelor degree; MA= Master degree

As regards the survey, invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent to a substantial number of entities selected among the partners' networks. In total 91 organisations completed the survey distributed as follows: 16 in Portugal, 26 in Greece, 19 in Italy, 12 in Spain, 18 in Hungary. The respondents' group is heterogeneous and is made up mostly by associations, cooperatives, foundations, NGOs, individual entrepreneurs and, to a lesser extent, by charitable associations and social cooperative enterprises, the majority operating at local level (58 entities), 19 at national level, and a lower number (12) working both at local and national level. Participating organisations differ also as regard to their size: 68 entities have fewer than 50 employees, 17 more than 50 employees and 66 even benefit from the support of volunteers in carrying out their activities. Furthermore,

around 40% are funded or co-funded by public funds. As shown in Tab.1 the responding organisations work in different fields.

Tab.2 *Field of work of the organisations*

Field of work	Number of organisations
Accommodation and food service activities (e.g., hotels, restaurants, event catering activities)	3
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (e.g., international organisations such as UN, activities of diplomats)	5
Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	1
Administrative and support service activities (e.g., cleaning activities, landscape service activities, call centres, packaging activities, gardening and green maintenance)	3
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (e.g., crop and animal production, silviculture, logging)	3
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (e.g., electricity production and distribution, trade of gas)	3
Information and communication (e.g., publishing activities, video and music production, computer programming, data processing)	2
Manufacturing (e.g., of food and beverages, textiles, wood, chemicals, metals, electronic products, pharmaceutical products, printing...)	5
Other service activities (e.g., repair and maintenance of computers and household goods such as furniture, washing and cleaning of textile products)	10
Public Administration and defense; compulsory social security (public order activities, general public administration activities)	1
Real estate activities (e.g., buying, selling, managing or renting real estate)	1
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (e.g., materials recovery, remediation activities, waste treatment and disposal)	2
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (e.g., wholesale of food, household goods, motor vehicles)	2

Moreover, they deliver services ranging from housing/ hospitality to training activities and initiatives of social inclusion.

Tab.3 *Services*

Services	Number of organisations
Training/workshops (technical and practical)	56
Professional training courses	12
Professional qualification courses	8
Skills and competences assessment	13
Learning certifications	22
Individualized services to facilitate work integration (e.g., internship, tutoring and job accompaniment/mentoring/coaching)	49
Work integration in protected environment	24
Language courses	26
Advocacy and/or research	28
Supporting actions to facilitate social inclusion (e.g., socialisation activities)	37
Hospitality/housing - Migrant women	11
Hospitality/housing - Asylum seekers and refugees	16

Among the respondents, several engage in activities aimed at the inclusion of different subjects, such as migrants and refugees, people with disabilities and homeless people.

Tab.4 *Inclusion*

Target	Number of organisations
People with disabilities	39
People with psycho-social disabilities and/or mental illnesses	35

Asylum seekers/refugees	49
Migrants	50
Women survivors of violence	30
People in long-term unemployment	35
Homeless people	17

During the unfolding of the research activities, every context faced different but, at the same time, also common challenges. The main difficulties, shared by almost the entirety of the partners, were related to the task of contacting and succeeding to interview public employment staff. Due to the long timings and bureaucracy that characterise the public sector and the limited time available to gather the research data, this specific assignment was found by partners to be particularly complex. One additional obstacle was obtaining a sufficient and satisfactory number of survey responses, as unfortunately many entities never replied to partners' invitations or forgot to complete the questionnaire.

The data collected does not allow for a systematic comparison between countries, however, it provides a useful reference framework that takes into account and explores different aspects on the issue of labour market integration of refugee and TCN women in the five contexts investigated. The analysis presented in this research report will therefore focus mainly on barriers, opportunities and practices of cooperation that, at different levels, are relevant when dealing with training and employment opportunities and conditions of TCN women in Spain, Hungary, Greece, Italy and Portugal.

3. Context

The first step taken in carrying out this research was to define the salient features of the national context of the five countries under analysis in relation to the migration phenomenon, socioeconomic development and the presence of relevant social problems. This information was collected with the

help of project partners, who provided the material for the elaboration of the following country level information. The context data collected is not intended to be exhaustive with respect to the issues mentioned; rather, it provides a general framework for the reader and significant information for the researchers who carried out the analysis in order to fully understand the contents of the interviews conducted.

3.1.   Greek context

A brief overview of migration in Greece

Greece is generally known as an emigration country, but after the 1970s two main waves of immigration took place. The first period started during the second half of the 1970s and continued throughout the 1990s, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union, and was marked by immigration of people from the Balkans and to a lesser extent from the Asian region (Cavounidis, 2015). The second wave is observed with the humanitarian and refugee crisis of 2014-2015 resulting in a high number of refugees arriving in Greece in those and subsequent years. UNHCR (2019) estimated that around 850,000 people reached Greece in the year 2015 alone.

Among the most important developments concerning the laws regulating immigration in the country, it is worth mentioning *The Immigration and Social Integration Code* (Law 4251/2014), which established provisions aimed at the simplification of procedures and modified terms and conditions for granting long-term residence permits and labour market access, marked by an effort to reduce cases and risks of irregular migration status. Other relevant measures that proved useful in managing the unprecedented migration flows in the country are *Migration Code and Law 4332/2015* concerning the regulation and simplification of residence and work permits of migrant seasonal workers and *Joint Ministerial Decision 30651/2014* and *Law 4332/2015*, regulating the procedures for a 2-year residence permit on humanitarian grounds for third country nationals who found themselves in particular conditions, such as victims of trafficking and domestic violence or individuals who suffer from serious health problems, or victims of violations of Article 3 of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Bagavos et al., 2021).

Several reforms followed in 2016 in very strict relation with the adoption of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016. Legislation on Asylum and Migration took a restrictive turn after the 2019 elections, when the government decided to promote more restrictive policies aimed at reducing arrivals, increasing returns to Turkey and reinforcing border controls. These intents took shape in the International Protection Act (IPA), adopted in November 2019, and entered into force in January 2020. The law has received harsh criticism by national and international human rights institutions, including UNHCR and The European Council on Refugees and Exiles for its lowering of the protection standards and its punitive approach (UNHCR, 2020).

As far as international protection is concerned, third country nationals have the right to apply for International Protection in the Asylum Services. However as underlined in the last report by AIDA, access to asylum, especially on the mainland "continued to be a serious matter of concern throughout 2021" (AIDA, 2022, 18). Among the main issues affecting the procedure is the inefficient system of self-registration to present the application at the Asylum Service that since 2014 takes place via the Skype platform (AIDA, 2022).

No time limitation is set by law for lodging an asylum application. Upon the full registration and application for international protection, asylum seekers receive an International Protection Applicant Card. This card provides applicants with rights and obligations as seen on the Migration and Asylum Ministry website[1].

The IPA foresees that the asylum seeker's card allows the applicant to stay legally in Greece until the examination of the claim is completed. In the event of a negative decision (rejection) the card will no more be valid. In general, the card validity varies from 30 days (for applicants on the islands of Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros, Kos and Rhodes subject to a "geographical limitation") to 1 year, depending on the examination procedure followed. The card contains the applicant's particulars, the application information and Provisional Insurance and Health Care Number. International Protection Applicants in possession of the International Protection Applicant Card have the right to work under the conditions set by the Greek law, after six months from the date of submission of the application.

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1 More detailed information is available at the following link: https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diadikasia-asyloy/meta-tin-aitisi/

The IPA foresees that the examination of applications should not exceed 21 months, and should generally be processed as soon as possible, with a time limit set to make a decision for asylum application at first instance within 6 months following regular procedure, to which a further period of 3 months can be added in the event of a high number of requests.

According to the last AIDA report, significant delays have been observed in this regard. In particular, "at the end of 2021, more than half of the applications (58.08%) pending at first instance had been pending for a period exceeding 12 months (18,463 out of the total 31,787 applications pending at the end of 2021)" (AIDA, 2022, 19). Despite the decrease in the number of applications in 2021, delays have been detected also concerning the management of interviews. The law provides the possibility to appeal against the first instance decision in the regular procedure. In this case, the Appeals Committee must take a decision within 3 months.

Several problems have been underlined also in relation to family reunification. In Greece, only recognised refugees can submit a request for family reunification. If the request is issued after 3 months from the delivery of the refugee status of the applicant, he/she must provide additional documents and guarantees such as the possession of social security and a proof of sufficient income. However, in practice, family reunification is a complex and long process, which especially due to administrative obstacles, usually lasts at least 3 years (AIDA, 2022).

Socio-economic characteristics of the territory

The estimated population of Greece in 2019, according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority was 10,724,599, with 5,208,293 men and 5,516,306 women. The population has decreased compared to previous data (based on the last national census of 2011, the total population of Greece was 10,816,286). The Greek economy underwent significant difficulties from 2009 onwards due to the international economic and financial crisis. The adverse economic conditions caused a sharp increase in unemployment and a relevant drop of the GDP. Unemployment rates shifted from 7.8% in 2008 to 24.9% in 2015 reaching 23.6% in 2016, while the long-term rates of 47.0% in 2008 reached 71.8% in 2016 (Bagavaos et al., 2021). This situation, coupled with the application of austerity measures, had a strong impact on the Greek labour market.

To date, the majority of the workforce in Greece (67.1%) is employed in private or public entities. Around 22.3% of the population is self-employed without employing other staff, 7.6% is self-employed with staff and 3% works in family businesses (ELSTAT, 2021). The field with the highest employment rate is trade with 18% of the overall employment, followed by agriculture and fishery with 12.2%. 10.2% of the workforce is employed in the public sector, 8.5% is employed in education and 7.5% in health. Finally, 5.4% of people are employed in transport and 5.3% in tourism (ELSTAT, 2021). According to ELSTAT, in the first quarter of 2021 the unemployment rate for the total population was 17.1%. Of those, 13.7% were men and 21.3% were women. The lowest percentage of unemployment for both men and women is observed in Attiki (where Athens is located) where unemployed people account for 13% of the population of the area. According to the data, the highest unemployment rate (34.6%) is observed for people who have only attended primary education. Moreover, an important difference emerges when considering the variable of nationality: of total unemployment, people with Greek nationality account for 16.4%, whereas the percentage for foreigners is 30.1%.

As far as the poverty rate is concerned, according to EUROSTAT, 17.70% of the population in Greece was at risk of poverty in 2021, indicating an improvement compared to previous years. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) underlines that "within the global context, the situation in Greece remains fluid with the recent formal statistics claiming that 28.9% of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion related to the incomes declared in 2020, affecting mostly 18–64-year-old (31.9%)" (EAPN, 2021, 2). In addition, if nationality is considered, "the risk of poverty or exclusion of people aged 18-64 years is higher for foreigners (54.0%) than for Greeks (30.2%)" (EAPN, 2021, 4).

In Greece, the worsening of economic conditions and the increase in migratory flows are elements that public opinion has often linked together. Xenophobic and racist beliefs and attitudes have risen significantly since the 2008 financial crisis, with large parts of the political and social realms using migrants as a scapegoat for the crisis. These beliefs and negative attitudes were and still are expressed in many different forms, from avoidance of interaction with people of different ethnic backgrounds to violent attacks. According to the Racist Violence Recording Network, the main mechanism monitoring and recording racist attacks based on the testimonies of the victims, 543 racist attacks against migrants and refugees were carried out from 2015 to 2018. 51 attacks against

migrants and asylum seekers and refugees have been recorded in 2019, whereas the number increased in 2020, with 74 incidents against "migrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers due to their ethnic origin, religion or/and colour, human rights defenders due to their association with refugees and migrants, as well as shelters or facilities providing other services for unaccompanied children or asylum-seekers" (RVRN, 2020, 12).

Attacks against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are very often carried out by organized groups, which started with Golden Dawn in 2008 and continues until today. Apart from these, there is a growing phenomenon of everyday racism, with racist rhetoric being used in everyday encounters with migrants and refugees. This is in line with previous research findings indicating negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees. According to the surveys conducted by the Political Barometer regarding attitudes towards refugees, 44% of the participants supported preventing all or most of all refugees from coming to the country in 2015 and 2016 (Political Barometer, 2015 & 2016). Additional data provided by the Eurobarometer (2018) show that Greek nationals consider migrants and refugees as a problem rather than an opportunity for the country to grow. More specifically, 67% believe immigrants have a negative impact on the economy, 75% believe that immigrants are a burden to the national welfare system, 73% believe that immigrants are taking jobs from Greek nationals, and 70% believe that immigrants worsen the crime problems in the country. Finally, paying taxes is considered the most important factor regarding the integration of immigrants and refugees by 88% of respondents, the highest rate among the EU countries participating in the survey. Moreover, 22% of participants disagree with stronger measures to tackle discrimination as a mean of promoting integration and 60% of respondents feel uncomfortable having social relations with immigrants. The exception was the case of the Syrian refugees arriving in Greece in 2015. That humanitarian crisis led to a mobilization of the Greek society as a whole and specifically of the local communities of the islands.

Preliminary information about the immigrant population

According to the numbers provided by Eurostat, in 2020 there were 730,000 non-EU citizens (6.8% of the total population) living in Greece, whereas in 2019 this number was higher, recording around 831,700 immigrants in Greece, 196,700 coming from EU member states and 635,000 from non-EU countries. As far as gender is concerned, male immigrants were slightly greater in number than

female (approx. 54% male and 46% female). According to UNHCR Greece, in 2019 74,613 people entered Greece from land and sea seeking asylum. This number decreased significantly in 2020 and 2021, with only 15,696 and 9,157 people respectively being recorded. As elaborated by AIDA (2022), in 2021 most new arrivals were from Afghanistan, Somalia and Palestine. The number of asylum applications, which have decreased considerably (30.71% lower than the previous year), were mainly issued from applicants from Afghanistan, Syria, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iraq and Somalia, with a recognition rate at first instance of 60% as was the case in 2020 (AIDA, 2022).

Individuals who are successfully recognised as refugees are granted a 3-year residence permit ("ADET"), while – after the recent changes in the legislation - beneficiaries of subsidiary protection receive a 1-year residence permit, renewable for 2 years. Applicants obtain residence permits usually at least 4-5 months after the communication of the positive decision granting international protection (AIDA, 2022). According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, recognized refugees can be benefited by the Helios program (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection) which offers accommodation support, integration-related courses (e.g., learning the Greek language, courses in professional skills development, etc.), and professional counselling to enhance job readiness. People who can benefit from the HELIOS program are beneficiaries of international protection who have been recognized as beneficiaries of international protection after 01/01/2018 and who also were officially registered and resided - when they received the decision granting them international protection -   in the accommodation facilities of the official reception system (ESTIA program, Filoxenia program, Open Facilities, Reception and Identification Centers, etc.).

As mentioned above, six months after lodging the application, asylum seekers have the possibility to access the Greek labour market. The right is automatically withdrawn in the event of a negative decision if it is not subject to an automatically suspensive appeal (AIDA, 2022). As employees, according to the law, asylum seekers have the same rights and obligations regarding social security as any Greek citizen. However, as highlighted from many sides, "despite the formulation of an institutional framework that gives asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection access to the Greek labour market, the reality is that these people remain mostly in the camps, with only a minority living in housing structures" (Bagavaos et al., 2021, 183). Therefore, "their integration into

the Greek labour market is thus extremely difficult in practice" (ibidem) also due to obstacles such as the country's economic conditions, language barriers, complex bureaucracy, and factors that lead to a spread of undeclared employment (Council of Europe, 2018). In Greece, all documented migrants have the possibility to access vocational training. Moreover, refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and long-term economic migrants can access the unemployment register and receive all benefits and services under the same conditions as Greek citizens (Bagavaos et al., 2021). However, as observed also by UNHCR, only a limited number of refugees attend language courses and integration programs (AIDA, 2022). These services are often provided by CSOs and NGOs, which propose activities ranging from humanitarian aid to training and employability programs, and support for housing or administrative issues, "attempting to manage the governmental gap" (Bagavaos et al., 2021, 184) of Greek migration policies. It is important to underline that despite the effort of CSOs and NGOs, empirical studies show that their activities often do not effectively respond to the challenge of refugee and asylum seeker integration into the labour market (Bagavos et al. 2019) and that in recent years Greece is witnessing a more active involvement of public services in this regard (Bagavaos et al., 2021).

Among the relevant initiatives, it is worth mentioning the Migrant Integration Centre (KEM) which operates in Athens as a local point of reference for the provision of specialized services - psychosocial support, legal counseling, and information on social rights- to third-country nationals (migrants and refugees) in order to improve living standards, access to the labour market and social integration of the respective populations. This kind of initiative is important for a city such as Athens, where the majority of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees of the Attiki area reside. In Attiki, whiere Athens is located, according to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, there are 20,754 asylum seekers.

As highlighted by Action Aid Hellas, a very organized community network is observed for the African community in a specific area of Athens (Kipseli). The community appears somewhat reluctant to cooperate with outgroup members. However, there is collaboration between representatives of the community and NGOs and the University of Athens.

3.2. Hungarian context

A brief overview of migration in Hungary

The political transformations occurring in South-eastern Europe since the late 80s brought several consequences in Hungary, ranging from economic transformations to social challenges, such as migration. In those years, the inflow of international migrants increased, initiating the transformation of Hungary from a closed country characterised by low migration, to one interested by immigration, outmigration and in particular, transit migration (Gödri et. al, 2014). During the early 90s, the first significant migration flow was mainly made up of individuals from neighbouring countries, especially Romanians. After 2004, following the inclusion of Hungary in the European Union, a second relevant migration flow took place, also thanks to changes in the legislation. In this context, the composition of migration to Hungary varied, including ethnic Hungarians from Ukraine and Yugoslavia, ex-Yugoslavian citizens, but also Asian, in particular Chinese, and people from Middle East (Gödri et. al, 2014).

Since 1998, with the entry into force of the Asylum Act (Act CXXXIX of 1997), Hungary started to receive refugees from all over the world. As underlined by Gödri et. al, this was fundamental to the completion of "the pre-EU accession migratory legal framework", a step through which "national rules on migration were adapted to EU legal norms, but not to their principles and values" (2014, 13). During the subsequent years, Hungary made very limited efforts oriented to improving migration policies; the Hungarian "Migration Strategy" designed in 2007 was only adopted in 2013. In 2007 the law (Act II of 2007) on the conditions for short- and long-term residence permits for foreigners and the Asylum Law Act LXXX of 2007 regulating asylum, subsidiary protection, and temporary protection granting were enacted. The amendments introduced between 2016 and 2020 hardened migration policies and restricted the range of benefits granted to asylum seekers, making asylum claims almost impossible. It is worth pointing out that since September 2015, a quasi-state of exception - called "state of crisis due to mass migration" - is in effect in Hungary through a government decree on the joint initiative of the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (NDGAP) and the Police, which has been continuously extended and is currently valid until 7 September 2022. This measure falls within the framework of policies along the same restrictive vein, including the Gov. Decree 233/2020 and the Transnational Act. These new rules regulating asylum since May 2020 foresee as the only

possibility for submitting an asylum application the lodging of the request at the Embassy of Hungary in Belgrade or in Kyiv. Previously, between March 2017 and 26 May 2020, asylum applications could be presented exclusively at the border.

The present procedure is composed of a preliminary step consisting in the submission of a "statement of intent" at the Embassy of Hungary in Belgrade or in Kyiv, which is forwarded for examination to the NDGAP in Budapest. Within 60 days the NDGAP issues a communication on whether to release a single-entry permit for the applicant to lodge the asylum request. Individuals who are granted protection status do not get a residence permit, but a Hungarian ID within 20 days, a period often extended at least to one month. In June 2016, the duration of refugee status and subsidiary protection permits was brought to 3 years, while for humanitarian protection the duration is 1 year. According to the last AIDA Hungarian report (2022), due to the Covid-19 pandemic the government office responsible for the management of documents required an online appointment accessible through a website exclusively in Hungarian until May 2021, complicating even more for the beneficiaries the process to obtain documents. This was not the only problematic issue to emerge in this regard during the pandemic: as reported by the AIDA (2022) report on the Hungarian case, Menedék Association noted that throughout 2021, "beneficiaries of international protection who returned to Hungary from other EU Member States faced difficulties in obtaining Hungarian documents, such as ID and address cards before the government offices" (113). Under these conditions, unsurprisingly, a very limited number of asylum seekers are granted with a protection status, from year to year fewer and fewer apply for asylum. Furthermore, in 2020 HHC observed an increase in status withdrawals to beneficiaries of international protection and third-country nationals residing regularly in Hungary based on national security reasons. As regards other opportunities related to the asylum procedure, such as family reunification, even though provided for by the law, it requires the fulfilment of several material conditions that are difficult to respect for beneficiaries, making this option hardly attainable. After the start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict people crossing the Hungarian-Ukrainian border are given entry up to a total of 661,083 (AIDA, 2022). Hungary committed to grant temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees; however, they face numerous difficulties regarding enforcement of their rights reflected in the low number of applications registered by NDGAP (AIDA, 2022).

As stated in the information note by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) of November 2021, "Hungary has practically suspended its asylum system in May 2020 and access to the asylum procedure is virtual since then. Neither the legal framework, nor its practical implementation offers effective access to the asylum system, thereby emptying out the right to seek asylum" (HHC, 2021, 1)[2].

Socio-economic characteristics of the territory

The current population of Hungary is 9,609,603 people. Demographically, Hungary is an ageing society experiencing a gradual population decrease. Following the collapse of state socialism, the transition of the country to democracy and market economy unfolded smoothly. The process of economic readjustment chosen by Hungary "stood closer to the 'shock therapy' endpoint, contrary to other Visegrad countries that were privatising their economies more gradually" (Gödri et. al, 2014, 20). Economic instability was recorded in the years of the Fall of Communism between 1990 and 1991 with a severe decrease in GDP, which recovered in 1994 and kept growing for 14 years. However, a new economic downturn came with the global economic crisis of 2009, causing the failure of the development strategy adopted after 1989 (Gödri et. al, 2014). As observed by Bakó & Lakatoshe "the domestic engine of economic recovery was industry and services on the production side, and exports, in addition to the rise in consumption, on the use side" (2016, 17). Data from 2019 show that the key economic sectors of employment are services (63.19 %), industry (accounting for 32.09%) and agriculture (4.72%). The Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH) reported in June 2022 an unemployment rate of 3.7 %[3]. Moreover, a study conducted by KSH in 2015 highlighted that, among Hungarians, 88% are employees with regular contract, 0.8% occasional workers, 4% members of a partnership business, and 6.9% individual entrepreneurs. When analysed according to nationality, considering TCNs, employees fall to 63.2%, while the rate of occasional workers increases to 4%, members of a partnership business to 18.3%) and individual entrepreneurs to 11.4%. The at-risk-of-poverty rate was 12.30% in December of 2020, according to EUROSTAT. Historically, the at-

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risk-of-poverty rate in Hungary reached a record high of 15.90% in December of 2006 and a record low of 12.30% in December of 2020[4].

According to Impact Hub Budapest, Hungary is hostile towards foreigners, especially on a governmental level, as very often in public discourse migration is described as a dangerous and problematic issue. This position has been confirmed by the negative response of Hungary, and other states such as Poland and the Czech Republic, to the 2015 EU Relocation Programme. As underlined by Silva & Sacramento this is a "telling example of how current nationalist interests contribute towards corroding the spirit of solidarity that framed the Union's social and political construction" (2020, 15). In addition, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe reported that xenophobic rhetoric and attitudes in Hungary have a negative effect on the integration of recognised refugees. However, representatives of Impact Hub Budapest who are in the partnership of this project stated that society can also be open to foreigners, especially towards people from neighbouring countries and European citizens.

Preliminary information about the immigrant population

The presence of third-country nationals (TCNs) remains residual and, as mentioned above, highly politically contested in Hungary. This situation is emphasised by the latest data on asylum reported by AIDA (2022), which shows the consequences of an increasingly limited access to the asylum procedure as a result of the introduction of a new asylum system in May 2020. In 2021, only 38 people succeeded in applying for asylum in Hungary (AIDA, 2022). The presence of TCNs in Hungary is around 109,000 people (Eurostat, 2019). 65% of the foreigners living in Hungary come from Europe, from the neighbouring countries, mainly Ukraine (15.41%), Romania (11%), Germany (9.14%) and Slovakia (5.2.0%), while 26% come from Asia, 3.0% from Africa and 3.79% from the Americas. For 2021 the total number of foreigners residing in Hungary was 194,491, the number of TCNs accounted for 70,069 people, of which 30,572 TCN women (KSH, 2021). In general, most are men (58.5%) while 41.4% are women. The age composition is younger than that of the resident population, both genders are dominated by the 20-39 age group, which accounts for 48% of the total foreign population.

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[4] https://tradingeconomics.com/hungary/at-risk-of-poverty-rate-eurostat-data.html#:~:text=Hungary%20%2D%20At%2Drisk%2Dof%2Dpoverty%20rate%20was%2012.30,12.30%25%20in%20December%20of%202020

The majority of the immigrants live in the capital, more specifically 47% of foreigners live in Budapest, 36% in cities outside the capital and 17% in villages, among them, many Ukrainian and Serbian citizens (mostly ethnic Hungarians) are settled in the vicinity of the borders (Gödri et. al, 2014). Outside the capital, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Baranya and Zala counties have the highest ratio of foreigners per thousand inhabitants, while Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg country have the lowest.

As regards integration services for beneficiaries of international protection, it is important to underline that "since June 2016, the Hungarian state has completely withdrawn integration services provided to beneficiaries of international protection, thus leaving recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to destitution and homelessness" (AIDA, 2022, 111). Moreover, for around 3 years, from March 2017 until May 2020, the prevalent form of reception had been detention in the transit zones (AIDA, 2022). According to the current legal framework beneficiaries are entitled to stay up to 30 days in reception centres after the issuance of the decision regarding their status. The last AIDA report stated that "due to the low number of asylum seekers registered in 2021, reception facilities ran below their capacities most part of the year. Nevertheless, the temporary stay of Afghan evacuees rescued by the Hungarian Defense Forces in the reception centres of Vámosszabadi and Balassagyarmat between September and November resulted in overcrowding in both facilities" (2022, 15).

After their short stay in reception centres, beneficiaries face difficulties in integrating in the local community as, since 2016, they do not have access to any state support (AIDA, 2022). Civil society and church-based organisations attempt to fill up this governmental gap providing assistance for housing, employment, language courses and trainings.

Asylum seekers also face difficulties in accessing the labour market. According to the law, they have the right to work after 9 months from the start of the procedures for the asylum application. Access to the labour market is granted with restrictions, only jobs not taken by Hungarians or EU nationals are available for asylum seekers. Among the major barriers is the unwillingness of employers to hire people who are provided with only a few-months-long residence permit. Furthermore, as reported by AIDA, "in times of state of crisis due to mass migration, asylum seekers who had stayed in the transit zones prior to 21 May 2020 had no access to the labour market at all" (2022, 83).

Data extracted from a 2015 KSH study regarding the unemployment rate of TCNs show that the percentage is higher for women (6.7%) compared to men (5.6%) and lower unemployment rates are found for TCNs than the resident population. In terms of economic activity, migrants tend to be at a disadvantage in the largest age group, 25-54. It is particularly difficult for third-country women to find a job in the labour market, as they are less able to enter and re-enter the labour market than their Hungarian counterparts. Compared to the resident population, third-country nationals are more likely to work in jobs requiring lower qualifications than their counterparts, and migrant men in particular find it more difficult to find a job that matches their qualifications (KSH, 2015).

The survey also showed that migrants living in Hungary are a heterogeneous group in terms of labour market presence, and employment opportunities are largely determined by the cultural characteristics and migration trends specific to the migrant group (KSH, 2015).

As far as education is concerned, according to AIDA, opportunities for adults, especially vocational training, are accessible subsequently to the reception of the protection status. However, in effect the offer is currently very scarce and limited to the activities proposed by NGOs – struggling also due to the lack of availability of AMIF funds since 2018- , which are in large part language courses.

Among the organisations operating in the territory (which represent a point of reference for beneficiaries) delivering integration, educational, and support services free of charge is worth mentioning: The Jesuit Refugee Service and the Lutheran Church, Menedék Association, The Baptist Integration Centre, The Hungarian Maltese Charity Service, Kalunba, Next Step Hungary Association, The Hungarian Red Cross, and The Cordelia Foundation.

3.3.   Italian context

A brief overview of migration in Italy

Long a country of emigration, Italy has become one of the main European countries at the centre of migration flows over the last decades. In 1960, international immigrants represented less than 1% of the overall Italian population, but progressively Italy has experienced rapid growth becoming an important receiver of immigration. Since the 90s, Italy started to transform into a net immigration

country, attracting people from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the North of Africa (De la Rica et. al, 2015). Data provided by Istat (2017) shows that since the end of the 90s the presence of immigrants in Italy has quintuplicated, with an increase of 2,023,317 persons between 2007 and 2016. The increase is a result of the high number of migrants and asylum seekers that arrived in particular via the Mediterranean route, as well as family reunification and Italy-born children. According to Chiaromonte and Federico (2021) the foreign population residing in Italy is mainly composed of non-EU nationals, especially from Morocco, Albania, China, Ukraine and the Philippines, while only 30% of foreigners are EU migrants. At the same time, residence permits for asylum and humanitarian protection have progressively increased, with a peak in 2017.

As far as the Italian law on immigration is concerned, it is important to underline that the Consolidated Law on Immigration is the result of multiple and fragmentary normative measures that, still today present problems of uniformity and efficiency. In addition, the last 20 years of legislative provisions in the field of migration are characterised by a significant level of restrictions that jeopardize the actual entitlement of rights for asylum seekers and refugees, making their living conditions in the Italian context increasingly instable. Examples include the 2002 "Bossi-Fini" Law (Law No. 189 of 2002), the "security package" (Law No. 94/2009, Law No. 125/2009 and Law No. 217/2010), the "Minniti decrees" (Law No. 46/2017 and Law No. 48/2017) and the recent "Salvini decrees" (Law No. 132/2018 and Law No. 77/2019), which received harsh criticism from NGOs, activists and politicians both at national and international level. In particular, with reference to these last laws, the Decree Law 113/2018, implemented by Law No. 132/2018, caused severe changes to the management of the Italian reception system, with consequences still evident to date, despite the law reformations that occurred in 2020.

To obtain legal access to the Italian territory it is possible to apply for international protection without a limited formal timeframe. However, in general, the application should be delivered within 8 days from the arrival date. It is possible to present it both at the border police office or at the provincial Immigration Office of the police (Questura) completing the so-called "C3 model". However, as underlined by AIDA (2022), due to bureaucratic and management issues, asylum seekers very often succeed to lodge applications only after weeks or even months, in particular in big cities. The step following the application is the interview, conducted by the Territorial Commission, responsible also

for the examination procedure, which should be concluded within 6 months of the lodging of the application. In special circumstances, this timeframe is extendible, reaching a maximum period of 18 months. In the event of a negative decision, applicants can appeal within 30 days before the competent Civil Court.

The most recent developments regarding immigration policies in Italy are strictly linked with the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and foresee through the Prime Ministerial Decree of 28 March 2022 the possibility of the recognition of temporary protection to people who were residents of Ukraine before 24 February and who escaped from Ukraine from 24 February 2022.

Socio-economic characteristics of the territory

According to Istat (2022), at the beginning of 2020 Italy had 60,317,116 inhabitants5. At present, Italy's population is shrinking, due to demographic ageing, low fertility rates and emigration. In this regard, migration flows had a key role in mitigating the negative demographic balance in Italy. Taking into account data from 2019, the total population was 60,391,000, with an amount of foreigners of 5,234,000 individuals, 8.7% of the total population. Data from 2020 shows that the main contribution to the Italian economy comes from the service sector (74%), followed by the secondary sector (24%), and to minimum part by the first sector (2%).

Within the manufacturing sector, of particular relevance are beverages, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, machinery, means of transport and metal products. The manufacturing businesses linked to design and fashion are renowned internationally. The economy of Italy is characterised by the presence of small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent the backbone of the Italian industry. In 2018, entities with a maximum of 9 employees represented approximately 95%, while large companies (250 employees or more) represented only 0.1% of the companies. Italy has, moreover, a strong cooperative sector; as shown by Cooperatives Europe (2015) it is the European country with the largest share of the population (4.5%) employed by such organisations. On the other hand, the shadow economy is highly present, especially in Southern Italy.

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[5]https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/269158

The Italian economy was deeply hit, from 2009 onwards, by the international economic and financial crisis and again, in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2015, the poverty rate in Italy reached 7.6%, one of the highest levels if the previous 10 years are considered. Poverty indicators grew in the last years, reaching 7.7% in 2020. However, from a geographical point of view, there are clear territorial differences. In 2020, the Italian unemployment rate was 9.2% and was characterised by significant gender differences - 10.2% for women and 8.4% for men.

Foreign workers are crucial for the Italian labour market, as a relevant number of economic sectors are heavily dependent on foreign workforce, especially in the care of children, the elderly and people with disabilities. The Italian labour market is highly segregated by nationality, workers with a foreign nationality account for 74% of domestic workers, 56% of total caregivers, 51.6% of street vendors, while foreign workers in leadership and managerial roles accounted for only 0.4% of the total migrant workforce (Fondazione Moressa, 2017). Therefore, Italian workers can afford to avoid jobs (mainly unskilled) that are traditionally considered unattractive (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021). As a result, "the majority of foreign workers are concentrated in the highly industrialized and developed northern regions, while only a small quota, mainly seasonal workers, reside in the less-developed and more agriculture-dependant southern regions" (Chiaromonte and Federico, 2021, 194).

The perception of migration in Italy is quite negative (Maggini, 2021. Citizens' negative feelings about immigration of people coming from outside the EU have remained relatively stable in the last years (Maggini, 2021) and are often fuelled by the stereotypical negative representations and narrations promoted by politicians and the media.

Preliminary information about the immigrant population

In 2021, after a decrease in arrivals during year 2019 and 2020, a total 67,477 persons disembarked in Italy. At the same time, Italy provided support to Lybia, with which, the Memorandum of Understanding was renewed in 2020. The main countries of origin of people migrating through the Mediterranean route are Libya, Tunisia, Turkey and Algeria. According to AIDA (2022), a total of 56,388 asylum requests were registered in 2021, tripling the same data for 2020. The main countries of origin of asylum applicants were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Afghanistan and Nigeria (AIDA, 2022).

The majority of the applicants were men at 81.7 % (including children) and 18.3% were women (including children).

Beneficiaries of international protection are granted a residence permit with a 5-year duration for Refugee status and Subsidiary protection and 2-year duration for Special protection. The application is submitted to the local Questura according to the person domicile. However, as noted by AIDA, "a common problem regarding the issuance of residence permits for international protection beneficiaries is the lack of a registered domicile address, which must be provided to the police" (2022, 192). As regards access to the labour market, the Italian law allows asylum seekers to work after 60 days from the lodging of the application. Nevertheless, it is important to note that an asylum seeker permit cannot be converted into a work or residence permit (AIDA, 2022). Despite being entitled to register with Provincial Offices for Labour, asylum seekers face significant difficulties in obtaining a residence permit enabling them to work, due to delays in the registration of the application or renewal of the residence permit, but also because of employers' lack of confidence in hiring asylum seekers who are in possession of only the asylum request receipt (AIDA, 2022). It is important to underline that if asylum seekers receive accommodation facilities, their annual income cannot amount to more than approximately 6000 euro. As observed by Chiaromonte & Federico, this limit "forces people to make hard choices, often pushing them to resort to the black or grey labour market (2021, 202). With regard to undeclared work, a phenomenon that strongly affects the Italian context is caporalato. It is a form of illegal recruitment and refers to the exploitation of workers, often migrant men and women working in the agricultural sector, exercised by the so-called caporali, intermediaries who recruit the workforce on behalf of entrepreneurs. In 2016, a new legislative initiative to contrast it was launched, but unfortunately, still today, it has not been fully enforced. Another provision aimed at regularizing foreign workers is *Decreto flussi*, an instrument that annually allows the entry of seasonal workers, which provides a way to regularise the position of undocumented migrants already in Italy. The latest was issued in the context of the Covid-19 health emergency, but it is losing its impact, as the number of available work permits is constantly decreased.

As regards reception, even if asylum seekers should be granted material reception conditions right after the initial registration, in many cases they receive accommodation following the lodging of the

application (*verbalizzazione*), which usually takes place months after this first stage of the procedure. This puts many applicants in the situation of precarious housing and risky situations.

Another issue is that, according to AIDA (2022), despite the changes foreseen by the last reform, the reception system is highly problematic. For example, 7 out of 10 asylum seekers are accommodated in Emergency Reception Centres (CAS). This new system, similarly to the one of the Legislative Decree no. 142 of 2015 (Reception decree), is divided into different phases: a first aid and identification phase; a first "assistance" phase, in governmental centres, during which the applicant is supported in the asylum procedure; and a reception phase, implemented in the System of Accommodation and Integration (SAI) (AIDA, 2022). However, as underlined by AIDA (2022), CAS represents over the 66% of the facilities where asylum seekers are accommodated (AIDA, 2022, 110), characterised by the low level of services guaranteed affecting the integration path of newcomers.

Following the approval of Decree Law 130/2020 (converted into Law 173/2020), the services linked to reception - removed in 2018- have been reinstated. But in practice, as the consequences of the previous regulations are still tangible, they are available only in limited form. Services offered are of "first level" such as social and psychological assistance, cultural mediation, Italian language courses, legal information service and information on territorial services but find difficulties to develop.

Despite all the limitations related to the management of migration, the "migration crisis" activated the Italian civil society and "shed new light on the long-standing tradition of volunteerism in Italy, fed by a curious interplay between the Catholic Church, trade unions and other secular associations of the left matrix" (Ambrosini 2018 in Chiaromonte & Federico, 2021, 195).

3.4.   Spanish context

A brief overview of migration in Spain

In the last century, due to a civil war and more than four decades of dictatorship, Spain was considered a refugee-producing country rather than an asylum country (Sánchez Legido, 2009). Later, during the first ten years of 2000, the country became one of the "main migration gateways to Europe" (Jubany & Rué, 2020) recording, though, a number of asylum seekers below the European

Project co-funded by the European Union's
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Union average (Ferrero, 2016 in Jubany & Rué, 2020). This situation started to change from 2009, mainly due to European and international factors, making Spain among the main asylum receiving countries in the European Union (Jubany & Rué, 2020). Asylum applications from 2588 in 2012 progressively reached a number of over 53,000 in 2018 and reception facilities grew from 930 in 2015 to 8,600 in 2018 (Garcés-Mascareñas & Moreno-Amador, 2020). In 2019, Spain was one of the main countries of asylum reception in the European context to the point that, in June 2019, the number of backlog applications reached 120,000 cases at the Asylum Office, causing significant delays in the procedures and leaving asylum seekers without documents for periods of up to two months (Jubany & Rué, 2020).

The significant inflow of migrants brought the Spanish asylum system into crisis, a condition that, combined with the need to integrate European directives regarding asylum, led to a new asylum legislation in 2009. This long-awaited law (Law 12/2009), as underlined by Ferrero (2016), whilst containing positive aspects, keeps numerous others unsolved, or even, represents in some elements a setback. The fact that the Asylum and Subsidiary Protection Law of 2009 is, still today, the text in force and applicable in Spain, denotes a certain immobilism of asylum policies in Spain. This characteristic of the Spanish case is defined by Jubany & Rué (2020) as a "politics of non-doing" that emerges also in the lack or weaknesses of specific regulations concerning for example family reunification, the protection of people in situations of particular vulnerability, legal assistance and freedom of movement for asylum seekers from Ceuta and Melilla to travel to the peninsula, and in the delays in transposing EU Directives such as Directive 2013/33/EU on asylum reception conditions.

One key example demonstrating the lack of specific regulations is that it is only since 2020 that applications for international protection can be lodged at Spanish embassies or consular offices. Despite the fact that this possibility was foreseen by the 2009 Asylum Act, a specific regulation on the issue is lacking. According to the last AIDA report on Spain "through a landmark judgement of October 2020, the Supreme Court finally clarified that the loophole resulting from the lack of the Regulation does not impede the exercise of the right to apply for international protection at Spanish Embassies and Consulates" (AIDA, 2022, 16) but in practice no application of this kind has been recorded to date.

On the other hand, it is important to mention regional administration initiatives, such as the one promoted by the Government of Cantabria which, since 2017, has a "Comprehensive Plan of Attention to Refugees in Cantabria" encompassing all the services provided from different areas to migrants within the Community. This comprehensive plan brings together all areas of assistance to refugees arriving in Cantabria, with the aim of promoting their full social, economic, labour and cultural integration: socio-educational, socio-labor, socio-health, inclusion and social welfare and development cooperation areas.

As regards international protection, the two most common ways to apply for asylum are through a formal application on the Spanish territory or at border controls. The application, contrary to other countries must be made during the first month of stay in Spain. When the registration is completed, the applicant receives an appointment for the formalisation ("lodging") of the application, which consists of an interview and the completion of a form; at this stage a document, known as "tarjeta blanca", attesting the "receipt of application for international protection" is released.

Applications are examined by Office of Asylum and Refugee (OAR), which submits a draft decision to the Inter-Ministerial Asylum and Refugee Commission (CIAR), serving as a basis for its final decision. Therefore, it is the Inter-Ministerial Asylum and Refugee Commission who decides whether to grant or refuse international protection.

Following the regular procedure, the process should take up to 6 months. However, as underlined by AIDA, "in practice this period is usually longer and can take up to 2 years" (AIDA, 2022, 18). To attest the applicant status as asylum seeker a red card (tarjeta roja) is released, giving the possibility to legally reside in Spain for 6 months. After this period, the card has to be renewed, giving the asylum seeker access to employment as well. In the event of a negative decision, the applicant can present an appeal within two months' time.

According to AIDA (2022) and The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2021), the increase in asylum applications recorded in recent years created problems and slowdowns affecting the Spanish asylum system and causing substantial waiting periods for asylum seekers to get appointments or for being interviewed. This situation impacts the asylum process as a whole, leading to cases in which it can

last up to 3 years. These issues highlight, as reported also by Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) (2019) the numerous fragilities of the Spanish asylum system.

Socio-economic characteristics of the territory

Cantabria is a small region in the north of Spain, with a population of 584,507 people according to 2021 data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) (283,378 men, 301,129 women -17,221 foreign men and 18,946 foreign women). Although Cantabria is considered a rural community as a whole, the project will be implemented in urban areas, specifically Santander (largest urban center of the region and its capital) and Torrelavega (second largest urban population center of the region).

The business fabric of Cantabria is in large part made up of small companies with less than 10 employees (more than 95% of the total). The main contribution to the development of the economy of Cantabria comes from the service sector: commerce (15.9%) and hotels and restaurants (8.8%), followed by health and social services (15.9%), and education (11%). An increase of the latter two have been observed due to the COVID-19 crisis. Next to the service sector is the construction sector and industry, to the detriment of the rest of the sectors that have decreased their activity over the years. Work distribution is highly segregated by gender, with more than 80% of women employed in the service sector, only around 5% in industry, and less than 1% in construction; while more than half of men are employed in the service sector, around 25% in industry, and more than 10% in construction. The minority sectors are those related to the primary sector, such as agriculture, which does not even account for 2% of the total. The employment and unemployment data reflect that the economic situation in Cantabria is better compared to the rest of Spain. The unemployment rate in Cantabria, however, has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic to 11.46% in 2021.

In terms of gender, women in Cantabria are slightly better off compared to the national average. The female unemployment rate in 2021 was 13%, while the male rate was 10%.

When analysed according to nationality, the unemployment rate of foreigners is double that of Spaniards, going above 20%. As is the case with the general unemployment rate, the unemployment rate of foreigners is also highly segregated by gender: the unemployment rate for foreign women is over 22%, compared to 19% for men. At the same time, it is very relevant to highlight that among

foreigners, those who do not belong to the European Union have the highest unemployment rate, at more than 25%, while the unemployment rate of foreigners from the EU does not reach 10%.

Regarding the unemployment rate by economic sector, the industry sector is the one with the highest rate in Cantabria during 2021 (7.16%); services (6.34%); construction (5.6%); and agriculture and fishing (2.98%). These rates by sector also have differences if analyzed from a gender perspective. Thus, women registered 6.48% unemployment in the services sector and 10.46% in industry; while men registered 6.16% in services, 6.09% in industry; 5.93% in construction; and 4.89% in agriculture and fishing.

According to the work contract in the case of the foreign population, 85% of the employees are in the general regime and only 19% are self-employed, followed by 11% who are domestic workers

Within the general regime, the branches of activity with the highest number of affiliated persons are manufacturing industry, commerce, vehicle repair and activities in the health and social services sector. With regard to foreigners, 30% are affiliated in the hotel and catering industry, 12% in construction and about 10% in commerce or vehicle repair.

As regards poverty in the country, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the poverty rate among the Spanish population in general and in Cantabria in particular has been remarkable. In general terms, the risk of poverty has increased to 21% of the Spanish population. In reference to Cantabria, the rate of people below the total poverty line in 2020 was lower than the Spanish rate, registering less than 18%. However, the poverty risk rate is not homogeneous and registers important variations between social groups and, in particular, according to sex, age, social position, disability status, nationality, educational level and household composition. In this sense, the rate of people below the poverty line in Cantabria, in relation to gender during 2020, is distributed as follows: women 16.94% and men 19.09%.

On the other hand, there is a large difference in the poverty risk rate between the Spanish and foreign population. In the year 2020, the poverty rate of non-EU foreign people was extraordinarily high: the poverty risk rate recorded for this category of population was 49.5%, while for EU-foreigners 36.3%.

The incidence of poverty in Cantabria shows a high correlation with educational level, economic activity and household typologies. In addition, rental households have a lower income, as do those with a higher number of unemployed or dependent persons. Likewise, in Cantabria there is greater inequality in terms of poverty rate in urban versus rural areas.

Preliminary information about the immigrant population

According to the statistical information of the Spanish Ministry of Interior, 65,404 persons applied for international protection in Spain in 2021, of which 64.07% were men and 35.93% were women. The five main countries of origin of people migrating to Spain were Venezuela, Colombia, Morocco, Mali, and Senegal. A very high share of applications was rejected at first instance (49,537) compared to the 5,354 granted refugees status, 2,017 subsidiary protection and 12,983 granted protection for humanitarian reasons. International protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) was granted mainly to people from the following nationalities: Colombia, Mali, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine, while protection for humanitarian reasons was issued in large part to people coming from Venezuela, Colombia, Ukraine, Peru, and Honduras.

The duration of the residence permit granted varies according to the type of international protection: with refugee status and subsidiary protection beneficiaries are granted a 5-year residence permit, while with humanitarian protection it is possible to reside legally in the country for only 1 year. For individuals who have been granted refugee status and subsidiary protection it is possible to acquire citizenship, for the former after 5 years and for the latter after 10 years.

Applicants for international protection are granted assistance and financial support and reception conditions for 18 months, which can be extended up to 24 months in specific cases. However, serious difficulties and delays have been observed in accessing the reception system in recent years (AIDA, 2022; Jubany & Rué, 2020). A similar situation has been noted also regarding the right to full access to the public health care system for all asylum seekers. According to AIDA "some asylum seekers were denied medical assistance, because medical personnel was not acquainted with the 'red card' (tarjeta roja) that applicants are provided with, or they did not know that asylum seekers were entitled to such right" (2022, 119).

As mentioned above, asylum seekers are entitled to start working 6 months after the acceptance of their application, for the time the application is under examination. The possibility to work is displayed in the "red card" (tarjeta roja). This right does not translate in a facilitated entry in the labour market, on the contrary, beneficiaries face several barriers ranging from lack of qualifications, discrimination, economic crisis and lack of information on the possibility to hire migrant people (AIDA, 2022). Moreover, an additional relevant aspect is that the recognition of diplomas in Spain is a complex and long procedure. To support beneficiaries in overcoming obstacles related to work integration, significant is the work carried out by NGOs and CSOs and specific programs in reception centres organising vocational and language trainings, and labour integration support schemes.

In reference to the context of Cantabria, the percentage of TCN residents in the total population is 4.49% (26,255 TCN), with women representing a slightly higher percentage than men. In total the TCN population is composed of 14,125 women (4.69%) and 12,130 men (4.28%). In recent years, it has been observed that Cantabria is one of the communities with the lowest migratory balance. The main groups come from the European Union (32.7%), South America (31.3%) and non-EU European countries (12.9%). According to sex, there are differences in distribution since most of the men come from European countries while most of the women come from the Americas. Among the most present nationalities it is possible to find Colombia, Peru, and Moldova. In addition, there is also a relevant presence of Venezuelan nationals who were granted humanitarian status (90% of the total of 108 applications: 97 grants). In Cantabria the foreign population is mainly in the urban centers, Santander and Torrelavega.

According to CISE, the profile of immigrant women in Spain, and in Cantabria, has evolved in recent years. They are no longer uneducated women who come to Cantabria "following" their husbands for family reunification. On the contrary, they are mostly women who are active subjects of their own migration who come to improve their quality of life and who in most cases have at least a basic education. However, the lack of integration often exposes them to end up working in jobs below their qualifications.

In Cantabria immigrants without education represent only 3%, compared to 20.3% of the general population of the country, and as regards the share of immigrant people with only primary studies it is about 21.7% compared to 30% of the general population. The next significant difference is in

tertiary or university education, with 29.6% of the immigrant population holding a university degree compared to 22.2% of the general population. Therefore, it can be said that the immigrant population residing in Cantabria has a higher level of education than the average of the country.

In general, immigrant workers from low and lower middle-income countries occupy the most precarious jobs and are those with the worst working conditions, with lower incomes and greater instability. The data for Cantabria in 2021 shows that non-EU immigrant women have a considerably higher unemployment rate than the rest of the population (both nationals and foreigners belonging to the EU). Specifically, non-EU foreign women have an unemployment rate in Cantabria of more than 22%, while EU foreign women have a rate of 21% and national women a rate of 11%.

According to CISE, in general, their socioeconomic integration is as flexible, low-wage workers. The majority of migrant women work in elementary occupations, there is an overrepresentation of migrant women in the lowest positions. In this sense, migrant women are mainly engaged in tasks oriented to care and the service sector. Within these jobs, the hotel and catering and domestic service sectors stand out. This situation crystallizes patterns based on gender inequalities in terms of wage income. If domestic service is the most abundant sector in which immigrant women work, in contrast, men are more employed in construction, industry and retail trade.

3.5 Portuguese context

A brief overview of migration in Portugal

Portugal was, until 1960, an emigration country. The situation regarding the migratory balance changed after 1974, with the fall of the Estado Novo, causing a significant inflow of people from Portuguese ex-colonies - especially until 2000 - and contributing to the creation of an increasingly heterogeneous society. After this first stage of immigration, second and third waves followed: during the first half of the 2000s from Eastern European countries, notably Ukraine, and in the second half of the 2000s, when Portugal witnessed a relevant increase, in particular, in the number of immigrants from Brazil (Borrego, 2016). It is important to underline that the lack of a complete and consistent asylum and integration policy at national level led, especially in previous years, to fragmentary and

episodic governmental responses to the issue of immigration (Silva & Sacramento, 2020). Silva and Sacramento show that "this frailty gained visibility when, in the aftermath of the Syrian conflict, the Portuguese Government expressed political willingness to receive more refugees from Greek and Italian camps under the EU's Resettlement Programme (2015-2017)" (2020, 171). Although Portugal is not considered to be among the main immigration countries in Europe, it is important to highlight that, in the last 30 years, the total number of immigrants has increased significantly.

Migration is regulated mainly by two recently adopted legal Acts: the Asylum Act and the Immigration Act. The first refers to Act n. 27/2008 of 30 June 2008 establishing the conditions for granting asylum or subsidiary protection, later amended by Act n. 26/2014 of 5 May 2014 transposing Directives 2011/95, 2013/32/EU and 2013/33/EU. The second is Act n. 23/2007 of 4 July 2007 on the legal status of entry, residence, departure and removal of foreigners from the national territory, amended by Act n. 28/2019 of 29 March 2019. During the course of 2020 the Government announced a plan for structural reform of the Immigration and Borders Service (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras - SEF). According to AIDA (2022) the main piece of legislation regarding this reform was approved in November 2021 and involves the reallocation of SEF's competencies to existing or new entities. Another relevant change in the legislation is related to the Portuguese Nationality regime. Comparing it to the ones of other European States, it can be considered relatively flexible, also thanks to the legal changes from 2006 and 2020[6] concerning the requirements and the procedures for the acquisition of Portuguese nationality facilitating and broadening the possibility for foreigners, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (in particular unaccompanied children) (AIDA, 2022) to become Portuguese citizens.

As far as the asylum procedure is concerned, in Portugal there is a single procedure for both refugee status and subsidiary protection (AIDA, 2022). The current legislation entrusts to the Asylum and Refugees Department of SEF (SEF-GAR) the responsibility of examining applications and drafting first instance decisions. The next step, i.e. decision granting/refusing, is conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs. In 3 days, SEF registers the asylum application and issues the applicant certificate of

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[6] Decree-Law n. 237-A/2006 of 14 December 2006 approving the regulation of the Portuguese nationality was amended by Decree-Law n. 71/2017 of 21 June 2017 and, at a later time by Law no. 2/2020 of November 10th 2020. Further information is available at https://www.mondaq.com/general-immigration/1016662/amendment-to-the-portuguese-nationality-law and https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/decree-law-712017-21-june-amendment-portuguese-nationality-regulation-law_en.

application. The next phase consists in an interview, after which, SEF drafts a document reporting the main elements relevant for the application. The following stage of evaluation can last up to 6 months (9 for complex cases). During this period the applicant receives a provisional residence permit allowing access to both education and employment. As regards reception, the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Employment, Solidarity, and Social Security cooperating with other public entities and/or private non-profit organisations in the framework of an MoU which, since 2020, has established a single system of reception and integration for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and the internal regulations of the Single Operative Group (SOG) to ensure the provision of such services (AIDA, 2022).

Portugal's collaborative attitude in the field of migration at the European level is demonstrated by its participation, since 2015, in relocation programs. With regard to the EU's Resettlement Programme (2015-2017) Pedro Silva and Octávio Sacramento (2020) underlined the role of municipalities, local third sector organisations and their staff - unaccustomed to working with refugees - "in the implementation of the refugee relocation programme in rural municipalities and peri-urban contexts in Portugal" (Sacramento et. al, 2020, 25). In September 2020, SEF and IOM formalised a new agreement concerning the resettlement of refugees (2020-2022). According to the available data, in 2020, Portugal committed to resettle 1,729 refugees from Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan (AIDA, 2021). Moreover, it is important to highlight that in Portugal family reunification requests are also managed under favourable conditions for both refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. An individual has the right to issue the request immediately after receiving international protection without time limits and, more importantly, unlike in other countries, without the obligation to provide proof of accommodation and income in family reunification procedures.

Socio-economic characteristics of the territory

The current population of Portugal is 10,344 million people according to the 2021 national census (INE, 2021). The Portuguese economy, after the negative trends caused by the financial crisis of 2007–2008, has been recovering and expanding since the end of 2014. The economy's growth has been accompanied by a continuous fall in the unemployment rate[7]. Statistics on the distribution of

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[7] Data available at: http://www.focus-economics.com/countries/portugal

employment in Portugal by economic sector from 2009 to 2019 show that in 2019 5.5% of the employees were active in the agricultural sector, 24.68% in industry and 69.83% in the service sector[8]. The services sector is, therefore, the main employment sector, followed by the industry sector and by agriculture. In the last 3 years, the unemployment rate in Portugal has been in line with the average of other European States: in 2020 it was at approximately 7.2%, while data from February 2022 highlights a post-pandemic recovery showing that Portugal currently has an unemployment rate of 5.8%[9]. As regards the poverty rate, it fluctuated substantially and tended to increase throughout the 2004-2018 period. More recently, the survey on Income and Living Conditions held in 2021 on previous years incomes showed that 18.4% of the population was at-risk-of-poverty/just above the poverty line in 2020, 2.2 percentage points more than in 2019 (INE, 2021a).

Overall, according to Impact Hub Lisbon, Portugal is a very welcoming country towards foreigners. The Portuguese population has a good level of English and is very professionally oriented towards the tourism and hospitality industry. According to Contemporary Portugal Database (PORDATA) from Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation, since 2020, the number of immigrants entering Portugal to settle permanently has increased. In 2020, a total of 67,160 immigrants moved to Portugal, 34,708 male and 32,452 female. In 2021 there was an increase of 40% of people with foreign nationality living in Portugal, which now represent 5.4% of the total population and, of which, 81.4% of the total are nationals of countries that are not part of the European Union.

Preliminary information about the immigrant population

Recent analysis shows that the inflow of immigrants from former Portuguese colonies, mostly Cape Verde and Brazil, which in the 90s formed a significant part of the immigrants residing in Portugal, since 2010 is decreasing. Despite these developments, Brazilians are still the largest foreign community in the territory (Borrego, 2016). Among the significant communities there is also that of immigrants from Ukraine, which expanded quickly since 2010 (Borrego, 2016). In 2020, the five main nationalities of asylum seekers in Portugal (Angolan, Bissau-Guinean, Gambian, Guinean and Venezuelan) represented approximately half of the total requests for international protection

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8 Data available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/372351/employment-by-economic-sector-in-portugal/#:~:text=The%20statistic%20shows%20the%20distribution,percent%20in%20the%20service%20sector
9 Data available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/372325/unemployment-rate-in-portugal/.

processed in the country. The last data analysed by AIDA for 2021 present a different composition: most of the asylum seekers come from Afghanistan, Morocco, India, Gambia, Guinea and, to a lesser extent, from Guinea Bissau, Angola, Senegal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone. According to the data provided by SEF, among the applicants, the majority were men (68.4%), while only 31.6% were women.

Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection receiving material reception conditions from ISS (Institute of Social Security - Instituto da Segurança Social) reside mostly in Lisbon and Porto (AIDA, 2021; AIDA, 2022). The duration of the residence permit varies from 3 years for subsidiary protection beneficiaries, to 5 years for refugees. In the last report on Portugal, AIDA underlined "the delays in the issuance and renewal of residence permits" (AIDA, 2022, 88) which have also been flagged by the UN Human Rights Committee. Such delays, as detected also by the Statistical Report of Asylum 2020, significantly impact refugees' access to services, assistance and, most of all, to the labour market.

According to the Asylum Act, asylum seekers have the right to access the labour market without limitations if in possession of a provisional residence permit. In the case of the regular procedure, access to the labour market can be granted after 7 days or after 10 to 30 days in procedures in place on the territory (AIDA, 2022). Moreover, the Portuguese legislation provides the possibility to receive support, under specific conditions, in the field of employment and vocational training (AIDA, 2022). Recent data and studies on the issue show that the immigrants represent a relevant part of the secondary labour market (Pereira, 2010) and underline an overrepresentation in unspecialised and precarious jobs and in seriously crisis-impacted sectors, which contributes to higher poverty level for this share of population compared to Portuguese citizens. In this situation, a relevant role is played by poor language skills, limited support networks and knowledge about the local labour market, and difficulties in accessing certified training. These constraints are often accompanied by complications of a bureaucratic nature that often cause employers' reluctance to hire third country nationals, especially asylum seekers.

In general, as underlined also by the Portuguese partner of this project, it has been difficult to find current and recent data, reports and studies on the situation of migrants, beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers in Portugal. In particular, relevant data is missing on the

living conditions of migrant women and refugees in the context of immigration. According to the information provided by Impact Hub Lisbon, immigrant women mainly work in cleaning services, in the domestic sector and/or in cleaning/domestic services companies.

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4. Labor market, VETs providers and Public Employment Services

The labour market is far from being perfect. Labour markets are characterized by information imperfections, asymmetries, and constraints that sharply reduce employment opportunities for some categories of workers (Borzaga et al., 2001).

However, difficulties in finding work do not affect everyone equally: they vary to a significant extent according to peoples' characteristics and contextual factors. Migrant women are among those facing the most discrimination.

All modern welfare states have adopted tailored labour policies aimed at favouring a more effective allocation of the labour force so as to ensure that all workers can make adequate use of their capabilities and qualifications and can acquire any missing abilities that may boost their competitiveness.

All in all, labour policies have failed to facilitate the meeting of supply and demand, if not for short periods and for very specific categories of fragile workers.

The research conducted corroborates that to ensure an optimal allocation of the workforce, the connection of VETs providers, Public Employment Services and the labour market is of utmost importance. Against this background, Employment Services should facilitate the matching of supply with demand, whereas training providers should equip job seekers with the skills needed to get hired.

Unfortunately, connections are very weak and rather ineffective when it comes to migrant workers in general, and women migrant workers specifically.

The process resulting from the interaction of Employment Services with training providers is indeed very complicated and the identification of the skills needed is extremely challenging. According to the research, the skills required are multiple, both formal and informal, and the barriers faced by women are much higher than those encountered by men. In addition to Public Employment Service and VET providers, there are a multitude of both formal and informal entities, including schools and

associations, that play a role in facilitating the target group's access to the labour market. Nevertheless, collaboration with these entities is unstable and not systematized.

From a comparative perspective, the countries of focus show some commonalities in terms of sectors of activity where migrant women are employed. These include mainly care services, agriculture, and tourism, which all tend to be highly feminized or masculinized. Furthermore, even if precise data is lacking, the agricultural sector and domestic work particularly are distinguished by illegal practices, including undeclared work and violation of workers' rights.

Barriers encountered by migrant women when entering the labour market are of two types: personal and external.

The recent global pandemic has partially changed the labour market, both in terms of opportunities (i.e. increase of unemployment in some sectors) and in terms of digitalization of some tasks, which has increased in relevance everywhere.

There are some noteworthy positive aspects of digitalization:

- There are more job opportunities for home-based positions (this can be of help to migrant women with children);

- The use of technology enables performing several activities from home (send CVs, applications and attend training) with the support of relatives in case of need;

- In some cases, the possibility to work or attend a course at home can help the work-life-balance;

- activities carried out from home are more inclusive from a certain persepective, as the person can take the necessary time to understand the tasks and can work from anywhere.

The next paragraphs will analyze the main barriers experienced by the specific target group, the skills required by the labour market, and what tools can be used to strengthen skills and competencies.

4.1.   Barriers

Most of the barriers detected affect women's entry and retention in employment, as well as training attendance. The research conducted confirms that all the key barriers faced by women when trying to enter the labour market persist also when they start to work and affect a variety of aspects of their daily life.

Personal and external/social barriers act simultaneously and sometimes overlap, thus influencing each other. At personal level, the main barriers deals with: language and communication skills; childcare, work-life balance, role in the family and in the community; Digitalization; Labour market integration in the new context; Psycho-sociological aspects; Knowledge of the territory; Motivation; Needs and expectations; Lack of awareness on capacities, skills and competencies. The barriers that develop from the external situation are: Unilateral path of inclusion, Documents/permit of stay; Representation of migrants in the local community and in society; Recognition of diplomas and qualifications and mismatch of preparation for high education and qualified job positions; Vulnerability to discrimination and violation of the rights of women; Perceptions and prejudices of the employers, of the society of origin and the society of arrival towards migrants and women; Permanent job sectors and time schedule; Inadequate services; Reception centres, post-acceptance phase and social inclusion; Project-based intervention and lack of long-term integration policies.

Personal barriers

Personal barriers refer to a series of difficulties that are mainly, but not exclusively, related to the individual. Personal barriers emerged from the interviews with VET providers, Public Employment Services, employers and from the reported experiences of the women interviewed. Each personal barrier is nevertheless influenced by the external context.

- **Language and communication skills**

Poor language skills are reported as the main barrier affecting entrance and permanence in the labour market and attendance of training in all countries. Only in Spain, where a certain share of migrant women comes from South America (Spanish speakers), this issue does not play a role.

Speaking, according to the survey, is more relevant than writing. According to various respondents, communication, including language skills and the capacity to properly approach interlocutors, significantly influences the outcome of the integration pathway..

Poor language and communication skills imply a higher risk of isolation and of being discriminated against.

In some countries, this barrier is exacerbated by the objective complexity of some languages, which are very difficult to learn. Moreover, learning a new language requires a lot of time, which tends to increase when the person is illiterate. The relevance of learning the language often clashes with the need to find a job quickly, which is described as urgent by many of the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed.

According to several trainers, the lack of motivation in learning the language is higher in refugees/asylum seekers that are hosted in countries that are not the final destination of their migration path.

- Childcare, work-life balance, role in the family and in the community

Finding a balance between taking care of the children and work is perceived as a difficulty by most women and the challenge of reconciling family life and work tends to be more severe for migrant women. Indeed, the weight of reproductive work in accessing work opportunities is conceived as a boundary in all target countries. Not surprisingly, as declared by a NGO rapresentative during a focus group, the absence of childcare services dramatically impacts employment;the "success story (of employment) we only have with single women, the more I think about it, most are single women (...) the one who finds the best jobs were single" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

One reason for this is that migrant women lack external support (parents, sometimes partners, family) and networks in the destination country. As reported "women who have a network are more independent" (Focus group, GR_FG_01). The country of origin seems to play an important role, as "some communities seem to have good networks. It depends on the nationality. For example, the community of Kongo (...) is well connected, which is not true for other nationalities" (Focus group, GR_FG_01). Moreover, migrant women have limited access to care services, due to either poor

information about the available services or difficulties in accessing information without proper support. In some cases, the cost of services represents a barrier, which hampers access by women.

Noteworthy is that training opportunities (and, more frequently, also workplaces) are very often not child-friendly, as they do not foresee the possibility of free or affordable care service, or the possibility to bring along children. Being aware of these difficulties, mothers often assume that they cannot have access to certain job opportunities as they are not suitable for women with children. Thus, they often do not apply for training or job positions, even when babysitting or similar services are indeed provided. In addition, in Europe, there are fewer home-based jobs than in some other areas (for example: producing goods at home for a company is not common at all, meanwhile in Africa it is) and this fact is a limit for those women who experienced a different work-life balance in the past and thus feel that they won't be able to "fit the European one" (Interview, IT_IW_05).

In this context, we believe that it would be extremely important to reflect on the concept of motherhood, which was described in different ways by several of the women interviewed. Noteworthy information comes from the point of view of operators of social services and a member of a grass-roots migrants' association. According to their opinions, the concept of motherhood incorporates some intrinsic cultural aspects related to the role of the mother and caring that may differ dramatically across cultures, depending on the community and origin of women.

"Before (in the country of origin) you have the child with you all time (…) glued on you (…) and then you go to a country where mothering is different, the child goes to school, it creates a different type of relationship, the mother relation changes" (Interview, SP_IT_03).

Similar perspectives have been mentioned by some women who have been living in Europe for a longer time, who actually had the opportunity to become familiar with the hosting society and underline how adaptation to the way of managing children took time.

Moreover, child rearing practices can be different, as pointed out in another interview: "she was raising her child differently there (in Syria)" (GR_IS_05). This can cause doubts and/or a sense of loss in some women, who may refuse to leave their children to someone else when having to work. Moreover, some women won't ever consider not carrying their children with them or may feel ashamed to make use of childcare services.

Regarding the role of women in the family and community, a Greek expert of gender equality issues and integration policies underlined how migration can be an opportunity to change and empower women (also as mothers). It can push them to "break out of traditional roles" and boost their self-development. At the same time, women may have to be ready to "deal with quick changes", and, among them, "gender relationship changes" within the family (Interview, GR_IS_05). These needed adjustments can cause inner conflicts, doubts, and lack of points of reference that can compromise motivation and willingness to enter the labour market altogether.

Conflicts can also develop within the family and in the relationship with the husband, where there may be reluctancy to support the woman in her empowerment process or even hinderance. Those conflicts increase when the activities that are considered "normal" for a woman differ between the country of origin and the one of arrival. In this sense, job integration can collide with the way the family or the partner see gender and family roles. This concept was explained as follows by one respondent: "cultural differences do exist (...), professional employment, from where they come from, may not be an acceptable activity for a woman, here (in Greece) it must necessarily be". (Interview, GR_IS_05). As pointed out by another respondent,it is not possible to support the woman without taking into consideration the "various issues related to the role of women at work, the role of women at home. Don't we need to look at them at some point? They have to be considered" (Interview, GR_IS_02).

- Digitalization

Digitalization has become particularly relevant since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic; it affects both access to the labour market (as it is a skill requested from employers) and access to training and services, because part of the process is very often held online (e.g. registration, access).

Most migrant women are endowed with very poor digital skills; they "do not know how to scan, or send emails, not familiar with Office" (Interview, PO_IS_01) and often lack digital tools (while most women have a mobile phone, fewer have a PC and tablet and often a low "quantity of wireless data"). Noteworthy is that attendance to courses dropped significantly after Covid-19, according to trainers, and most women now consider online activities and courses less effective.

- Labour market integration in the new context

The European labour market requires that women make a significant effort to understand its configuration and conditions of work. In particular, it is important that migrant women recognize the differences existing between the labour market in the country of origin and that of arrival. Key differences concern laws and rules, the sectors of activity, the quality and productivity standards, the number of working hours. Women may also have a different "culture of labour" (punctuality, absences), which may require mediation between their personal and cultural mindset and the culture of the country of arrival. Work ethics is also a challenging issue, as behaviors, social rules, implicit and explicit agreements in the labour maket vary from country to country and, further, they "depend on the workplace and activities (...), work in a hotel requires a different culture and attitude compared to logistics (...) and women do not know either." (Interview, GR_IS_02).

Moreover, often there is a mismatch between the embedded "meaning" of a specific job in the country of origin and in Europe. Variations may concern the way the job is performed, the tools or means employed, the skills required (in terms of certification, but also knowledge).

When approaching an unknown territory, state or city, women can also be unsure about where to find job offers and how to apply. As mentioned, "we need to see what possibilities are offered by the environment (...) and initiatives taken by businesses and local communities. These persons' efforts to find work require support (...) to be able to take action." (Interview, GR_IS_02).

The research shows that potential difficulties arise mainly due to migrant women's gaps in information. This can be a general condition of migrants and people coming from other contexts. However, while men have more chances to speak with others both before leaving and once settled in the new country, women are in most cases forced to "follow" their husbands and hence lack information about the hosting country altogether. Moreover, women can have less access to sources of information even once they are in the country, as they attend fewer public spaces than men and tend to have fewer mentors or examples to follow. The community, at this point, often plays a very crucial role. As mentioned by a member of the staff of a Public Employment Service in Spain, very often women come with a sister or a friend.

When this happens, it is important not to presume that the woman is ready and willing to enter labour market: "They (job counselors) need to introduce women gradually to a logic men already are

familiar with. The man who comes to job counselling wants to find a job. This is not necessarily the case for women" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Due to the lack of knowledge of the labor market, women can fall victim of fraud (i.e. networking job offers, easy gains).

- **Psycho-sociological aspects**

When dealing with job search and labour market, interview respondents underlined the tendency of the staff of Public Services for employment to overlook social and psychological elements affecting the life conditions of migrant women throughout their migratory experience and their life in the destination country. However, these aspects are relevant in shaping women's integration pathways, opportunities and capacity to face and overcome everyday life challenges. refugees women, due to the difficulties they have to face during the journey and once settled, can be more insecure and self-doubting and their emotional and psychological condition can affect their resolution to claim something (Focus group, HU_FG_01)this . The situation of being an asylum seeker and a refugee put the person in a condition of constant expectation and uncertainty and this condition may have repercussions on wellbeing, and on the migration journey.

"We must bear in mind that people come with various traumas, major burdens, and various situations, and there is a need for psychosocial support (...) a place that provides support in a methodical way" (Interview, GR_IS_02).

Moreover, the adaptation process can be difficult: a shock induced by the adjustment to the new work environment can take place and influence the multiple levels of changes that migrant women encounter (role in the family and in the society, life standards). The working sphere can be similarly involved, as some women do not imagine themselves working at the beginning. This new role and self-perception can differ dramatically from an individual's previous self perception.

- **Knowledge of the territory**

Migrant women's lack of knowledge of the hosting territory jeopardises their work integration. Indeed, they may not be informed about the accessible services, including, among others, training,

nor have information on key issues like, for example, the main economic sector of the area. Some information is conversely easily accessible (e.g. the transportation system, as "Google" helps).

- Motivation

Motivation is a major determinant of both training attendance and entry into the workforce. In the case of migrant women, the personal history and motivations for leaving the country play a key role, influencing training attendance and work integration significantly. Women do not always choose to migrate and often do not choose the country in which to settle down either. This might create a sense of instability, "they are not here in a good mood" (Interview, IT_IS_02), and lack of motivation. Moreover, the whole asylum application procedure, which is often characterized by delays and blocks, makes integration into the new society difficult and adds additional sources of concern. Once the woman and her family obtain the "status" she/they might decide to leave (or can be forced to do it), especially when they settled in countries with high unemployment rates. When women are aware of this possibility in advance, they may be less keen to start a long-term training or may lack the motivation to start any kind of integration process. The process becomes even more complicated when an assylum application is rejected: in this case, the whole situation may generate a sense of insecurity and feed mistrust towards the hosting country institutions and society, as well as nourish a sense of injustice and reticence. Several interviewees focus on how refugees and asylum seekers approach the future in the new country: it is reported that at the beginning the person applies a "survival mode" (Focus group, GR_FG_01), making it very difficult to "think a step ahead" (Interview, PO_IS_03). For this reason, it can be very difficult for recipients to commit: the present is more important than the future and "motivation to go on arrives gradually (…) when the basic survival mode ends, then the realization brings motivation. Women have a delay in that, probably because very often they have been victimized during the journey and it takes a long time to get out of the survival mode" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Lack of motivation implies in some cases that the woman gets stuck due to her incapacity to figure out objectives and desires and she might have a "limited perspective of what it means to be a woman in Europe and cannot imagine herself working" (Focus group, GR_FG_01). One of the main consequences is that women often declare to be willing to do "any job" (Interview, IT_IT_03), independently from their skills, previous experience, talents and aspirations. In such cases,

enrollment in courses is often induced by inertia, by the fact to follow someone else's decision, or it is decided by the social service and not by the woman.

"Background problems are common" (Focus group, GR_FG_02): motivation to participate in courses and experiment with a new integration path is also affected by daily barriers that migrant women normally face (childcare, economic needs, housing). These barriers can contribute to worsening the attitude of women and influence the capacity to stay focused. Because of this, attendance of intense vocational training or higher educational programs together with natives that require a high level of commitment may cause frustrations and push women to give up their commitment. In essence, background problems contribute to explaining the incapacity to follow a long-term training or education path.

- Needs and expectations

Needs and expectations contribute to shaping women's experiences in the new life context and can influence their attitude towards the labour market. Needs and expectations vary according to women's personal cultural, social and economic backgrounds as well as according to their legal status in the destination country. However, women's needs and expectations are often difficult to detect, also due to a widespread lack of awareness on the part of the women themselves, who often ignore their skills and abilities, as well as their ambitions. At the same time, they are willing to find a job and if they can not reach it in a reasonable amount of time, their motivation can decrese. As reported by several women, "job is a way to be accepted in the society" (Interview, IT_IT_11) and ununployment can bring along demotivation and isolation.

As reported during the meetings with VET providers and Public Employment Services, emergencies and daily needs (income shortage, housing) prevent a proper assessment and increase the risk of underestimating women's resources and capacities. Moreover, they limit the capacity to prevent the emergence of further problems in the workplace.

A standardized need assesment or profiling is very risky because of the wide range of needs that are detected.

Some experts of labour integration emphasized one specific aspect: needs are influenced by personal beliefs (e.g.. religion), which are often incompatible with the needs of the labour market. For example, a woman may have the need to find a job allowing for the wearing of long skirts, as prescribed by her belief. This need will exclude a certain number of activities, which are not compatible with the wearing of a long skirt. There could thus be a mismatch between the need of the employer and the need of the woman. This can be one of the reasons why, as discussed during one of the focus groups held in Greece, "Statistically, it is difficult for a woman who is wearing a headscarf by belief to want to go to work" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Conflicts between diverse needs are more likely to arise:

o in jobs where relational aspects predominate, such as the personal/social service sector, where women tend to be predominantly employed (e.g. domestic work, elderly and child care) since personal contact often "shows" intimate and cultural aspects more;

o where it is necessary to cook (restaurant, but also housekeeping) and, for example, to touch meat, which should be avoided according to some faiths;

o in cleaning, where one has to follow certain customs and standards of the hosting society, which are not necessarily shared in other countries.

Finally, dealing with the balance between needs and expectation, it is possible to do an in-depth focus about the enrollment of the target group in high education training, at the university or in intensive vocational training. According to some educators working in the field (Focus group, SP_F1_01), the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries play a crucial role for their success. For many of them, in fact, it is very difficult to keep on track due to their daily needs that create a deep difference between them and native students. National students are younger, have more support and no family responsibilities, whereas most migrant women have to combine study and work. If we consider their lower preparation (discussed further below), it is possible to understand how their expectation of success can be unreal. Even the more qualified women experience more difficulties when compared to natives.

- **Lack of awareness on capacities, skills and competencies**

The self-recognition of skills and abilities is a key element in the choice of vocational training and for a successful integration into the labour market. To find jobs that match the capacities of migrant women job seekers, it is very important that the person is aware of what she is able to do and that the employer is adequately informed as to why the job should fit the person.

According to the research, women might have less professional experience, but they are more likely to have soft skills linked with motherhood, housekeeping and social relations. Nevertheless, migrant women are in many instances less aware of being endowed with these skills when compared to men and native women.

Women less aware of their own capacities and competencies consequentially are not able to present them.

External and social barriers

The extensive experience of the respondents makes it possible to highlight which features or problems in the area are most unfavorable to women.

- ## Unilateral path of inclusion

Pathways to social and labour integration are implicitly understood as a task and commitment of the migrant person. On the contrary, for a positive and successful integration, inclusion should be conceived as a "bilateral path" resulting from a relationship involving both society and migrants. "It is a dual approach situation (...) a dynamic relationship with the new society" (Interview, GR_IS_05).

Strong barriers have been detected in this respect, as companies/agencies, employers and VET providers are often not prone to engage actively. Additional difficulties may be caused by the poor involvement and/or hostile attitude of civil society, but "integration is something that requires the involvement of both sides" (Interview, GR_IS_01).

Moreover, the benefits of inclusion are often considered only in terms of their impact on the life conditions of the migrant. Instead, "when you invest in people (....) everyone gains benefit (...) the society as a whole" (Interview, GR_IS_01). This is extremely valid for the labour market, as legally

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including migrants in the market positively impacts the economy, increases social development, and decreases their need for assistance.

- Documents/permit of stay

Residence permits for asylum seekers and refugees are different from those held by the vast majority of foreigners, both in terms of procedures required to obtain them, conditions (duration, possibility to convert, process to renew it), and format. Moreover, bureaucracy and procedures take a long time and change constantly, causing uncertainty and additional bureaucratic obstacles.

This administrative situation has a strong impact on employability "administrative situation goes hand in hand with the employment situation" (Focus group, SP_FG_02) - the time needed for receiving documents limits training and work opportunities and information on the topic might be difficult to gather by both women and employers. The latter, when unsure about the rights of migrants to work, may feel unsure to hire asylum seekers or refugees. Moreover, the interview with the competent body in charge of awarding the asylum status may require them to stay or come back to a certain city (i.e. the capital city) and this may cause additional troubles and difficulties.

Additional specific issues have been reported in Hungary, where the possibility to hire foreigners is strictly regulated and it is so demanding that, according to the opinion of a public officer, it is convenient for a company to ask the support of an expert. As reported: "The regulation are quite complicated (...) the whole system is supervised (...) legal system is pretty tide (...) it is advisable to bring an external service provider to do it for you" (Interview, HU_IS_05).

- Representation of migrants in the local community and in society

According to some interviewees, the lack of power and failure to recognize migrant communities may influence their work integration, particularly in the case of women, who normally struggle to make their needs visible to society. Refugees, asylum seekers and, more generally, migrants are not entitled to vote and be elected and have less power to underline their necessities and requests. This weakness should, according to the interview with a relevant stakeholder, be enforced by the state by creating obligatory space for consultations where to find ways for integration, to "give voice to the community (...) for communities to feel, to become empowered that they have a place (to speak), It is part of the empowerment (...) of the procedure" (Interview, GR_IS_01). This lack of representation can lead to

a lack of both trust and self-confidence in taking steps in public spaces and in advocating for their needs and rights.

Moreover, some communities are more present and visible than others in a territory, due to their numerical power, historical presence or previous connection with the country due to the colonial past. The risk is that communities with a stronger presence (and thus often stronger networks) end up being more integrated, while lone migrants will struggle more to find their way.

- **Recognition of diplomas and qualifications and mismatch of preparation for high education and qualified job positions**

Qualified migrants struggle to find jobs that match their previous qualifications and find it very difficult to enter the qualified labour market. This situation distances the person from job offers that coincide with knowledge, personal investment and professional life project.

One reason for this is the lack of recognition of diplomas and certificates. Several causes prevent recognition of qualifications. First, the absence of formal procedures in the home country; second, the complexity of the process, defined as "excessive, tedious and time- consuming bureaucracy" (Interview, SP_IS_03); third, the difficulty to find information on how to do it and, finally, the demanding, often costly, and very long process.

According to the research, several women decided not to apply for recognition because it is not clear, once the certification has been recognized, if it will be valid in European states other than the hosting country. When the person is not sure whether she will stay in the country, the investment may be far too high.

Moreover, the situation can be even worst for refugees as they can lack the documents and certificates that they could not manage to bring along when they left due to severe risks (Focus group, PO_F01_VET).

However, this topic is very complex and undoubtedly needs more investigation to be properly analysed. As underlined by some interviewees "every country wants to protect their doctors" (Interview, GR_IS_03) and "our own academic children (....). The 'scientific union' don't want to open the market" (Interview, GR_IS_01). Thus, many states don't render the process of recognition

smoother because they do not want to enlarge the quota of qualified personnel. The feeling is that "that the effort to integrate migrants and refugees is mostly focused on manual work that does not require degrees" (Interview, GR_IS_02).

The topic of qualifications and higher education have been approached also from a different point of view by some experts working in the higher educational system. According to their experience, it is important to be aware that certificates and qualifications obtained in foreign countries are often not really comparable to the national ones: the level, in terms of knowledge and skills, is lower, especially in university. This does not mean that the student cannot attend classes, but they will often have gaps and need additional support, such as qualified staff to support foreigners, intensive remedial courses, and the possibility of lengthening the academic course without the need to pay additional fees. However,pre institutions rarely can provide support due to a shortage of resources (Focus group, GR_FG_02).

- **Vulnerability to discrimination and violation of the rights of women**

Many of the women interviewed in the course of this research declared that they "wish" to be paid on time and fairly. The tendency of women not to recognize this as a "right", but rather as something they "wish" to happen, confirms both the lack of information about their rights and the higher risk for women to accept illegal treatment. At the same time, as underlined by a staff member of a Foundation working with refugee women in Hungary (Focus group, HU_FG_01), sometimes women prefer to work in the black market, because they earn more money. Migrant women often ignore the negative effect that this can have in terms of rights also because they do not understand the importance of contracts and assurance.

Further, some experts underlined how harassment and abuse, also linked with domestic work, are more common for migrant women:

"The predator has a radar to see who is more vulnerable" (Focus group, SP_FG_01)

Migrant women are often not fully aware of the abuses they are victim of; they may be afraid to quit the job and sometimes find it difficult to speak about the abuses with job counselors. As reported by an interviewee discussing this topic, "another thing you never discuss with men is this. I never had to

discuss sexual harassment or trafficking or anything else or what is allowed to an employer to do to you and what not. With women, there are these issues" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

The target group are moreover more vulnerable to multiple and intersectional discrimination, e.g. as woman and as migrant. In some cases, they may be targeted because they have more "visible" external features/signs than men (e.g. headscarf).

The role of religious signs is a very debated topic with respect to which there was no unity of views among interviewees. According to some of them, every aspect of the culture and beliefs of women ought to be safeguarded; others underline that asking women to change some habits is not a matter of discrimination but of mediation (Focus group, GR_FG_01). This discussion confirms that there is a pressing need to further reflect on what is discrimination and what are the limits and borders between personal choices and mediation. On top of this, there is a need to convince women to stand up against violations.

In addition, some interviewees underlined the presence of widespread institutional racism (Focus group, IT_FG_01). Institutional discrimination can occur also due to the burnout of operators that are overwhelmed by difficulties and by the fact that their institutions do not keep them up to date on procedures and needs of their target groups.

Finally, it is important to highlight that - based on interviews - stakeholders and staff report cases of discrimination more than the women themselves. This may be caused by the low awareness on the part of women and/or fear of being further discriminated against by their employers.

- **Perceptions and prejudices of the employers, of the society of origin and the society of arrival towards migrants and women**

Foreign women are potential victims of prejudice for multiple aspects of their identity, intersectionally. Two main areas emerged from the research: gender and origin. Moreover, those prejudices can be experienced in the relationship with the employer, with the society in its complexity and with the family and society of origin.

The existence of prejudices based on gender in society and labour market are largely detected in all counties, and for this reason for the target group "the gender dimension creates an extra difficulty

(…) first because there is an issue with corporate culture, which is connected with social culture" (Interview, GR_IS_01).

Several interviewees who normally interact with employers, such as staff of employment centers and trainers, report employers' prejudices and preconceptions in hiring foreigners. For a migrant, the "first step", the initial connection, is always the most difficult. As reported "there are companies that show a strong bias against foreign nationality, so they still use discrimination when they have to select and enter a migrant for an intership. Later, when they meet the person, they change their mind, but the initial approach is one of distrust and prejudice" (Focus group, IT_FG_02). Prejudices are in some cases addressed to the entire migrant population, whereas in some other cases they only concern certain minority groups. As reported in a focus group:

"Employers have announced that they'd like to employ refugees, but when it turned out that they are gypsies, they withdrew" (Member of an association for migrants, HU_FG_01).

A great need to "raise awareness among employers (…) some are reluctant to hire veiled women in front of the public. (Interview, SP_IS_03)

Prejudices against migrants and minorities (e.g. Roma, North African) tend to be very strong for job positions involving the entry/presence of the worker into the employers' house. Some interviewees reported prejudices towards foreigners on the part of clients or co-workers. In these cases, the employer may prefer not to hire certain people not because he or she considers the prejudices founded, but to avoid conflictual situations in the workplace. Prejudices of colleagues and chiefs of staff can deeply affect the well-being and the success of the integration process, also in the case of internships. The work environment is important: if the boss or the colleagues do not welcome or discriminate against the woman, she can easily quit, as reported by a member of a charity association that declared "there is a lot of mistrust, they (the women) don't dare to stay for the trial day because they hear a lot of bad things". (Focus group, SP_FG_01). This fact is testimony to the persistence of a low social sensitivity toward diversity (SP_FG_02).

Another very common stereotype in all the territories studied is related to the role of migrant women in the labour market. According to several respondents (staff of employment services and trainers, NGOs operators, women themselves), migrant women are very often considered as "naturally"

dedicated to caring and cleaning, (Interview, HU_IS_02). These prejudices negatively impact access to other work opportunities and can be followed by the tendency of VET providers and employment centers to suggest only certain typologies of training and select pre-determined categories of job positions. This widespread belief also influences the expectations, ambitions, and aspirations of women, who may convince themselves that they are unable to perform any task other than caring and cleaning. Finally, prejudices can also be unintentional: organisations, stakeholders and VET providers sometimes label women as frail and not as skill-bearers (Focus group, FG_IT_01) and offer them underqualified jobs that do not fit their skills because they assume that they need support and assistance.

Finally, it is interesting to quote also the opinion of one of the interviewees, that declared that "there are prejudice also against NGOs, because we are the middle man (...) with the narrative developed around migration, organizations are now part of the enemy (...) there are bad reactions against lawyers of the organization, and social worker". (Interview, GR_IS_01).

- **Permanent job sectors and time schedule**

According to the inteviews, in all countries TCNs are more likely hired in manual and non skilled jobs, but this is not the only limit that has been detected. As said, some occupational sectors are highly feminized and are considered as "naturally suitable" for migrant women.

Moreover, the segmentation of the labour market excludes migrant women from given sectors. In all countries, there are economic sectors (most of them regarding the so-called STEM area and IT profiles) where the demand for professionals is high, prospects of career development are concrete, and the wage is on average high. Research quoted by some of the experts that took part in the survey shows that the percentage of women in these sectors is significantly lower than men. This trend affects all women regardless of their nationality. The difficulties faced by migrant women when applying for these qualified jobs (STEM area and IT profiles) are raised further by the intersection of prejudices and the overlap of several personal barriers described in the previous paragraphs. Our research identifies multiple limitations: refugees and migrants in general are strongly influenced by their belonging community and family that may force them to apply in traditional sectors and this attitude discourages employers to hire women, even when they have the most suitable profile. A meaningful example is provided by a trainer of a high educational training program on computer

science, who declared the following "last year, at the end of the course, we had two very valid girls. They sent their CVs for positions that fit them perfectly, but they have not even been contacted for an interview" (Focus group, GR_FG_02).

High and medium qualified positions in the STEM and IT area are not the only jobs that are affected by stereotypes. Alongside sectors that are inaccessible to women, migrants and refugees, there are other sectors that are commonly identified as the "natural" setting for migrant/asylum seekers or refugees. These include cleaning, domestic work and care: sectors that are seen as very "feminine" in a more general sense and suitable for migrant women. As emerged, the prevailing trend sees employers contact Employment Centres asking for women for notably stereotyped open positions.

The femininization of some sectors is often supported by migrant men, as they are keen to accept that their wives work in places where they "meet women, work with women" (Focus group, HU_GF_01). This attitude also involves self-employment, such as, for example, the beauty industry.

It is noteworthyhe that the concept of feminization of certain sectors also depends on culture: "the culture shock is abysmal (…) jobs that are typically feminised here (in Europe) may not even be that are typically feminized in Africa" (Interview, SP_IS_05).

Difficulties are not only related to the openness or closeness of certain sectors and it's not just a matter of choices and possibility for women to fit into job positions that are consistent with their qualifications and expectations. Domestic and care work are very precarious sectors in terms of working conditions. In essence, this means that besides personal choices, women are more likely to be employed in sectors distinguished by low salaries and unsecure conditions.

Interviews with VET providers underlined an additional effect of the gendered division of sectors. According to their experience, companies and employers are more likely to collaborate with VET providers that offer specialized scientific or technical courses, mostly linked with computer science, IT and technology, or devoted to the use of industry or logistic machinery. In most of these courses the presence of women is low, and this implies fewer possible contacts and fewer networks of VET providers useful for migrant women.

An additional problem is the difficulty for many women to meet the requests of the labour market in terms of working hours, schedule and frequency of work. First of all, it is noticeable the lack, in all sectors, of a sufficient level of flexibility in the organization of the working hours and the limited availability of part-time jobs. Very often, it is impossible for women that have children or family duties to satisfy the requirements of the employers. In some instances, this is strictly linked with the typology of service provided (e.g.. tourism, restaurants). In others, it is linked with the organization of the company and the tendency to have fixed working hours. An additional issue is the overall detected presence of contracts that do not foresee a fixed amount of weekly working hours, mostly applied in cleaning, restaurants and care services, sectors where the presence of women is very high. This kind of contract has several effects: normally the woman works less than a full time job and she cannot be sure about her monthly income.

- **Inadequate services**

Each territory has its own given characteristics and offers or lacks certain services (transportation, public housing, centers for employment, health - social and care assistance). Gaps in this sense have a negative impact upon everyone, native population included. Nevertheless, for migrant women, the gaps in service provision can have more severe consequences, as they are intertwined with personal barriers. Among these, we mention:

  o lack of transportation, resulting in the need to find a job in a narrow radius for women, as the vast majority do not have a drivers license;

  o lack of staff of social services trained on interculturality, leading to difficulties in the relationship of help;

  o lack of skilled staff dealing with labour market integration of migrant women, resulting in the inability to mediate with the employer when needed.

  o lack of services in rural areas due to fewer resources and funds than major cities and less access to projects and networks implying the impossibility for women to access information (also due to the impossibility to move easily to other territories/city);

  o lack of houses at affordable prices that are not just temporary solutions forces women to allocate a high share of their income to pay rent. The concerns this situation generates

prevent women from focusing on their personal growth; moreover, the difficulty in finding housing in certain places does not allow women to apply for given job positions. This issue also impacts attendance at trainings given the impossibility to enroll or ensure continuity. In some cases, an additional problem is related to the involvement of recipients in public housing programs. In most cases, this situation does not allow women to leave the apartment and move to a different place for a pre-defined timeframe (e.g. summer season). This rule has very severe consequences in countries where seasonal jobs are available (tourism, agriculture);

o lack of collaboration between services or offices, in charge of different aspect of the person's life. Several examples have been mentioned, in some countries this barrier is reinforced by rules and laws that strictly define responsabilties and right for foreingner: "(TCN integration) it doesn't get to us becase we are dealing with labour issues only. It is a home affairs issue" (Interview, HU_IS_05);

o difficulty or impossibility to work directly with foreigners in Hungary, where Employment Deparments are not legally allowed to wirk directly with them. (Interview, HU_IS_01)

- **Reception centres, post-acceptance phase and social inclusion**

According to national and international legislation, asylum seekers and refugees have access, at least for a certain period, to reception centers and to the national integration systems. According to some operators working in employment services, the role played by these services is significant. Indeed, implementing actions to increase employability and to enhance asylum seekers and refugees' skills from the very beginning is fundamental. "The first contact is very important (…) to unlock and search your way (…) to feel better and understand how to move on" (Focus group, GR_FG_01). As reported by a representative of the Institute of Labour in Greece "It is important to encourage refugees to enter, as soon as possible, the labour market integration processes (…) People were somehow trapped (in places) that catered to their need of survival, but the parts of social and occupational integration followed a lot later and were quite fragmented" (Interview, GR_IS_02). Reception centers play, indeed, a twofold role, according to interview: "reception phase is the most critical and delicate one" (Focus group, IT_FG_01). On the one hand, reception centers or local associations (including volunteers) provide language courses, contribute to rendering recipients familiar with the culture and

habits of the hosting territory, thus facilitating social inclusion and integration; on the other hand, operators have a privileged point of view of the needs, skills, weaknesses and capabilities of recipients. All this information, as already mentioned, is very important to properly orient recipients towards the labor market.

Unfortunately, integration pathways are often project-based (with no certainty of continuity over time) and vary significantly from country to country. On top of this, support services are very patchy and vary significantly within the same territory. Very differentiated situations in terms of support and approaches make it impossible to trace common trends and challenges.

Difficulties in terms of integration increase when the hosting period in the reception centers ends. Indeed, particularly in the most vulnerable cases, recipients may not have always achieved an adequate level of autonomy. Specific support services addressed to migrant women are absent or very limited, and failure to support them when they exit the reception center increases the risks of exclusion and poverty. On top of this, very often, all the information on competencies and skills of recipients collected by reception operators during the women's stay in the centers gets lost.

- **Project- based intervention and lack of long-term integration policies**

Most respondents mention the absence of continuous and stable integration policies and interventions. Interventions always appear to be based on projects of limited duration. Although policies that have been active for many years are being renewed from time to time, a high level of uncertainty hinders the work.

"Short term programs do not leave anything on the environment (…) nothing stable can be used by others after" (Interview, GR_IS_02)

4.2. Possible strategies to overcome barriers for the civil society organization, VET providers, Public Employment Services

The following proposals include both actions that have already been experimented by some stakeholders in selected countries as well as project ideas. Ad hoc strategies will need to be designed to implement these proposals on a wide scale.

I.   Make societies and social service providers aware of the difficulties faced by migrant women:

o   increase the use of foreign languages by public servants in public offices

o   create an office or a division in every Public Employment Service office dedicated to supporting migrant women specifically

o   include mediators in key interviews/meetings with social service providers

o   increase opportunities of interaction of migrant women with the hosting territory and create bonds with the community through ad hoc initiatives ("leisure community programmes", events)

o   lengthen the time horizon for activating and supporting integration policies. "An important footprint (of the project) would be to create a rather stable pole of employment policies institutionally supported" (Interview, GR_IS_02)

o   promote inclusion as a bilateral process, implying that every person plays a role with the different stakeholders

o   involve volunteers in interaction activities and increase volunteer opportunities, given the "inclination of volunteers to build bridges and enhance social cohesion" (Interview, PO_IS_03)

II. Involve employers in the definition of employment strategies and increase their knowledge on migrant women

o   use effective communication strategies to include migrant women in specific projects (i.e. paid internships) and underline the connected social and economic benefits, "as companies are mainly focused on productivity and profitability" (IT_FG_02)

- o increase companies' awareness of their role in the integration process and increase the visibility of successful integration stories (i.e. storytelling of positive corporate experience and inclusion)

- o make employers aware in advance of the needs, personal and external barriers, and skills of migrant women. As reported "employers, even the most sensitive ones, hardly think about the conception of enlarged society" (Focus group, IT_FG_01)

- o organize ad hoc trainings for employers on key topics, such as interculturality, motherhood and gender roles, equality policies, discrimination, illegality and violation of rights

- o work locally with companies so as to promote a new cultural approach, as "it is essential to work hard on a deep cultural change, that proves how those women can bring values and benefit for the companies" (Focus group, FG_IT_01)

- o make sure that mediation services are provided in case of need in all workplaces

- o propose "corporate dinners" - companies meet job seekers during thematic events dedicated to getting to know each other

- o help the migrant (provide support, occasion of meeting and mediation) to do the "first step" and enter and meet companies, expecially those who have an initial approach of distrust and prejudice;

III. Increase the understanding of the context by migrant women

- o organize trainings on cultural aspects, legal issues, local customs

- o organize workshops on work ethic and behaviour, by highlighting differences across job sectors

- o organize trainings on labour rights, discrimination and violence

- o organize trainings on equity policies and social services delivered in the local territories

- o develop a dissemination plan for the activities or vocational training available, broadcasts

- o organize language courses also based on "immediate learning methodologies" (joint programmes between language teachers and technical skills teachers)

o   organize trainings on how to run a business, open to the participation of both migrants and natives, and provide follow-up for advice in addition to offices and spaces for starting up the business

IV.   Foster inclusion for mothers

o   cooperate with organisations providing childcare that operate near the place of work/training so as to systematically foresee caring for children during classes/work

V.   Develop a trustful relationship with women and provide guidance for labour integration

o   adapt the intervention to each case: interventions should be "tailor-made" and "personalized"

o   provide an initial personalized needs assessment and define an individualized path of work integration based on a balance between emergency needs/aspirations and expectations

o   do not feed unrealistic expectations

o   schedule an adequate amount of time, when the woman has no family duties (morning or school time), to give her the chance to open up. Women, in fact, do not need support that differs deeply from other categories, but "the difference is qualitative (...) related mostly to time (...) because women need more time (...) if a regular counseling of a 25 year-old is 3 sessions, usually for a women it is 5" (Focus group, GR_F1_01)

o   schedule dedicated guidance in safe and accessible places

o   define a holistic and integrated approach (including socio and psychological support)

o   be ready to "deal with trauma to get them (refugee women) ready for the labor market" (Focus Group, HU_FG_01);

o   collect women's social integration history (interests, contact, priorities)

o   provide follow-up meetings to see if the needs, desires, and expectations have changed. As needs are difficult to detect for the long-term, define a flexible pathway for the future

o   be aware of the importance for trainers or staff members of Public Employment Services to pose the right questions and keep an open and constant interaction or channel of communication with the woman

- o be aware that the sex of the counsellor could play a role (often, a female is more adequate)

- o use group meetings (exchanges with other women in meetings facilitated by a counsellor turns out to be very significant and valid) for assessing skills and capacities and for introducing the possibilities/constraints of the labour market

VI. Help women to strengthen common bonds and connect to each other to provide mutual help

- o organize meetings with the same group to "create a sense of community (…) have stronger need to come in a group (…) they feel more secure and they bonded" (Focus group, GR_F1_01).

- o create "job clubs" - regular meetings where unemployed persons can speak about their problems

- o organize "virtual event" where companies that offer jobs and job seekers converge.

VII. Mediate with the women's social, family and community of belonging

- o find a way to engage women in activities that can foster their empowerment: "introduce them (Afghan women) to European things slowly" (Focus Group, HU_FG_01)

VIII. Help to stand up against violation and illegality

- o create an awareness campaign of the effects of exploitation of migrants on their life and on the society as a whole

- o prepare recipients to work legally by knowing their rights and what to ask before accepting a job position

- o define who can be addressed in case of violations of rights and involve them as stakeholders

- o teach women how to check job offers, as they need to be also "fair" and underline that quantity does not mean necessarily quality. Raise awareness on the topic with the help of mediators.

During the interviews, names of projects and manuals dealing with some of the project's themes were also collected.

o INE-GSEE - Project IRefSos (active vocational and career guidance) https://irefsos.oaed.gr/?page_id=24820

o INE-GSEE and EOPPEP (list of job descriptions - work guidance) https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/

o I.E.S. AUGUSTO GONZALES - (Entrepreneuership Classroom) https://www.iesaglinares.com/

o Hungary Ministry of the Interior - FETE PROGRAM (work inclusion) https://fete.hu/

o Artemisszió - FEMTALKs (gender inclusion) https://platform.femtalksforum.eu/stories/85

o Renovar a Mouraria - ProfCom (integration) https://www.renovaramouraria.pt/

o Ariadna Network (labour integration supportive schemes for asylum seekers in reception centres) - https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practice/red-ariadna-ariadna-network_en

4.3 Skills

Skills needed in the labour market

Information about the skills needed to successfully enroll in training and access the labour market have been collected through the survey and interviews with staff members of Public Employment Services. Respondents were asked to weigh the relevance of a set of skills which are deemed necessary to achieve the full integration of migrant women into the labour market. Based on the data collected, language is considered as the most relevant skill and a high percentage of respondents (88%) consider effective communication relevant. However, the capacity to speak is in their view far more relevant than the capacity to write: 50% of the survey respondents consider writing not very relevant, while speaking is considered a relevant skill by 82.4% of respondents.

The vast majority of respondents consider the following skills far less important: promoting, selling and purchasing to customers, running administrative tasks and allocating and controlling resources, mathematical and technological skills, the capacity to create and edit digital content, communication and collaboration through digital technologies, and media and information literacy.

Respondents value as positive: a certain degree of self-confidence in decision making, self-management, leadership and organization skills. However, in accordance with the findings of the

interviews, the survey underlines the higher importance of: capacity to work in a team, having a positive attitude, being motivated, flexibility, creativity, commitment, proactivity and a dynamic, empathetic and curious character. Having critical thinking and problem-solving capacities is also regarded as valuable, especially for those who work in logistic or manual work.

One important mention goes to IT skills that are considered very helpful for entering the labour market, as many job vacancies regard this field.

Productivity plays an important role, but it is very strictly correlated to the capacity to understand others and express needs, and also very linked with the possibility to find a job that matches the capacity and previous experience of women.

Possible causes of skill gaps

As concerns technical skills, the educational experience of women in their country of origin and in any transit country plays a key role. If they have a basic education, it is likely that their integration pathway will be smoother. Nevertheless, once they settle in the country of destination, they can still experience difficulties. This may be due to a number of factors: the absence of courses that meet the needs of the labour market or the woman's aspirations, or the woman's inability to take part in training opportunities. Half of the survey respondents believe that the economic barrier, i.e., lack of resources on the part of the woman, is a determining factor. Several stakeholders agree with this: women have in most cases no other opportunity but to choose training that is free of charge. Normally, the level of training is basic and they are standardized. More professional and specific training are normally costly. The economic instability of women plays a double role: they may have to give up the idea of participating because they cannot afford the cost of training or, when they manage to participate, attendance may be negatively influenced by the need to work to sustain themselves and their families.

Effects of skill gaps

According to the survey respondents and interviews, skill gaps have effects at different levels.

As concerns the professional level, women face more challenges in entering or remaining in the job market. When they succeed in obtaining a job, their productivity may be lower and performance may be less effective and efficient, because they do not exploit their potential to the fullest and have fewer chances to have professional development when compared to men.

Moreover, when compared to men, women earn lower wages, are more likely to face situations of precariousness and experience such bad conditions that some speak about "slavery", tend to become dependent upon social assistance or other charity support and are often forced into passivity and dependence on free services that may in some cases not even meet their real needs.

As concerns the social and personal level, women's social mobility remains low if skill gaps are not closed. Moreover, there is the risk that a woman, seeing that her productivity is lower or that she is facing difficulties, can lose her self-confidence at work.

Skill gaps come along with isolation, loneliness, exclusion, vulnerability, low self-esteem, frustration, demotivation, and fixation in the closed circle of family life. She can thus be trapped in a circle - a trap of exclusion, that produces difficulty in socio-professional integration and reduced psychosocial and work integration. As stated by a member of an association supporting women: "Skill gaps create a further discouragement within an already very discouraging system".

Some additional effects regard the lack of equal opportunities in participating in EU projects because migrant women often lack basic skills.

When asked about the future development of skill gaps, 20 out of 91 respondents to the survey declared they do not know how the trend will go, 19 think that they will decrease, 33 reckon they will increase, and 5 suggest that they will remain the same. As a general overview, most respondents foresee a progressive increase in skills gap over the next future.

Skill assessment

The research collected quite congruous opinions on the methodologies to be applied for assessing women's skills and on the importance for the professionals that implement these methodologies to be updated.

Great importance was given by respondents to recognising women's individuality. This implies two aspects:

o   the need to provide for individualized assessments;

o   the need to find a compromise between an assessment that should be standardised and replicable on the one hand, and flexibility so as to adjust to women's needs, on the other hand.

Prioritizing personal skills does not clash with the need to find objective tests of evaluation that can be used to assess technical and practical skills, as well as communication skills. According to the research, it is possible to use general skill diagnostic questionnaires and specific skill validation exercises. To be more aligned with women's needs, at least part of the assessments could be carried out orally, as many women are not endowed with the required writing skills.

As mentioned by one organization taking part in the survey,

"The certification process of skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts enhances the learning that occurs in one's daily life unintentionally; it is daily experiences at work, at home or in free time, and not only in formal classroom training contexts, which teach us the most precious thing we know. These processes, which are not strictly training, allow you to explain and become aware of your skills so as to achieve awareness of what you are capable of doing, beyond the professional sphere".

(Italy)

The importance of social skills is highlighted by this sentence:

"Often due to the nature of the job, informal skills linked to knowledge of the culture and customs of the host population are criteria for the selection of the candidate"

(Hungary)

A due amount of time should be dedicated to the assessment of needs of migrant women and follow-up meetings should be planned in advance.

Indeed, needs assessment should be a continuous process, which cannot be fulfilled face-to-face during few hourly meetings: it should take place also during the working hours over time. Besides interviews, capacities ought to be evaluated also during workshops or internships, where technicians identify along with the candidate the competencies and skills thanks to "observation in practice".

Moreover, the assessment is not done only by one person, but it is a collective action, carried out by a group of people dealing with women. Their collective feedback is very important and it presupposes a holistic approach, involving also psychological support (which enables the evaluation of whether the user is emotionally able to seek a job). As reported by a key member of the Refugees Council in Greece: "it is very important to have different support from different specialties and from many

aspects (...), it cannot work without the collaboration of experts (...) for any refugees, but for women it is even more complicated" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

The assessment of skills is a crucial moment for achieving a successful career and training path that needs to be performed by competent people endowed with the needed tools. In this respect, consulting existing manuals, guides and handbooks at European level is strongly encouraged.

Tools to improve skills and competencies

According to the research, all the countries studied lack effective work integration policies providing internships and job placement support for asylum seekers or refugees. Migrant women can benefit from very limited initiatives or projects and policies that were not designed for them specifically but address broader categories of recipients, such as: single women, unemployed or low-income people. Interviewees shed light on two very sensitive issues to consider in the process of upgrading of the skills of migrant women:

- o   the importance of monitoring the whole process (beyond the type of support);

- o   the need to remunerate the activities.

Projects and integration policies should take these needs into consideration and allocate the needed funds. Women's remuneration could eventually be supported - entirely or partially - by the employer in the case of internships.

Possible interventions aimed at supporting migrant women include the following:

- • Internships

Internships are positively viewed by the vast majority of the stakeholders (women, VET providers, and respondents to the survey) as an opportunity to enhance the skills of migrant women. Women can learn and enhance soft, social, and technical skills, and at the same time they can show their capacities. In fact, internships are opportunities for the mentor, trainer, job coach, or person in charge of helping women to identify women's strengths and weaknesses and define better strategies to improve skills.

It is worth mentioning that there are not in-between opinions on the value of internships: as said, the vast majority of respondents consider them very effective, some not at all.

The possibility and characteristics of internships vary from country to country based on the regulations that define their terms. In Italy, for example, several respondents underlined that asylum seekers and refugees are not included among the "vulnerable" categories of recipients by any kind of law and this limits the possibilities of providing paid internships. In particular, they are systematically excluded from an important programme, namely "Garanzia Giovani," that would allow them to access a potentially very useful internship program.

Personal motivation is a pre-requisite. Forced internships don't ever turn into real work opportunities, nor effective work experiences according to the survey respondents.

- Volunteering in an organization

It could potentially provide the opportunity to enhance soft and social skills is considered less effective because it provides a less professional setting when compared to a work environment.

Despite this, several respondents highlight the importance of trust relationships that a volunteer environment may nourish. In fact, this setting is usually more open and attentive to social inclusion and may pave the way for the creation of support networks.

- Monitoring and peer-to-peer

According to respondents, mentoring and peer-to-peer activities have, on average, a lower impact. Noteworthy, though, is that none of the respondents believe that they are not effective at all. In many cases, their contribution can be seen as additional to other major interventions. The role of the mentor can vary, he/she is "somebody that follows you to enter labour market and after", "someone who replaces the supportive environment" (Interview, IT_IS_02) or a "bridge" between the person and the society, with the role to let her feel "safe" (Focus group, PO_F01_VET). In any case, mentoring is "very important in order to keep the disadvantaged target group involved in training sessions" (Focus groups, HU_FG_02).

- Vocational training

This tool is also rated as very effective by the vast majority of respondents.

Three aspects emerged as particularly relevant: first, the characteristics of training in terms of scopes and aims; second, possible risk factors or negative elements that can compromise the success of the intervention and, finally, inspiring practices.

Scope and aims

The primary scope of a training is to enforce competencies that a person already has or to provide new ones. The reasons to embrace training may seem obvious: to learn something. But determining why a person wants to attend the training and why the VET provider/staff member/operator that is taking care of the work integration of the subject proposes the training is a fundamental. "Motivation is something that is really significant (...) to deconstruct and find the factors enhancing the motivations would be of great help" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Motivations in fact play a very important role at different stages: at the very beginning when a person decides to start a course, and during the training, when difficulties may show up. As underlined, even if it is difficult, objective barriers (external and personal) affecting women can be removed, but practical solutions (e.g. childcare services) are not enough if the person is not sufficiently motivated. A reflection on the purpose of a certain training by the staff is needed for different reasons: to avoid falling into prejudices and standardization and to better individualize the needs of women.

Additional, but not less important, objectives can be identified. A training can strengthen the coherence of the CV with career objectives, especially when all the qualifications and work experiences mentioned were accomplished abroad.

Attending a training has then also a positive impact on wellbeing, and this effect is even more relevant when somebody is facing a difficult time, isolation or lack of motivation as "it forces the person to get up and have a routine" (Focus group, IT_FG_03).

Training programs also fulfill a social role: they are an occasion to meet and know people and build a network that can turn out to be helpful at a personal and professional level. Once again, the importance of being in a group is emphasized "they are in a team and in a framework with exchanges of ideas, it gives them confidence and enhances their self-esteem" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Critical issues

Standardized training does not match the needs of migrant women. As reported by a member of an international organization "refugees cannot be treated in a uniform way: age, education, cultural background. These groups should be broken up" but often "employment policies offer forced training course that do not turn into real opportunities of work experience" (Focus group, FG_IT_01).

Training programs are often spot interventions, related to a certain project or time-limited policies and hence lack continuity. This aspect, which is regarded as particularly relevant by respondents, can be traced back to the lack of systematized integration processes.

Lack of continuity is also due to financial constraints. Free of charge training initiatives and integration processes largely depend on the availability of funds. The necessity to collect funds limit the flexibility to decide in autonomy topics, fees, schedule. As mentioned by a VET provider, "we completely follow the instruction from the funding organization" (Focus group, PO_F01_VET).

Some VET providers offer very useful courses, but since they are not for free they are not affordable for migrant women.

VET providers interviewed highlighted the low attendance and high dropout rates registered by refugees, especially women (GR_IH_02). As mentioned, "there are some programs that invite people assuming a priori (...), the potential situation of the person" (GR_IS_02).

A crucial issue is the absence of the state and state-led institutions, as a cause of the lack of systematic official policies for integration. Project based intevention, lack of reseources, lack of continuity are all deeply influenced by this gap on leading by the state.

Possible strategies and good practices

Some possible strategies and inspiring practices presuppose the involvement of women and the adoption of an individualized, integrated, flexible and holistic approach that draws on the potential of the group.

As reported by several stakeholders, a general good practice is to involve women not just as beneficiaries but also as active contributors. This pillar should be a "light" applicated at each stage (training definition, training choice, training development). Different tools can be applied: take into consideration the needs of women, monitor the activities through the collection of their opinion and feedback, and organize group checking. Positive feedback on promoting "active career guidance" where the woman is the protagonist of the activation of training and a "group counseling process" have been collected by the Institute of Labour GSEE (Interview, GR_IS_02) during a recent project .

As concerns individualized paths, several steps can be taken. At the very beginning it is important to provide training that "meets the needs of the applicant" (Focus group, HU_FG_01), with a feasible timetable and setting. This means that training is scheduled while children are at school, avoiding

evenings and weekends. Moreover, the place should be easy to reach with public transportation. Additionally, it is important to involve mediators to make the woman feel safe and welcomed (i.e. for the recruiting and registration processes).

A holistic approach that takes into consideration the social and psychological well-being of women is thus once again necessary to prevent a drop in motivation and increased frustration on the part of women. To reach this scope, "a complex teamwork, with many actors working together, can make a real impact" (Focus group, HU_FG_01). It means, professionals, coordinating and working together to better address the need, building a "network for the case", as we will see later on in this report.

Since participants in training form a group, it is important to find a balance between the needs of the "class" and those of the person. Taking into consideration the class as a community may help to avoid problems and to harness the unexploited potential of the group. A group works as a network that can play a role in enforcing transferable skills and increase engagement and commitment. As reported, the group contributes to "moving together towards a common goal" (GR_IS_02) and, according to some interviews, it works better "for those who have no experience, neither of work, nor of work culture". Women, when in a group, can "understand that they are not alone, not only as refugee women in a foreign society but also as persons who have never worked but are endowed with skills (…) they all have some skills and it is different when the group tells it to the woman" (Focus group, FG_GR_01).

The group is as important as the person, and it can significantly affect the success of training. Groups can be homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of needs, time availability, and occupational status. A homogenous group provides a safer environment, whereas exchanges and the possibility to meet new people and enlarge one's network are higher in heterogeneous groups. A specific mention goes to group homogeneity for sex: according to the research, for some women, it is better to attend courses where men are not included to feel more comfortable. Despite the willingness of women, attendance can be compromised by husbands who may not allow them to attend. Once again, this information is very significant and can be collected only by dedicating due time to listening to women's needs through dedicated, individualized meetings.

As concerns the method, in terms of organization of the activities and teaching, flexibility and non-standard interventions are essential.

To better suit the beneficiaries, it is possible to take into account actions in the training initiative that are more familiar to women and integrate them into the learning process. It is thus important to encourage experiential activities with the use of practical tools. "(...) when people spend a long time in training and learning procedures they may lose interest and become disheartened. It is important to develop parallel labour market integration procedures (...) to foster mobilization" (Interview, GR_IS_02).

Flexibility can be considered in terms of duration and scheduling, but also in terms of procedure. "This is a new culture in the field of interventions and soft skill workshops (...) the idea being to finish an action before going on to the next one is not valid (...)to enable the population to remain active, multiple interventions are needed, changing the place and maybe the time" (Interview, GR_IS_02).

Finally, respondents suggested two specific strategies to be adopted by employers.

The first one is to develop "ad hoc courses (...) created for a specific reason (...) When an employer offers 5 job position to do this thing, we form a class where women go for 10 intensive days (...) to learn the basic work of the particular work environment" (Focus group, GR_FG_02). The discussion on the topic to cover is done at the beginning with the employer to better address the needs.

Providers must be highly flexible in terms of resources, time availability and trainers, but, according to respondents, they can in this way provide a concrete and effective support.

Considering internships very close to training, one respondent suggested developing a project where companies become trainers (Survey).

Finally, in recent years, many people started to reconsider the contribution of vocational training and they sometimes believe that training initiatives are more convenient than university as they are faster and offer more job opportunities. This new attitude towards vocational training may open up new opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.

4.4.   Entrepreneurship and self-employment

The research included collecting information on the ability, possibility and willingness of migrant women to embark on new entrepreneurial initiatives and self-employment. Several interviews reported the desire of migrant women to open their own business or to develop other kinds of activities in all countries involved in the research. This desire is shared by both women that had their own business in the country of origin and women with no previous experience of self-employment.

Many women would rather be self-employed because:

- they used to do it in the country of origin (mostly working in markets and local shops. Those activities are, indeed, often run by women) and they are willing to do the same activities in Europe. For migrants, it is likely to "do not know the documentation (needed) and get into trouble, for examples with their taxes (Focus group, PO_F01_VET);

- they consider it a way to stay with the family during the day, because they can decide how, where and how long to work;

- they see it as a very effective way of empowerment and a method to solve the difficulty of finding employment.

Most of them think that the "beauty industry" and "local markets" or "small business on the street" are the sectors that fit them better and where they are more willing to enter.

Several staff members of Public Employment Services and VET providers underline how, to successfully run a business, women should:

- know the "rules" and mindset of the country and of the sector they are entering. This implies a sound knowledge of the bureaucracy and of the laws that regulate businesses, but also a set of information on how certain activities are culturally accepted in the hosting country

- have a net of possible customers and supporters, both native and not.

Possible objective obstacles include the following:

- some activities (e.g. hairdresser on the street, embroidery, street vendor) do not exist or are not requested (anymore) in Europe, or are less widespread, very strictly regulated or forbidden by law;

- at different levels, society is not always open to those activities: resistance of the hosting community is in some contexts rather strong.

It is hard to understand how migrant women can collect information on how to proceed in the realization of their project of self-employment. There are neither standardized, nor defined paths that help women achieve this desire. In some cases, they ask for help from the migrant association they are in contact with (Focus group, GR_FG_01). None of the entities involved in the research offer

direct support specifically to migrant women interested in starting up their own business. However, several institutions provide for some support:

- some higher educational training institutes working on IT and computer science provide business classes to all the students;

- two associations offer help to develop a business plan on a volunteer basis;

- IOM developed a program of job counseling in Greece based on 3 pillars: profiling, job support providing job offers, entrepreneurship support;

- some associations support for the formalities of incorporation and advice on legal form;

- some associations give advice on grants and subsidies.

There are also projects dedicated to self-employment for broader categories (youth, women) that are accessible to migrant women. However, often the level of awareness and preparation required to participate and successfully attend the training are very high and hence out of reach of the migrant women.

5. Cooperation and Networking

The research **also aimed** to examine **the level of cooperation and collaboration** among the concerned stakeholders **and** verify **the** existence **of networks, both formal and informal.**

Country variations are significant, due to **the different roles played by** each of the respondents and the extremely **diverse settings.**

On**e common factor seems to be the "chaos" that reigns in the management of services for** refugees**, both at the institutional and non-institutional levels**. As explained by one of the founders of a Greek network, created to sustain refugees: "Cooperating in the refugee (sector) with various bodies is a terrible confusion (...) zero coordination" (GR_IS_05). The state, according to several stakeholders, plays a crucial role and the absence of long-term policies (a trend already mentioned about integration and here enlarged to the whole process of hosting asylum seekers and refugees) results in a lack of systemization, all over detected as a relevant need for the development of networks.

Nevertheless, in all the countries studied there are examples of cooperation between actors, public and private, including social economy organisations, that recognize the value and benefit of acting together, even though several barriers hinder a fruitful collaboration.

At the base, a "culture of cooperation between bodies is (...) essential" (GR_IS_05) though it is sometimes lacking. A relevant share of stakeholders consider networking a very resource-consuming activity, to be more effective, it would be very helpful to have "an external intervention, a specific project that someone else makes the framework for you and gives you money" (GR_IS_05). In the cases where there is a project that helps to develop the network, the experiences seem to be more positive, even if, once again, the fact that they are time-limited is the main obstacle, and often "there is nothing left after the program (...) as soon as the framework is over the cooperation disappears" (IT_IS_02).

According to the research, it is more common to collaborate with one/two entities than to take part in a large and structured network. With regard to the stakeholders involved, contacts emerged between:

- employment services and reception center operators. This occurs in particular when it is necessary to take care of compulsory paperwork or register people for certain services. In this case, in fact, the operators take charge of communicating to the employment agency the list of names of people who, for example, need to be registered on the list of unemployed;
- employment centers and employers that offer job positions. In Spain, this collaboration is lined with the role of "prospector"; a person that is in charge of visiting companies to publicize the employment services;
- employment services, to exchange information about job offers;
- public employment services and organizations offering support and foreign offices, prefectures, labour inspectorate;
- VET providers and operators of housing services for asylum seekers or social assistants who are helping the person in his or her integration process. Usually, it seems that it is the latter who contacts those who provide training after selecting possible courses together with the person;

- VET providers and organizations specialized in assisting women. According to one VET provider "we need support or guidance from who usually works with victims of gender based violence to manage better some cases (...)" (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Based on **the interviews, systematized procedures for enhancing** collaboration are very rare. For example, in one of the territorial cases reported, the collaboration with "companies is a non-formalized one, there are some deep informal relationships with companies that over time have always been willing to work together to accomplish certain objectives (...). In some cases, real formal agreements are signed (...) with the business that seems to have the right profile to welcome the target effectively" (Focus group, IT_FG_02).

5.1   Networking

The research underlined the existence of different kinds **of networks that** involve **stakeholders** and differ in terms of scope, typologies of participants, strategies, and stability over time. For the sake of simplicity, we grouped them into three major categories, on the basis of **their purposes and characteristics. In some cases, they overlap and not all the characteristics of a certain typology are necessarily met. The** existence of multiple and overlapping networks is also linked with the fact that **the** final beneficiaries **of the research** "deal **with different networks horizontally** (IT_FG_02) **a**s they are **related** both **to migration and gender issues. T**heir "needs, or problems" are **thus discussed at different levels and sometimes w**ithin **different network**s; in many territories there are indeed distinct groups working either to empower women or to support migrants.

Network for the "case"

This type of **network provid**es social support. Quite often local government, local institutions or social systems **foresee it to "solve a case", which may be a person or a family facing integration or social problems, often defined as "fragile or vulnerable". At the center of the network** there are the **needs and issues that the beneficiary is facing and** the leader or facilitator of this network is normally the social assistant. T**he network involves social service providers, VET providers, volunteers, operators, associations or organizations supporting the person, who collaborate in order to solve the problem or smooth the integration process**: "W**e work together a lot, everyone covers different

parts of integration, our services build on each other" (Member of association, Focus group, HU_FG_01). The for-profit sector seems not to be directly involved in these types of networks.

Once the network provides the necessary support or the resources cease to exist, it often disappears. When a formal network designed to assist persons in need either does not exist, or it does, but it is not very effective, an informal network of assistance may develop spontaneously. Normally, this latter includes personal contacts of the person, informal civil society organizations, activists, or nonprofit organizations.

Key features:

- It improves the quality of assistance provided to the person

- The same network can take care of different situations concerning distinct persons in need

- It can adjust to the evolving needs of the beneficiary

- These networks are rather common in urban contexts, less in rural and remote areas where resources and services are lacking

Network gathering diverse typologies of organizations for a common scope

This type of network is normally comprised of diverse organisations who come together, mostly informally, to solve urgent and quite widespread issues. An additional driver may be the willingness of actors working in the same area to cooperate so as to improve the effectiveness of their interventions (e.g. housing, homelessness, assistance to refugees). No specific networks linked to job inclusion specifically have been identified by this research. This type of network normally addresses multiple challenges and tends to have a broad approach. It may involve international organizations, civil society actors, VET providers, (public) employment services and social economy organizations.

Key features

- Formal and informal agreements are both possible:

    o formal and structured networks are considered more useful by some of the interviewees because they have more resources and are more likely to survive over time and thus are "able to support the target group and make women self-sufficient" (Focus group,

FG_IT_01), **even though some underline the risk** of being **less efficient, slower in targeting the problem, and less open to new participants**;

- o **informal networks are more flexi**ble and in some instances able to address new needs in a very effective way, but they are **not able to** ensure **support for a long period** and are in general more precarious than structured networks;

- o informal networks often develop from formal and project based networks "built during the planning phase (of a project) and whether the sessions and exchanges are positive, based on a relationship of esteem, trust and shared values, they can also be carried out (...) contacts are maintained (...) and turn into a very personal and informal level" (Focus group, IT_FG_01);

- o informal network and the relationship of trust and the sharing mood they can bring along "preserve the group and become an excellent resource to participate in further opportunities" (Focus group, IT_FG_01).

- A key role is played by the presence or absence of the public or private institutions, as:

  - o they play an important role as they can be leader

  - o they often have more resources;

  - o if they are in the network it can become more powerful and can advocate with the government;

  - o sometimes they are auditors because they cannot join officially or because they are "part" of the issues discussed;

  - o they can have more power in creating durable changes in the environment.

- Networks are mostly created as an outcome of funded projects. Accordingly:

  - o they are time-limited;

  - o not all of them survive after the end of the project, as follow-ups are rarely scheduled;

  - o Covid-19 had a bad influence all over- some networks have become weaker/disappeared.

Network of social civil movements and individuals

This type of network is formed by civil society entities, individuals, associations and activities, normally for advocacy purposes, citizen mobilization and collective actions. The research underlines the importance of activating civil society to foster the well being of everyone, and in this specific framework to support migrant women and facilitate their inclusion in the community. "I would like to emphasize the importance that the individuals, volunteers, who want to collaborate, may have in a place where they can discuss (...) and activate together changes (...). the importance of civil society, of all people being involved is this" (Focus group, SP_FG_01).

In several contexts a poor mobilization of civil society has been mentioned, as "there is a lack of support in society for society itself" (Focus group, SP_FG_01). This lack of activation seems to be also connected with the post-pandemic period, as "more than before, the collective lost against the individual" (Interview, GR_IS_01) and this has a negative impact upon the possibility to foster interaction among recipients and the hosting community.

In this framework, the territorial and local dimension of the network plays an important role in the definition of a positive relationship with others and in the construction of informal networks of solidarity. In the best situation, this solidarity involves natives and foreigners and can provide very relevant help to the refugees. Special attention has been paid to "neighborhood movements" (Focus group, SP_FG_01) as key places and occasions to increase the sense of collectivity and to strengthen inclusion, and the fact that sometimes "there are strategies to not allow neighborhood movement" (Focus group, SP_FG_01) because the state or local government do not give spaces to neighborhood associations. Those places play a very important role in the "conciliation with people from the neighborhood so that they can attend a place (...) where to get to know each other, mingle and unite fronts. The ultimate goal would be not to have associations by nationalities but neighborhood associations, of people that live in the same area" (Focus group, SP_FG_02).

Key features

- Public institutions are normally excluded
- The drivers are often specific social concerns that are widely perceived by the community as relevant.

Benefits of networking

All stakeholders recognized the benefits of being part of a network. Both the joining organizations and the beneficiaries can benefit greatly.

One positive effect benefiting member organisations is the possibility to "stay updated" about changes that occur in the context or in the territory, about policies and rules that affect the target group, about the existence and the delivery of new services or associations. As mentioned by a strong fan of networking, co-founder of a group of associations in Hungary, "everybody knows what others do and stay up-to-date (…) and this is the key" (HU_IS_02). Moreover, linked with the scope of the MOMENTUM project, stakeholders underlined how networking can definitely increase the possibility to exchange information on open job positions and trends of the labour market, and thus foster the capacity to provide help to women job seekers.

Secondly, networking implies the organisation of **meetings among** stakeholders that work on the same topic and **that might otherwise not have the opportunity to interact. It** enhances **coordination among** the concerned stakeholders, thus technically implying a reduction in "transaction costs" and a generation of economies of scale. In essence, networking contributes to **minimiz**ing **the effort of each participant as it** helps **avoid the usel**ess replications of certain actions and it **avoids "multiple calls to organize one service"** (IT_IS_02). It can thus be a way to support a more effective and efficient allocation of resources. Several interviews underlined the importance of allocating the existing resources better and this is possible if the needs and the capacities of each stakeholder are known by the other members (i.e. an organization can avoid asking for funds to pay for a care service if it knows that close by there is an association providing this support).

Some networks can have a role in facilitating the meeting of sectors (also job sectors) or entities that normally do not interact or do not know each other because they are "far" in terms of power, spheres of influence or interests. And this can be possible thanks to the identification of a common field of interest or purpose. As concerns the labour market, the research underlines a lack of networking between training institutions, businesses, and "professional associations". Often VET providers work at an individual level, asking employers about their availability. However, individual actions have proven to be less powerful and effective when compared to coordinated actions promoted by

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structured networks providing for stable channels of communication. Moreover, the meeting across sectors or entities can pave the way for new opportunities of collaboration and new projects.

A network facilitates the sharing of **tools, ideas** and methods. P**articipants can discuss and share experiences** on **how to** deal **with certain issues**, or, regarding the beneficiaries, **cultural features and specific needs.** A network also provides the space for reflecting on important topics that are particularly relevant for the development of a given territory.

The possibility to stay updated also gives the opportunity to "know what is going on" in the territory and increase the visibility of the topic. It is a way to "make the other local administrations aware of the growing migration phenomenon and ensure that there is a serious control over the work of those who work with migrants" (Focus group, IT_FG_01).

Finally, networking **increases the power to advocate and the chance to** make a change. **As reported by** one respondent**,** there are "practical issues that affect the daily life of refugees for which one sole association cannot do anything more than sending a letter to the Ministry saying - today we have seen these problems - (…) alone this is as far as we can get". A net of entities has "a louder voice" and can easily reach more results (Focus group, GR_FG_01).

Barriers detected

Several limitations have been mentioned resulting from structural, functional or ideological factors.

Networking requires resources (time and funds) that are limited and often scarce. Even if it is recognized that "teamwork and synergies are extremely important: third sector organizations alone do not succeed" (Focus group, FG_IT_01), for smaller associations and informal groups stable participation in networks can be extremely demanding. In these cases, participation is often linked with the "good willingness" of an individual inside the organization. This might be one of the reasons why networks are often made out of a few people that are considered reliable and competent. Moreover, being based on personal contacts, it is sometimes difficult for a new association or group to join an existing network. The lack of resources can be also a cause of the difficulty to "establish and maintain permanent, virtuous network able to support women" (Focus group, FG_IT_01).

Specific projects often support the creation and consolidation of networks. The main limit is that project-based funding is time-limited. Very often, once the project ends, "the network disappears" (Interview, PO_IS_02) and most of the generated benefits get lost, and "every time the organizations need to meet, they need to start over again to build a network (...) and this is discouraging because it seems that short-term projects do not have the right visibility (...) or sharing of results with other networks" (Focus group, IT_FG_02). A high level of agreement has been detected in this finding: projects foresee network building, and several meetings during the realization of the intervention, but "it is not common to schedule predefined follow-up meetings" (Focus group, IT_FG_01). "When the money finishes there is no continuation and we are then based on the good cooperation and the good relation we have" (Interview, GR_IS_01). According to the experience of some stakeholders that are quite critical about the creation of specific and new networks, "it makes more sense to enforce existing networks than building a new one" (Interview, IT_IS_03).

Being time-limited has another relevant effect: often, it does not give the necessary amount of time to participants to develop the necessary trust and confidence to further maintain the network. Informal networks, as said, can further develop from project based initiatives, but "in long term activities, the network is structured naturally: the more activities and services are carried out, on a daily constancy, the most the network is based on a natural and trustworthy way. During a project, there is not time to do that" (Focus group, IT_FG_02).

In terms of functioning, relevant stakeholders underlined that it is essential to have established procedures, regular and systematic meetings, and possibly a facilitator in charge of coordinating the network. Unfortunately, this happens very rarely according to the interviews. In certain situations bureaucracy is a barrier; this occurs when some entities are prevented from participating.

Institutions have more difficulties in dealing and having contact with the private sector and in general in networking with certain enterprises, and often they have only unofficial contacts with civil society organizations. Under other circumstances, public institutions may not be encouraged to interact with civil society organisations or companies or may lack contacts.

"Psychoanalytic" limits to collaboration were also detected by some respondents, who reported that some societies or groups do not understand the need for cooperation due to "psychoanalytic

individual egoism". (Interview, GR_IS_04). Moreover, due to ideological issues, some stakeholders blame private, for-profit and business entities responsible for social problems and for the "exploitation of the employee" and are hence reluctant to interact with them and to include them in the network. Instead, "the private actors are very important and it is better to include them in the discussion and thus have both sides setting the terms, (…) you cannot say: 'I will not talk to private sector because they take advantage of people' because it obstruct people from accessing the labour market in the name of the our way to protect them (…) we invoke protection of people, and protect them from exploitation by preventing them from accessing something they can choose" (Interview, GR_IS_01).

S**ome interviewees underlined** that **migration, especially** when **linked** to the request for **asylum, is often culturally seen as an emergency and consequently treated as something that "will pass". Instead, it is a structural trend that will be always present and i**ncrease further over the near future; accordingly, **networks that work with this phenomenon** ought **to be enforced**. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to share this reflection at a societal level (Focus group, IT_FG_01). The prevailing conception of forced migration as a transitory phenomenon is considered as one of the reasons explaining the lack of structured networks between the reception system and other stakeholders of the territory.

Possible strategies and good practices

Some ideas on how to enhance networking have been collected.

According to stakeholders, it is important to build bridges among training institutions and companies, otherwise the training loses its value (Focus group, FG_IT_01).

Dissemination moments (very relevant and supported by the Commission) and sharing circles should be enforced to share results but also networks. It is necessary to disseminate the result of a single project (and those moments are always foreseen by projects) but also have moments where all projects can meet and have their space. Wide dissemination is necessary to promote innovative networks, search for further funding and meet stakeholders that are interested in similar topics.

Finally, as time and resources are scarce, public institutions should support networks more significantly through dedicated funds, spaces made available for networking and by raising awareness

of the importance of incorporating the topic of labour market integration in the agenda of existing networks.

6. Conclusion

The Momentum research collected a significant amount of information on two macro themes: the barriers that limit women's access to the labour market and the level of cooperation among actors working in the field of labour integration.

The starting point from which to draw conclusions is that women, their aspirations and needs, must be at the center of the analysis.

The target group addressed by the Momentum project consists of individuals sharing a number of features: beneficiaries are both women and foreigners in a hosting country, and most of them are refugees or asylum seekers.

Women are subject to social prejudices, are at risk of victimization and are affected by gender discriminations: as a result, when compared to men, they struggle more to develop their own careers, enter certain labour sectors, and cover higher job positions. On top of this, women are deeply impacted by family duties.

As foreigners, all of the above factors are often compounded by prejudices based on the country of origin. Furthermore, additional difficulties are caused by the poor networks of women in the hosting territory and by the constant need to mediate with the gender role in their community of origin.

Moreover, as asylum seekers or refugees, women face many bureaucratic difficulties and uncertainties about their future; they lack decisional power, are more at risk of poverty and discrimination; face several psychological difficulties related to traumas and victimization connected with their long journeys.

Each of these aspects bring along additional difficulties and barriers compared to men and other native women that do not have to struggle to enter the labour market. These obstacles add up and complement each other, making women's integration pathways more complex and in constant evolution. There is a second crucial point: changes in terms of needs, barriers, desires and

expectations of migrant women take place continuously, and this evolution can be extremely rapid, due to the high number of aspects that influence the lives of women.

The research identifies a number of personal and external barriers that need to be unlocked to fully harness the employment potential of women. These barriers act simultaneously and sometimes overlap, thus influencing each other.

Key personal barriers that emerged from the Momentum study include: the lack of skills (mainly language and digitalization); the lack of awareness on the capacities, skills and competencies of women; resistance to adapt to the new labour market; difficulty in accessing services and job opportunities; difficulties finding a work-life balance in accordance with family needs; the necessity to deal with psycho-sociological aspects, like the lack of motivation; and meeting expectations.

The external barriers that surfaced are more broadly related to society's inclination to consider inclusion a unilateral path, which exclusively requires migrants to adapt to the new society. Inclusion is rarely conceived as a process, which requires an investment on the part of the hosting society so as to establish a dynamic relationship with newcomers. Integration policies are overall vague, short-term and not systematized, being mainly project-based. Additional external barriers are related to the low representation of migrants in the local community and in society. This lack of visibility and voice affects their capacity to advocate for their needs. Further, there are widespread perceptions and prejudices on the part of the employers, the society of origin and the broader hosting society against both migrants and women. In all countries, certain job sectors are strongly femininized (care services and cleaning). These sectors tend to be ones that have low wages, are more likely to register illegal work, and have less protection in terms of rights. Women are more likely to enter these sectors with worse conditions, also because it is hard for them to enter other sectors, such as IT and technology, due to the prejudice in hiring women in those masculinized sectors. Moreover, there is a general low flexibility in terms of time schedule and a limited use of part-time contracts, that prevent women from accessing certain positions and finding an easy work life balance. There are also several administrative and bureaucratic barriers linked to the long and complex procedures required to obtain documents or permits of stay and to recognize diplomas and qualifications. Finally, the quality of support services is often low and rather patchy due to the lack of systematization of reception centres, especially during the post-acceptance phase. Due to these factors, women end up being more vulnerable to discrimination and violations of their rights when compared to men.

One of the Momentum project aims is to find ways to unlock the barriers preventing the full empowerment of women. In light of this, it is essential to work contextually at two levels: support the activation of women on the one hand, and raise awareness about the importance of creating inclusive spaces stimulating a bidirectional understanding of integration. To support women, it is essential to: favour an individualized assistance; create networks with peers and society; and organize proper training programmes focused on both the topics of interest to women and the context. From the perspective of the hosting society, to overcome prejudices, it is necessary to: raise awareness on the target group's specific needs, difficulties and capacities; facilitate the interaction of women with the local communities and employers; and provide for mediation in case of need. Nevertheless, these are general considerations. To be effective, interventions must be tailored to the specific needs of each territory. In this respect, local actors need to be actively engaged and to do this it is essential to have a strong knowledge of the territory and its stakeholders.

One of the barriers frequently mentioned in the data collected is the low awareness that women have about their own skills and competencies. Each individual has a set of skills and abilities, developed through previous experience, training and education. To valorise them in the most useful way, it is necessary to be aware of migrant women's skills, be equipped with proper tools aiming to take stock and enhance previous competencies, and identify the skills the labour market needs so as to facilitate an effective matching of demand with supply.

According to Momentum research, women have a wide range of skills - formal and informal, social and soft - and it is very important to run a proper skills assessment to trace them properly as, more than for men, there is a high risk of underestimating them. Respondents confirmed that there is a significant difficulty in recognizing and exploiting skills, both on the part of the women and on society. To create a relationship of trust with women, skills assessments should be tailored to the needs of women in terms of quantity of meetings and setting (time and place). Competencies should be certified through objective tests and oral meetings, while interviews should be integrated by the observation of women in the workplace (during an internship or short period) and should take into consideration psychological aspects, as identified by staff (social assistants, the operator of the housing service, trainers etc.).

The survey conducted identified the most valuable skills that are needed for a successful integration into the labour market. Besides language and basic digitalization skills, most respondents underlined

the importance of being open to learning; being proactive; having a positive attitude; being motivated; and being team-oriented. Having administrative and technical skills is regarded as less relevant.

For certain jobs, qualifications and certifications are very important. However, if obtained abroad, it is extremely challenging to legalize them in the hosting country. Achieving high job positions, especially in certain sectors (IT, computer science, engineering) is moreover very difficult for migrant women.

Useful methods for improving skills include internships, which are positively evaluated by the vast majority of respondents. Mentorships and peer-to-peer activities are considered as not sufficient alone: they ought to be integrated by other interventions, like volunteering activities and vocational training. To be effective, these activities should be strictly linked with the needs of the territory and developed in accordance with the existing services of the territory. This aspect relates directly to the second theme, the level of collaboration and networking.

According to the Momentum project research, collaboration with one or two entities is more frequent than networking in large groups. The reasons for networking are different, mainly responding to the need to solve a similar problem or case(s), or to address specific issues in a territory, or to work on a collective concern. Networks have different characteristics: they can be formal or informal, include or exclude public institutions, be open or closed, have a leader or be horizontal. They bring along several benefits: participants can stay up to date and share tools and ideas, can optimize resources and find allies, have more power to advocate, create occasions to meet new stakeholders and define future collaborations. Several limits emerge from the research: the main one is that networks are very often project-based and thus time – limited. If a certain level of trust and collaboration have not been achieved, they normally disappear as soon as the project ends. Participating in a network is, moreover, resource-consuming in terms of time and financial resources, which is particularly challenging for small associations or informal organizations that have fewer funds and resources at their disposal.

The Momentum project sheds light on two aspects: to survive, networks require significant support from public institutions; secondly, when coming to its end, each project should foresee follow-up meetings and dissemination moments where all networks can get to know each other to increase

their power, force and possibility to remain active and survive over time, beyond the time horizon of

the project.