

## EU-wide Guidelines for Inclusion of A Gender-Sensitive Perspective as a part of Migration/integration Policy

### Introduction

Igamma Femina is the third Igamma Erasmus+ project, with a focus on shortening the distance to education / the labour Market for migrant and refugee women through gender-sensitive counselling and local collaboration strategies. One of the project outputs is the production of EU-wide guidelines for inclusion of a gender-sensitive perspective as a part of migration/integration policy.

Background sources for these guidelines include other of the project outputs including the methodological handbook and the country research, as well as external materials related to integration policy, and most specifically related to the European Agenda for the integration of third-country nationals a communication from the European Commission from 2011.

### Background

Over the past few decades, most EU member states have experienced increasing migration. In 2017, the EU was home to 21.6 million third-country nationals, 4.2% of the total population. Almost half of these people have lived in their host country for 10 years or longer (European Commission, 2018).

The increased diversity of migration and migrants bring a great opportunity and potential to a country, however, to realise this potential strategy and practice around integration is crucial. Integration can be defined as ‘the process by which immigrants and their children come to feel and become participants in the life of their country of destination, and in its schools, workplaces, and communities.’ (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/integration-policy>). Studies have shown that better integration of migrants leads to higher long term economic and social gains for the country where they settle. (Kancs and Lecca, 2017)(European Court of Auditors, 2018). However, the gap between the outcomes of migrants and EU citizens in the areas of employment,

education, social inclusion and active citizenship clearly demonstrates the need for effective integration policies (European Court of Auditors, 2018)

Individual European countries have the primary responsibility for integrating new arrivals into their country. However, in the last 20 years the EU has had a large role in supporting this – providing financial support, developing frameworks and strategies for integration and anti-discrimination policies, and co-ordinating the co-operation and mutual support between member states to support good practice.

Though no formal definition of integration exists at EU level, in 2004 the Council developed eleven Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy. These principles defined integration as 'a dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation', i.e. a social process that involves both migrants and the receiving society. (Council of the European Union, 2004)(European Court of Auditors, 2018)

Efforts to develop a common approach are continually revised, and in 2011 the European Agenda for the integration of third-country nationals was devised, when member States 'confirmed their commitment to further developing the core idea of integration as a driver for economic development and social cohesion, in order to better enhance migrants' contribution to economic growth and cultural richness' (Council of European Union, 2010).

In 2016 the European Commission reviewed strategy on integration and put forward an action plan with 52 measures to be undertaken at EU level. They also encouraged member states to include a focus on particular issues within their national strategies, however these are not monitored by the Commission. (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

Generally, although there are directives on migration and frameworks around integration, individual countries have scope to choose how they translate these into national law. Consequently, states have differing rules related to asylum and migration. This can lead to people moving between countries once they have arrived in Europe, which often delays the start of the integration process, which makes it less likely to be successful. Another delaying

factor is the waiting period for applications to be processed, which is common when a country has a sudden, unexpected influx of migrants, often looking for asylum. The EU Commission has a 'hotspot' approach, which focuses on areas at the EU's boundary borders which face the greatest pressure. In the European Court of Auditors report on this theme, it was concluded that 'the procedures that followed the arrival and registration of migrants at that time, were often slow and subject to several delays' (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

Most European countries have integration policies in place, sometimes within other policy frameworks. At the end of 2017, 25 Member States had a national/regional or local integration policy in place targeting migrants. However, these policies vary with apparently differing ideas of what integration means and consequently not all factors being tackled, as well as countries not always addressing the heterogeneous nature of migrants and addressing their various needs. For example, at the end of 2017 26 of 30 states surveyed did not have a policy relating to migrant women (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

Added to this many countries appear weak in their data collection and monitoring linked to migration and integration. This leads to a lack of clarity about the national situation and consequently less ability to develop relevant, meaningful strategy. (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

In 2010, the EU Member States adopted, under the Spanish Presidency, Common indicators to monitor the integration of third-country nationals in four areas: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. (European Commission, 2018). However, not all countries appear to use them, and their efficacy is also being questioned.

Although noted separately, these indicators are closely related and have a major impact on each other. For example, when choosing locations for refugees they need to offer 'sufficient infrastructure support to prevent isolation, segregation and diminished access to socio-cultural support.' (Mattern et al., 2016, p.4). Language allows daily interactions within the wider community but also increases the possibilities around the labour market (Kiagia, Kriona and Georgaca, 2010, pp. 40-41).

Failures in integration policies has led to the situation of low employment levels of migrants (particularly women), high levels of migrants in jobs that they are over qualified for, social exclusion and its outcomes, and public concerns over the lack of integration of migrants. Accordingly, integration practices are needing to be constantly revised and updated (European Commission 2011a).

The EU Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, has focused attention on migrant women as an important target group re integration. The gap between employment of non-EU born women versus native women is 8 percentage points larger than the gap among men (Li, 2018).

This double disadvantage that women face involves a number of factors. Some analysis (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015) cites the main reason as the inadequate mapping and validation of women’s’ prior knowledge, skills and experience and the lack of individual support for these women. Also, a lack of cooperation and coordination between different organisations dealing with these women and consequently a lack of individual support for them.

The European Economic and Social Committee in 2015 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0204\\_EN.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0204_EN.html) concluded that ‘participating in the labour market is one of the most effective and practical ways of integrating migrant women into society’. However, having a level of stability in other areas of her life eg status, family welfare and finance are prerequisites for engaging with the task of gaining work.

Migrant women in Europe are a diverse, heterogeneous group with a variety of reasons for leaving their country of origin and coming to Europe. These include those; looking for asylum, victims of trafficking or other forms of exploitation, joining family members, fleeing poverty or for other economic reasons as highly specialised workers. They have a diverse legal status and rights and their life experiences are very different, some with high level qualifications or extensive work experience, others with very little schooling or not having worked outside of

the home. Despite these differences and the differing challenges that they face, and also despite a disparity of integration outcomes between the groups, in Europe, migrant female unemployment and social exclusion remains one of the main socioeconomic challenges for most European countries. On average there is a 24% difference between male and female employment rates when it comes to non-EU citizens in the 28 EU-countries. Immigrant women in general tend to have a higher risk of unemployment or under employment when compared to men in all partner countries (Iigma-Femina methodology handbook). Most of the working age third-country nationals living in the EU are in employment (55%), however there is a persisting gap (13 % points) compared to host-country nationals (68%) – which is even more pronounced among women. (European Commission, 2018) Employment levels of women migrants have also been particularly affected by the global economic crisis. (Benton et al., 2014)

### Guidelines

When reflecting on having a gender-sensitive perspective to policy around migration it is important to remember that our own countries and cultures are not gender neutral. To varying degrees, they have legislation and policies that try to rectify gender biases and discrimination. However, our cultural norms and behaviours do not always reflect these attempts at gender neutrality. When developing strategy, we need to hold this fact in mind.

People’s lack of awareness and consideration of gender discrimination in our public and private lives may be magnified in refugee and migrant women who come from cultures with a strong norm of women being seen as inferior, or strong cultural gender stereotyping. Although this can be the case, and it is important for us to understand cultural differences, it is equally important for us to consider every woman as an individual and to not give in to stereotyping and consequent assumptions.

### National Level

As mentioned above, there has been no attempt at harmonisation of legislation around integration in the individual EU countries. Thus, national pictures of a gender sensitive perspective as part of integration policies varies from country to country. To ensure effective co-ordination of funding at EU and national level, clear processes and resources to manage any delays in the start of the integration process, country-wide parity and local comparability of service it is vital to have an overarching national approach. (European Commission, 2016).

Important elements at a national level would include:

- A clear, workable national policy with related legislation on immigration with a gender perspective included.
- Where possible relationships with the countries of origin of migrants to set up pre-departure / pre-arrival measures to support the early onset of integration processes (European Commission, 2011a, 2016).
- A national strategy for integration specifically related to women migrants and refugees. This should include targeted measures for women related to support for family and child care responsibilities, social orientation and participation, learning the host language, raising of educational levels, accessing the labour market, democratic participation and host country citizen participation (Li, 2018) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- The strategy needs to recognise the heterogeneous nature of women migrants and refugees, from those with tertiary education levels to those with only primary levels, and to create strategies that are targeted at and support the range of this client group (Li, 2018).
- A legislative entitlement for all refugees and migrants to take part in an integration programme, with a variety of elements including language training and social orientation modules. To include either compulsory elements or financial incentives to encourage women to take part in the programme. (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- Within any public funding streams for integration, to have money ringfenced for projects that target women and to have a focus of funding for areas of support that

can otherwise disadvantage women eg language learning, social integration. Quotas for engaging and supporting women within more generic integration programmes (Li, 2018).

- An additional ringfenced funding stream for vulnerable women, for example, who may arrive in the country on their own, or as the only adult with children (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016). (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- The importance of equivalency systems for qualifications from different countries was highlighted in the 2011 European Agenda for the integration of third-country nationals, but also important is the national development of educational skills testing to assess non-certificated skills and experience from informal settings, much more usual for women. (Although they have similar levels of tertiary education as native-born women and migrant men, migrant women are both more likely to be over-qualified for their job and less likely to be in employment (Li, 2018) (European Commission, 2016).
- A national certificated, professional careers counsellor/case manager training that includes equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and gender awareness elements (<http://eacg.eu/>)(European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009).
- Systems in place to ensure close co-operation between national and local government and non-governmental organisations including a focus on monitoring. This to include rigorous data collection (from new arrivals and later down the line from those in work and education) to ensure appropriate targeting of services and equality of opportunity, evaluation of projects to share best practice and as a counter argument for negative attitudes towards migrants. This monitoring and evaluation to feed into the national strategy (European Court of Auditors, 2018)
- Strong Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment legislation – with monitoring and evaluation around enforcement. Governmental bodies for the promotion of equal opportunities. All local government and those receiving national funding to promote and monitor equal opportunities. Monies ringfenced for marketing and publicity of the laws, including for work in schools and with employers. Monies for initiatives around gender equality and promotion of women’s participation and rights

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination_en)

- to support all women in education and work including financial support for maternity, child and other caring obligations, legislation around flexible working, strategies for adequate and geographically appropriate childcare, and for flexible learning (Li, 2018).
- Health systems with ring fenced funds for work related to gender-based violence including domestic violence, enforced marriage, trafficking, female genital mutilation (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- Housing in most countries is an issue. A housing policy and funding that ensures a level of stability for new arrivals, with migrants neither segregated into disadvantaged areas or housed away from any known contacts or communities, which can lead particularly to isolation for women ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-11-529\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-529_en.htm?locale=en))(European Commission, 2016)(Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016).
- Legislation regulating the countries media and the promotion of hate crimes. Conversely media campaigns by the government targeting host country citizens to support refugee and migrant acceptance and integration (TNS Qual+, 2011).
- Country links with the various countries of origin, through preparation for integration before the migrants’ departure where possible and support via Embassies (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

### Local Level

The European Agenda for Integration 2011 highlighted the key role for local authorities in a successful integration policy. These authorities tend to be responsible for the integration process and delivery of services for the refugee/migrants living in their area. Different geographic areas will have differing needs in relation to this integration and local authorities are well placed in terms of understanding their local demographics and networks, having relationships with local organisations and having a level of power through funding and local legislation to understand and meet these differing needs (European Commission, 2011).

Important elements for guidelines at a local level would include:

- The local authority to put resources into a broader strong equality of opportunity environment, including training, media campaigns, local legislation and policies, encouraging the participation, promotion and well-being of women in all areas of life (European Commission, 2016).
- The local authority to have a co-ordination role around the many partners involved in integration services (likely a mix of public, private, and third sector organisations), with local agreements, monitoring and evaluation of services for equality of opportunity and supporting the creation of partnerships and networking environments for those in these services focusing on working with women (European Commission, 2011).
- A strategy supporting positive action to encourage refugee and migrant women into roles and positions of responsibility and power, including within public life, local authority, women’s and refugee projects (European Commission, 2016).
- Local authority to fund local projects and partnerships targeted at women refugees and migrants, with a variety of aims, for example, upskilling, language learning, social integration, employability skills, enhancing participation in public life, networking, mental health support, advice and guidance, using a variety of methods (European Commission, 2016).
- To fund projects aimed at all refugees and migrants that have an element of gender awareness and equal opportunities education
- To support (both financially and administratively) the involvement of schools, health centres and other places and organisations that women frequent for integration purposes, eg language lessons, skills learning and social integration (Li, 2018).
- To facilitate an awareness raising programme of available activities, support and learning for women migrants using appropriate techniques and messages eg a local directory of services in a variety of languages (European Commission, 2016).
- To co-ordinate and fund initiatives that promote a strong commitment by the host receiving community to the integration of migrant women including joint women’s projects and programmes and cultural programmes (TNS Qual+, 2011).

- Measures to strengthen women’s democratic participation generally, to encourage an equal representation in public life (European Commission, 2011a).

### Legal Status

The experiences of women entering Europe, although varying from country to country, are often very largely based on their status, whether they are a migrant, an asylum seeker or a refugee. Their levels of engagement in terms of integration, employment and their ambitions are greatly impacted by this status (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016).

A migrant woman, whose main reasons for entering a country are socio-economic, will more likely, and more quickly carry out the steps required to move into work, including thinking about their economic future. Whereas women who enter Europe in order to claim asylum are often mainly initially concerned with their and their family’s safety and whether they are eligible to stay in the country (TNS Qual+, 2011).

When first arriving in the country guidelines that support women asylum seekers and migrants include:

- Gender awareness training for all immigration workers including charity and NGO workers such as lawyers and psychologists, which could include; challenging stereotypes of lone women travellers, understanding of gender-based violence, cultural gender stereotyping, gender sensitive assessment tools (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- The possibility for every woman to talk to a female immigration officer and have a female translator if desired, with this possibility clearly publicised (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)
- A level of stability and activity whilst their claim is being processed, including geographically appropriate, stable and adequate housing and activities and education for children (Directorate-general for Internal Policies, 2016) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)

### Introductory integration programmes including social orientation and host language learning

One of the biggest barriers for women in their integration is not understanding the local language which has multiple ramifications in most areas of their lives. Language learning must be encouraged as early as possible, possibly linking attending classes to financial support. Women refugees and migrants are more likely than men to suffer isolation in their new country and a focus on participation and networking is also important (European Commission, 2011a, 2016) (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality 2015)

Guidelines should include:

- Programmes are to be offered as early as possible but also with an inbuilt flexibility within the offer in terms of time frames and individualised programmes and with longer term support available (European Commission, 2011a).
- Programmes to be geographically and culturally accessible to migrant women eg within local community centres and schools, an offer of women only sessions, sessions run by other migrant women, within same community spaces, flexible timings and with creche facilities or a ‘children welcome’ policy (Li, 2018) (European Commission, 2011b).
- Programmes to be financially accessible to women, for example, offering monies and or support for child and other care, offering incentives such as free lunch (Li, 2018). (European Commission, 2011b).
- Gender awareness and anti-discrimination focus to be integrated into all elements of all introductory programmes (European Commission, 2011a).
- As a follow on from these programmes, access to skills and vocational training which are also barriers for women
- Finance for programmes that include activities which encourage participation and network building, and build confidence and resilience (European Commission, 2011a).

### Labour Market Integration

Women migrants and refugees may prioritise security and settling of their families when they first arrive in the country. Employment services and linked benefits, as well as supporting and encouraging progression within education and the labour market, must also have a flexibility to allow for these priorities. These women, with multiple barriers, often have a longer distance to travel into the labour market and need professional on-going, individualised support to make this progression.

Guidelines to support this process include:

- National strong anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation related to the workplace, including related to maternity leave, childcare, parental leave and flexible working ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en))
- At national and local levels policies, strategies and funding that supports the entry into, well-being within, and progression for women in the labour market (Li, 2018).
- Skills trainings and education, including employability skills programmes, that are geographically, culturally and financially accessible to migrant and refugee women (Li, 2018).
- Additional training where relevant to ensure that women can be placed in the labour market at a level that corresponds to their existing qualifications and skills.(European Commission 2011a)
- A strong focus on employer involvement in strategy, projects and initiatives to support women refugees and migrants into the labour market. Employers to offer work experience, mentoring schemes, taster programmes, aspirational and motivational talks, flexibility around work times and recruitment criteria (European Commission 2011a).
- Because women are supported by flexible working conditions, programmes (mentoring, entrepreneurship skills, start-up funding etc) to promote self-employment as an alternative for migrant women into paid work (European Commission 2011a).

- Employment services to have a level of flexibility within their requirements of claimants, to meet the needs of those with a distance to travel to the labour market.
- Women migrant and refugees are statistically a long distance from the labour market. They often need long-term, ongoing support to fulfil their aspirations and potential. This necessitates the existence of professional case managers / careers counsellors offering targeted individual support within employment support services (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009).
- Front line careers counsellors to receive equal opportunities including gender awareness training as part of a professional qualification, to understand how gender affects the encounter that they have with their client. This should include: reflection on own prejudices and presumptions around gender, host country norms around gender and cultural variations, gender stereotyping and biases within the world of work (<http://eacg.eu/>)(European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009).
- The professional qualification should also include:
  - a. assessment skills and tools to work with migrant and refugee women that take into account skills and work experience gained through informal routes and hidden or unspoken barriers to joining the labour market
  - b. skills and tools to understand the importance of supporting and building confidence and aspiration within the women in their ability within the labour market and offering tools to support this.
  - c. case management skills including; working in an individualised, flexible way, the focus on relationship, the concept of distance from the labour market and gradual progression.



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