



# Policy Paper

## **Harnessing the potential of migrant women as Integration Experts**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigrants face a greater risk of social exclusion than native populations, especially with respect to accessing employment, education, health and social services. Within the immigrant population some groups are particularly at risk and thus require tailored integration measures. This is especially the case for migrant women, among other at risk categories such as: third-country nationals, refugees and beneficiaries of international protection, low-skilled immigrants and irregular immigrants. Migrant women's role within integration is a crucial one and more should be done to increase it in the coming years, if effective integration is to be achieved across Europe.

The partners of the INTEGR8 consortium believe that the *Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum* and the trialed project approach can have considerable bearing on future policy development in the area of migrant integration and as such has therefore produced this Policy Paper to present the relevant learning and findings that have emerged from the implementation of the project activities.

In formulating this Policy Paper, the project consortium conducted research interviews to explore the impact of the INTEGR8 project and why a change of policy approach might be relevant for project target groups, namely migrants or more specifically migrant women.

The research results, informing this paper, prove there is a need for policy improvement in this field in order to ensure integration measures are more effective, better respond to migrants' needs and valorise migrant women as a valuable resource that should be mobilised and supported.

The main aim of this Policy Paper is to share the experiences of migrant women through the INTEGR8 project, contribute to the policy debate and make a series of recommendations for future policy considerations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration is not a new phenomenon for Europe and migrant communities have always made a major contribution to the economic development of the Union and to the cultural diversity which characterises European society today. If EU Member States are to fully harness the potential of this cultural diversity, the integration of migrant and host communities' needs to be systemic. Integration will not be achieved by doing *to* migrant communities, or doing *for* migrant communities, but rather only by doing *with* migrant communities.

Immigration and the civic and social integration of new ethnic minorities have become important policy challenges in all EU countries in recent years. While economic integration is easily measured through a number of widely available indicators like the reduction of wage, or income and employment disparities between natives and immigrants, where social and civic integration is concerned the levels of integration are more difficult to assess.

Research highlights a number of key challenges facing new immigrants in host countries that government led initiatives to date have failed to overcome. There is a *“significant information gap as migrants experience a lack of knowledge about their new social and civic systems and are often unaware of the civic and political processes within their new country. To date, immigrant voter campaigns, civic and language education or even direct government assistance to immigrant organizations have achieved minimal impacts”* (Bloemraad, 2010); There is also a network gap as although immigrant organizations may help to build or solidify networks within immigrant communities they do little to tie these organizations to groups outside of the immigrant communities (Strömblad and Adman, 2012) and while immigrant civil society groups create ‘bonding’ social capital within their own communities they fail to achieve ‘bridging’ social capital with the host community or other migrant communities (Putnam, 2007).

Considering these challenges, there is a real opportunity to harness the potential of migrant women as migrant integration experts. Providing validated training and a range of essential professional supports are the critical first steps to a more inclusive and equal Europe for all.

## **2. APPROACH AND RESULTS**

This Policy Paper has been issued within the framework of the project “*Harnessing the potential of migrant women as integration experts*” [INTEGR8].

### ***2.1. The INTEGR8 Project: Aims and Achievements***

INTEGR8 is a project funded by the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission, under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). INTEGR8 project has the reference number HOME/2015/AMIF/AG/INTE/9101 and its implementation spans from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2016 to 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2018.

The INTEGR8 project is led by Meath Partnership and is promoted by a consortium of seven organisations from across Europe, with differing expertise in working directly within local migrant communities, being experienced in receiving and integrating migrants, as follows:

1. Meath Partnership (co-ordinator), Ireland
2. CARDET, Cyprus
3. ISQ Formação, Portugal
4. University of Pitesti, Romania
5. Learning Unlimited, United Kingdom
6. FormAzione Co&So Network, Italy
7. Jugend am Werk Steiermark, Austria

These partner institutions have the necessary blend of skills and experience that was relevant to the focus of the project.

The INTEGR8 project partners believe that migrant women are key to supporting and facilitating the integration of other migrant women. Consortium partners are convinced that fostering the integration of migrant women can be best supported and achieved if integration programmes and initiatives are led by migrant women themselves. Empowering women within migrant communities by providing validated training and supporting them to develop a series of informal networks to promote social and civic integration among their peer group was in the focus of the INTEGR8 project. Thus, the project aims to train, support and empower migrant women in to take a pro-active role in their communities to support women’s integration in a wide range of ways.

The key intended outcome of the INTEGR8 project is a change in attitude and understanding within both migrant communities and the organisations that support them, so that all implicated parties agree and accept that migrant women themselves, if appropriately trained and supported, are best placed to foster the integration of migrant women. Also, INTEGR8 builds and/or strengthens the local networking structures in each partner country and the resulting improved communication within both host and migrant communities.

The INTEGR8 project addresses two target groups:

- Migrant integration professionals and educators who work in migrant centres and support agencies, specifically those with targeted programmes for women.
- Migrant women and communities.

**Since its beginning, the consortium of the INTEGR8 project has implemented the activities and achieved the outcomes described as follows:**

**1.** Research was undertaken to identify the training needs of migrant women in each partner country<sup>1</sup> and elaborated the *Summary Research Report* based on the national findings. The Summary Research Reports is a 32-page strategic document, organised in five sections:

- Section A: Literature review
  - Best Practice National Integration Measures
  - Issues and Unmet Needs
  - Recommendations
  - Resources
- Section B: Migrant women: Needs Analysis
- Section C: Migrant agencies and educators: Needs Analysis
- Section D: Innovative Social and Civic Inclusion Methodologies
- Section E: Conclusions and recommendations

**2.** Created and designed two tailored training programmes to address the needs of migrant women and also to train adult educators to support migrant women in their new role as community leaders. These programmes are presented as a Train-the-Trainer Courseware and Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum together with necessary training materials and resources.

- The *Train-the-Trainer Courseware* comprises nine modules as follows: 1) The Integr8 project; 2) Effective communication; 3) Intercultural awareness and competence; 4) Using participatory approaches in facilitating groups; 5) How to use the Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum, Toolkit and e-platform; 6) European Citizenship and Engagement; 7) Trainer responsibilities; 8) Learning outside the classroom; 9) Reflection and review; and also a final part with tips for migrant support workers.
- The package for the *Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum* is composed of the:
  - (a) *Tutor Manual* - supporting tutors to deliver the Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum. The tutor manual is structured in the following parts: Introduction to the Tutor Manual; Introducing the INTEGR8 Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum; Introduction for the Tutor; Beginning the Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum; Cultural Considerations; Objectives of Each Curriculum Module; Techniques and Methodologies to be used; Module 1: Getting to Know Each Other; Module 2: Self-care; Module 3: Effective Communication; Module 4: Cultural Competence; Module 5: Engagement; Module 6: Facilitating Groups; Module 7: Taking Action.
  - (b) *Learner Workbook* - designed as a portfolio for migrant women completing the Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum. It is structured in terms of: Introduction to the Learner Workbook; Introducing the INTEGR8 Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum; Overview of the MIE Modules; Assignments and Handouts. The Learner Workbook allows learners to complete tasks and assessments as part of group exercises in workshops, supported by their tutors

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<sup>1</sup> Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Romania

and fellow learners. Keeping this record will allow learners (migrant women) to return to the content once they have completed the Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum and to use it as a resource and reference point for when they are managing their local micro-networks of local and migrant women.

- (c) **INTEGR8 Toolkit:** this practical resource has the following structure: Introduction; The structure of the INTEGR8 tools; National resources; The common resources of the INTEGR8 toolkit (role play and drama; ice-breaking; recreational activity; individual activity; problem solving; establishing rules; civic programme); and suggestions for the migrant integration expert.

All these outcomes are accessible online on the project website and e-learning platform ([www.integrateproject.eu](http://www.integrateproject.eu))

3. Implementation of a range of training activities, workshops and seminars in which 74 trainers, tutors and migrant support workers were trained, 179 migrant women became Migrant Integration Experts and 900+ stakeholders engaged.

4. Production of a **video documentary** tracing the development history of the project, which contains 7 case studies from partner countries, presenting the experience of migrant women who completed the Migrant Integration Expert training.

5. Completed a **comparative analysis** that contrasts migrant integration programmes and actions on the ground in each of the participating partner countries.

6. Designed and developed the **project website** ([www.integrateproject.eu](http://www.integrateproject.eu)), presenting the project and the partner organisations, providing the resources produced by the consortium and offering free access to the eLearning platform where the INTEGR8 training programmes (for tutors and migrant women) can be completed online. The website is available in all partner languages.

These project outcomes (the suite of training programmes, the necessary materials and other resources) have been developed by the INTEGR8 consortium by working in partnership with local migrant support agencies, education providers, migrant women's networks and migrant women individually which have documented, tested and then validated these results.

## **2.2. INTEGR8 Methodology**

While different government departments and a host of public authorities in EU Member States play a significant legislative role in the migrant integration process, legislative processes alone cannot achieve an integrated society. Legislation can aim to create acceptance of and respect for cultural mix; it can aim to promote tolerance and participation; it can aim to create the circumstances in which a plural society can blossom; however, it cannot alone establish such a society. It needs to be supported by other measures.

There is ample evidence that the vast majority of state sponsored integration initiatives have failed to achieve the cross-community integration that is the ultimate litmus test of successful social and civic integration processes. The INTEGR8 consortium proposed a bottom-up

approach to the integration of migrant women that places the women themselves at the centre of the integration design process. Partners put forward the premise that migrant women themselves are most knowledgeable about the issues and barriers they face in new communities and are therefore best placed to lead any new initiative that aims to foster the integration of migrant women. Identifying and training a new cohort of Migrant Integration Experts within the community of migrant women in the participating countries is an innovative and potentially ground-breaking approach.

As with any development project, the current state-of-the-art is an essential starting point; however, the methodology proposed by the INTEGR8 consortium focused on establishing the state-of-the-art from the perspective of the migrant women themselves and planning all development actions to respond to the situations and circumstances that pertain. The INTEGR8 methodology focused on target group engagement through all development phases. The local working groups established in each partner country helped create a sense of ownership of all project outputs among the implicated target groups and these groups have met at regular intervals to provide insights, opinions and feedback on the project development process and the outputs produced.

The methodological cycle was a continuing process of consultation; development work; testing; signing-off; where addressing the needs of migrant women remained the dominant concern. Given the innovative nature of the proposed resources partners are prepared to work on an *ab initio* basis.

The project proposed a bottom-up approach to policy change, which existing research indicates (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Bodilly et al., 2004; Russell and Schneiderheinze, 2005.) is essential for eventual up-take and up-scaling.

### ***2.3. The Importance of the INTEGR8 Project***

Europe has been struggling to cope with a large-scale influx of migrants and there have been divisions within the European Union (EU) over how best to support refugees (Persaud, 2017). The refugee crisis has created a disproportionate burden on some countries and more collaboration at the EU level is needed to coordinate their integration (Persaud, 2017).

According to the UN Refugee Agency, 16.2 million people became displaced during the course of 2017 due to persecution, conflict or violence. In this same year 650,000 first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the EU, 538, 000 of which were granted protection status in one of the Member States (Eurostat, 2018). As shown by Public Policy Exchange (Conference, 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2018), engaging all relevant stakeholders in the on-going debate on the European asylum system, including NGO's and civil society, is of critical importance in order to assist policy makers and politicians in finding practical and politically feasible solutions consistent with the realities of each country. In addition, it is agreed that ways of harnessing the skilled migrant force to counteract the



economic repercussions of a rapid ageing population in Europe should be sought, provided that the European Union develops successful integration mechanisms in the host countries.

European policies do not provide special provisions to facilitate the settlement of refugee women and instead place barriers to their social and economic participation (e.g., unfavourable family reunion policies). The legal basis for asylum, the requirements and the procedures all reduce the protection which is likely to be conferred to asylum-seeking women (Bloch, Galvin, & Harrell-Bond, 2000).

Immigrants' integration remains high on the current EU political agenda.

Under the current EU context regarding the integration of immigrants, the INTEGR8 project is important because it offers an innovative, and at the same time, a reliable solution for the role of migrant women as integration experts, that is validated by the target groups which have tested it. INTEGR8 has designed training materials and resources for migrant women's skill acquisition, so that they can be leaders of integration in their communities, they can act as a bridge between migrant communities and host communities. The idea is to empower migrant women so that they can in-turn empower others, to help other migrant women to feel more accepted and integrated into their host communities, to access basic services and to learn about their rights and entitlements in their host countries. INTEGR8 presents the *Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum* to facilitate this. If migrant women develop skills and build their confidence, they can help to link members of their community with mainstream services in their host communities. The migrant women's training was delivered through a series of practical workshops, networking and social events, and with the support of the INTEGR8 dedicated online platform, trainees could access e-learning modules and integration resources developed by the INTEGR8 consortium at a time and in a format that meets their needs and matched their learning styles.

#### **2.4. Research Results**

The INTEGR8 research in all seven partner countries was a combined one: desk-based and field-based research. The *desk research* was performed through a review of available literature and analysis of existing migrant integration measures and initiatives. Also, innovative social and civic inclusion methodologies that use educational, cultural and recreational activities as embedded learning techniques, were been identified and analysed. The *field research* consisted of an in-depth need analysis achieved through several rounds of applying (at various stages of project implementation) structured interviews and of organizing focus groups with (a) 64 migrant women (to identify their specific training needs necessary for designing the bespoke curriculum - the *MIE: Migrant Integration Expert Curriculum*) and (b) a wide range of migrant support agencies and educators, which included local and international organisations, third sector organisations, charities, not-for-profit social enterprises, children's centres (to determine the train-the-trainer needs that will need to be addressed if they are to successfully implement the MIE curriculum).

### *2.4.1. Issues and Unmet Needs*

The Literature Review performed within the Integr8 project shows that the partner countries represent a mix of front line, transit and destination countries for migrants with partners reporting increased, stable or decreasing net migration. Some countries reported ‘joined up’ national policies, strategies, entitlements and support specifically targeted towards the integration of migrants. Others reported a lack of joined up thinking on a policy level with limited or decreasing entitlements and support, resulting in increasing risk of poverty and social exclusion for migrants, particularly migrant women and their children.

In terms of current best practices, our research revealed that as a result of, or despite national policies and resourcing, a diverse range of best practice national integration measures and social and civic inclusion methodologies exist. These measures include nationally funded and organised initiatives and measures as well as those run by educational institutions, third sector organisations, charities, networks and strategic partnerships.

INTEGR8 field research (through interviews and focus groups) has identified many issues impacting on migrants in general and/or migrant women specifically, as well as a significant number of unmet needs. These included:

#### **Advice, Information and Support**

- Case management to support women navigate their way through the system;
- Information desks to offer services for migrants to support integration;

#### **Social / Cultural / Inter-cultural**

- Information and opportunities for reflection on the different role of women;
- The perception of host countries being ‘closed communities’ which are difficult gain entry into;
- Need for more baseline data about the quality of life of migrants and their untapped economic potential;
- Need for policies which are responsive to the ‘*progressive feminization of migration*’;
- More opportunities to build relationships with host country nationals;
- Further development of work addressing stereotypes and cultural difference;
- More information to be translated into other languages;
- Racism, hate crimes, xenophobia and/or suspicion towards migrants;
- High levels of social isolation;
- Social and cultural barriers, including from women’s own families and communities, impacting on women’s participation and integration;

#### **Education and Training**

- Lower entrance thresholds to maximise engagement;
- Support with progression between offer/services etc.;
- Increased access to educational opportunities;

- More opportunities to learn the language;
- Need for recognition of diplomas and qualifications, skills assessment and/or job orientation;
- Programmes which target and are responsive to the needs and availability of migrant women with young children;

#### **Equality and Human Rights**

- Recognition of the additional barriers and discrimination faced by LGBTI migrants;
- Many migrant women fall outside mainstream services;

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

- Migrants' lack of knowledge about their rights and the opportunities available;
- Reflection on personal technical and transversal skills based on personal experiences to support positioning/repositioning in the world of work and address or make choices appropriate to personal/professional path;
- Excessive bureaucracy;

#### **Resources**

- Cuts to public funding;

#### **Work, Work experience, Employability and Volunteering**

- Migrant women need better access to the labour market and recognition of their skills, education and work experience;
- Restrictive labour market and 60-day time limit for migrants to find a new job in order to avoid legal issues relating to their right to stay in the country;

#### *2.4.2. Barriers to Integration*

Migrant women face many barriers to integration and these can also vary depending on their country of origin, reason for migrating, legal status in partner/home country, whether first or second generation migrants, whether they have a work permit, where they are in the asylum system, whether or not they have any previous experience of formal education, their language skills and whether they are literate in the host country's language and/or their home language. Migrant women involved in our study have identified many different barriers to integration and the examples they provided covered a wide range of areas and issues which fell into nine main categories (as shown in Table 2.1). Language barriers and cultural/intercultural barriers were identified as key barriers in interviews in all partner countries and were perceived to have the biggest impact. Language is needed to overcome all or most other of the other barriers identified. Personal and social barriers were the other main barriers identified across most partner reports. It is important to add that some women reported that they do not feel they face any barriers and that they feel integrated.

Table 2.1: *Barriers to migrant women integration*

<b>Barriers identified</b>	<b>Examples provided</b>
<b>Language barriers</b>	Not knowing or understanding the language / Not being able to understand information about services etc. / Not being able to communicate / Not understanding people, idioms or jokes
<b>Cultural barriers</b>	Lack of interest or understanding of migrants' lives, experiences, cultural backgrounds and/or religion by people in host country / Misunderstanding, e.g. about Muslim people / Feeling that you are being watched / People saying inappropriate things / Not understanding the culture or politics / Racism / Xenophobia / Hate crimes / Verbal abuse / Being treated as a foreigner / Different food / Not being invited to join activities or community events / Different lifestyles / Cultural differences / People being so busy / People sticking within their own cultures and communities
<b>Personal and social barriers</b>	Loneliness / Having no friends/ Social isolation / Difficulties meeting people and making friends / Lack of opportunities for communication with people from host country / Low levels of confidence / Shyness /Embarrassment / Discomfort / Fear / Family problems / Being away from and missing family / Not being part of networks /Lack of social and emotional support / Issues relating mental health and culture shock
<b>Accessing services</b>	Lack of information about what services or support are available and/or difficulty accessing services/ Not knowing who to ask / Not understanding systems or bureaucratic requirements, e.g. social security, entitlements / Not understanding transport
<b>Basic needs</b>	Poverty / High cost of living in partner country / Not being able to afford to get involved or take up opportunities / Homes with no heating / Cold weather
<b>Work/ Volunteering</b>	Being unemployed / Difficulty finding work or volunteering opportunities / Low pay / Poor or unfair working conditions / Difficulty getting references / Qualifications not being recognised (See also below)
<b>Issues specifically affecting women</b>	Domestic violence and abuse / FGM / Men prohibiting migrant women from having contact with other people / Different cultural attitudes e.g. gender roles, sexual orientation, women feeling unable to swim due to need to cover body and hair / Lack of opportunities to meet other mothers with young children / Unfair or difficult working conditions impacting on women including lower pay, weekend work, extra duties etc.
<b>Education and training</b>	Difficulty accessing education and training
<b>Other</b>	Feeling there are too many refugees; BREXIT

### **3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS**

Policy implications of the INTEGR8 approach:

- INTEGR8 approach is an element in a chain of several measures that would be needed in a successful integration process. It is important to have this kind of bottom-up process (rather than a top-down process) nowadays, since political support and funding for integration measures are decreasing (at the moment, the political focus seem to rely more on preventing people from coming into the country rather than supporting integration). INTEGR8 approach is a positive one, not based on penalties, but rather making migrant women more visible in society, contributing positively in terms of education and training.
- The innovative and unique character of INTEGR8 project will be valuable at a national level (e.g. migration integration services, authorities, etc.). This makes INTEGR8 project a ‘good practice in the area of migration integration’, as it can help address a gap in the national content and improve the practice and decision-making process.
- As influencers and agenda setters, policy makers need to embrace the project approach and use it to mobilise communities to promote integration, recognising the fact that communities play a crucial role in making those living within them feel at home. The project is a genuine step forward promoting Migrant Integration Experts as conduits of integration. It is a cost-effective and sustainability model once the micro-social networks are realised and established. The INTEGR8 training curriculum is unique in terms of the quality and comprehensiveness of the information assembled; is augmented by the train-the-trainer programme that ensures the curriculum is facilitated by qualified and experienced tutors; and encompasses different delivery methods to address all learning styles. The activities contained within are thought-provoking which encourage rich discussions in a safe environment. The fact that the training curriculum and approach encourages reaching out within the host community and including local women in the micro-social networks makes it an approach of equality and inclusiveness.
- INTEGR8 is a positive example of a bottom-up integration initiative, rather than a top-down institution-led action deciding how integration should be planned and implemented on a local level. INTEGR8 empowered migrant women to take charge of and manage their own integration in their host community which is a positive case study that could be support by these policy recommendations. INTEGR8 recognises the role that women play in community development and community cohesion and also prioritised the engagement and capacity building of a target group (i.e. migrant women) that is often under-presented in regional and national policies. As an immediate policy implication here: the establishment of a community integration grant

scheme to provide funding to support grass-roots activities and replicate the intervention. These funds should be widely promoted and advertised locally and the application process simply.

- There should be a high value placed on achieving close cooperation among the European nations to reach common goals in relation to supporting integration and INTEGR8 provides an effective model to do this across the EU. As existing programmes and policies still have room for improvement in integration outcomes for migrant women in the EU, taking a structured approach as the one in INTEGR8 to pursuing migrant women's active engagement in integration support is highly important to finding enhanced solutions. By providing spaces for women to develop confidence in a safe and supportive environment, they can then take that confidence outside of the training space to share with more women and people around them in general.
- Anything that can help migrant women to be involved in community will be a very useful experience for the policy makers to realise what it works and what it does not; for stakeholders it is always good to learn from the experience accumulated during the implementation of such projects. Thus, INTEGR8 can support the policies becoming more permissive and quite friendly to the facilitation of migrant women's access to different social levels. Policy makers should use the INTEGR8 results to shape future actions for migrant integration.

As the scope of the INTEGR8 Policy Paper is to present recommendations and suggestions for the policy makers, of what should be done to support integration within EU by using migrant women as integration experts, the following key issues should be on their focus, as critical success factors:

- ***Support migrant women to playing an increased role in achieving integration, by properly training and helping them***

Policy change should envisage the training of migrant women to help them become role-models in their communities, to take leadership roles in a range of civil society organisations, especially schools, but also faith organisations and campaign groups. Empowering migrant women, who in turn empower others (family, other people, community), is a crucial activity as women can achieve self-, family- and society-wide changes. When properly trained, migrant women have the tools, awareness and ability to move forward in society and take positive steps towards integration: create and facilitate groups which can be totally inclusive of women from both host and migrant communities; model the right attitude and behaviour that can influence and challenge other migrant women to embrace integration by creating opportunities for exchange. By establishing and facilitating micro-social networks, created space and opportunities for women to put into practice what they had learned; lead their own integration but also have a significant impact on their family and children's beliefs and

attitudes. Training and support can enhance the voices migrant women already have: it allows them to understand better the structures surrounding them, so they gain more tools for action.

- ***Foster the integration of migrant women by addressing existing barriers***

There are several barriers experienced by migrant women when trying to integrate, with language difficulties and illiteracy being two of the greatest. The lack of language skills can undermine confidence and self-esteem amongst the migrant women.

The ‘cultural clash’ is another barrier, as many immigrant families are coming from countries with strong traditions. Immigrants should accept that there are some aspects from their home country that can be accepted, and some that cannot. They should also understand the benefits of participation and that their integration does not mean forgetting about their cultures, but to be open to the culture of the country where they intend to live. Natural integration means to accept differences and enjoy the multicultural aspects.

There are also contrasting cultural gender roles especially in relation to the role of women in the home and this can undermine the economic empowerment of migrant women. New policies should bring appropriate gender roles for migrant women in employment, education, family and civil engagement.

Migrant women’s lack of professional qualification, correlated with the lack of funding supports allow them provisions for the period when they attend professional training classes also represent obstacles in terms of equality of access and economic integration.

Often the lack of information about available supports and services in host communities can present as a barrier but so too can a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the similarities that exist within the host community. Knowing the history and contemporary issues of the host country can help migrant women to identify similarities and feel somewhat more connected to the host country.

Psychological and psychosocial barriers where they exist make migrant women feel socially and emotionally isolated, alone or depressed, thus it is extremely difficult for them to feel motivated to participate.

Discrimination from mainstream society is also impacting negatively on migrant women. Prejudice such as preventing migrant women from getting jobs, progressing at work or accessing services exacerbate the struggles of migrant women.

*Additional barriers* impacting on women’s integration include:

- access to health services, including inability to provide accessible childcare for migrant women/families;

- the need for outreach in order to reach those most in need with information about services;
- fear of travelling out of the area;
- limited representation of migrant women in a variety of societal roles, both in migrant and host communities;
- potentially limited access to education, training and employment opportunities and services; and
- gender discrimination (migrant women are paid less for the same work as migrant men).

***Put in place the needed support to foster the networking of migrant women and thus address the integration gap at community level, use appropriate model(s) of support together with necessary resources***

A successful model of support should address the identified integration barriers, should have sufficient funding, should consider language skills, should make sure the involvement of both communities (migrant communities and communities from the host country), and should consider the health care aspect. It should be needs-based, approachable and easily accessible, simple and user-friendly and should have an online form with appropriate open education resources (OER). Any integration model should build on civil society organisations sending strong messages to celebrate diversity and facilitate the involvement of people.

Moving beyond the remit of the micro-social networks and in consultation with the MIEs, the proposed model of support is an ongoing or next-phase model, based on the concept of mentoring circles. Mentoring circles are a form of group mentoring that encourages participants from all backgrounds or levels of ability to propose and own a topic of interest. It would build on the new skills and capabilities of the MIEs. This model gives motivated MIEs an avenue to grow within their local community and opens the door for all women to find or create a circle that motivates them. Once a circle is created, other women interested in similar aims of personal development, integration, discussions, connections can join and participate. These circles can occur virtually or in person depending on the women's needs. The resources needed for this model include a person-in-charge or circle leader, a meeting space and a social messaging service to schedule the sessions. It is important to the migrant women that the circle leader is a fellow migrant who has had a similar journey.

Additional support-tools and resources should include:

- involving volunteers and NGOs to undertake outreach;
- implementing community-based projects with and for migrant women;
- performing large consultations with the target groups and using strengths-based and participatory approaches;
- offering places where migrant women can meet persons and organisations able to provide them information, knowledge and support;



- acquiring the monitoring and follow-up of migrant women situation;
- organising socio-cultural events with migrant women and host communities.

*Use the merits of the INTEGR8 methodology and its up-scaling potential*

One of the major values of the INTEGR8 approach and methodology is that it empowers migrant women through peer learning, i.e. women training/supporting other women from their communities. It promotes networking: it creates support groups within migrant women communities in the host country and then inter-connects these support groups, creating networks and involving support organisations.

INTEGR8 methodology is innovative, creative and personalised, as it is based on the individual migrant woman's needs and context.

The INTEGR8 methodology encourages debate, research, relationship building, identification of barriers and solutions, recognising similarities and difference and promotes inter-cultural and intra-cultural dialogue in a safe and trust-filled environment. Hence, its merits which include: face-to-face interaction with peers; sharing stories and experiences; fostering relationships; inclusive, strengths-based and participatory training; hands-on and practical training and support sessions – participants can easily buy into the ideas, join in and embrace them; empowering migrant women to identify barriers to and opportunities for integration, and develop their own responses; increasing the number of trained and employable workers in society (with less use of state-based benefits); flexibility in scaling up to cover a broader geographic and sector scope; immediately putting migrant women in a position of serving as role models, important for their own confidence as well as presenting possibilities to other migrants in the community.

In terms of scaling-up and exploiting the methodology of INTEGR8, there is potential to work within the school environment to create young leaders of integration. At organisational level, there is potential to have integration leaders to fight racism and promote inclusiveness.

The INTEGR8 methodology has the potential to be extended at community level, it has a universal applicability, it can be used by public authorities or different organisations involved in the migrant integration process. It allows better communication between the decision makers and the migrant women and establishes a line to the EU policies.

*From a policy perspective, if integration is to be achieved, it is necessary to continue to work with and alongside migrant women to develop and design a coherent integration strategy that is clearly understood by all stakeholders.*

#### **4. CONCLUDING NOTE**

Migration in EU needs to be better managed in all its aspects; through a new European Agenda on Migration, the EU aims at providing its Member States with tools to do so in the medium as well as long term. Specific solutions viable at local/regional level, like INTEGR8, can add to the centralized effort and help increase the effectiveness of integration measures.

EU migration policy will succeed if underpinned by effective integration policies. The EU has employed different financial instruments (AMIF, ERDF, ESF) to fund integration related priorities. For the programming period 2014 to 2020, at least 20% of ESF resources will contribute to social inclusion, which includes measures for the integration of migrants with a particular focus on those seeking asylum and refugees as well as on children. The funds can support targeted initiatives to improve language and professional skills, improve access to services, promote access to the labour market, inclusive education foster inter-cultural exchanges and promote awareness campaigns targeting both host communities and migrants (European Agenda on Migration, 2015). INTEGR8 is the evidence that such financial support can boost integration.

Integration is about playing an active role in the local, regional and national community. There is need for ongoing support to bolster migrant women's self-belief to become leaders of integration at community level. INTEGR8 demonstrated that if properly trained, migrant women (who usually face multiple forms of discrimination) can play such a role, be effective in fostering exchanges between migrants and host communities and become experts to support integration of their immigrant communities.

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