Hand in Hand: Social and Economic Inclusion of Newcomers

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EESC
European Network of Migrant Women

- 50+ members org
- Individual members
- 20 EU states
- Brussels office
- Feminist
- International
- Non Partisan
- Secular
- Non Hierarchical
- Migrant Women Led
- Grassroots
- Members Driven
Why Female Migrants?

• Many third country nationals (TCN) in Europe are overqualified or over-skilled for their jobs and women tend to have particularly low employment rates. Even though they are more educated than migrant men, they experience de-skilling than other women and migrant men (EIGE Report, 2016). Their skills and qualifications are not completely utilised.

• Related to these, a special focus on migrant women’s labour integration has been found as indispensable in the EU Action Plan for Third-Country Nationals adopted in 2016.
Why Volunteering?

Promoting immigrant volunteering has been on the agenda of many EU states since they have realised the potential and advantages it might bring.

The need to provide immigrants with voluntary work opportunities has also been referred in the Common Agenda for Integration adopted in 2005.

However, ‘Immigrant volunteering’ has been mentioned mostly in relation to ‘increasing civic participation, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue and cultural awareness’ (Handbook of Integration for Policy makers and Practitioners, 2010).
Skills and Competences Through Volunteering?

- Volunteering as an integration method has been highly beneficial to any participant and the receiving society. However, there is a lack of knowledge and data about migrant volunteering in European countries.
Partners: Belgium, Cyprus, France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom

As a multi-agency cooperation project, SMART Volunteering aims to fill this gap by exploring understanding of volunteering among migrant women and the crucial roles of civil society organizations and business actors in creating the conditions conducive to social integration.
Methodology

TARGET GROUP I: Migrant / Third Country National (TCN) Women

Method
- Desk Research
- Focus Groups
- Individual Interviews
- Questions-Activities

Participants
- Variability in ethnic background
- (Highly) skilled migrant women.
- Total of 55 women

Analysis
- Emerging themes in discussion
- Group consensus & dissenting views
- Degree of conviction in responses
- Key Similarities & Differences

Key Questions
- Main challenges TCN women face in getting access to employment in partner countries
- How volunteering responds to TCN women’s socio-economic integration needs
- Main perceptions and understanding of volunteering amongst TCN women

In conducting interviews and focus groups partners aimed at adopting a FEMINIST METHODOLOGY which encourages a more reflexive and reciprocal approach seeking to neutralise the hierarchical power relations inherent to traditional interview structures.
Methodology

TARGET GROUP II: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) / NGOs

Method
Desk Research
Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants
Representatives of CSOs/NGOs
Experienced with volunteers
Total of 31 organisations

Analysis
Legal VS Cultural barriers
Most common needs & problems
Gaps between perceptions & needs

Key Questions
- Existing volunteering programs & opportunities available to TCN women
- Perceptions and understanding about volunteering
- Barriers to volunteering
- Transferable skills TCN women can gain through voluntary work
- Legal and administrative framework for working as a volunteer in partner countries
Methodology

TARGET GROUP III: Business Organisations

Method
- Desk Research
- Online Surveys
- Interviews

Participants
- Small scale companies
- Medium scale companies
- Total of 90 companies

Analysis
- Legal VS Cultural barriers
- Most common needs & problems
- Gaps between perceptions & needs

Key Questions
- Perceptions about and barriers to volunteering for migrants & refugees
- Internal Equality policies & protocols on ethnic/racial & women's representation
- Legal and administrative framework for working as a volunteer in partner countries
- Training needs for working with volunteers & ethnic groups
- Barriers faced in working with ethnic minority groups / migrants
- Available mentoring & training schemes within business entities
Conclusions

Migrant women are motivated to integrate into social and economic life if/when they are provided with necessary support and tools. Even though their reasons for moving to Europe vary, they all aspire to study, be trained and get proper jobs suitable to their qualifications.

Most migrant women believe that volunteering can play an important role in their self-development, access to labour market, engaging in community and coping with uncertainty. This should be recognised by different actors, and volunteering should be easily accessible to all women from different backgrounds.

Training, volunteering, internship, and educational programs can be among the best methods to develop migrant women’s skills. However, there should be a combination of training and opportunities to use these skills in the labour market.

Helping other people and feeling useful is the biggest reason for TCN women to volunteer, but many volunteering positions do not offer enough opportunities, which demotivates them to do volunteering in long term.
Migrant Women's Skills

- Academic Degrees
- Working Experience
- Vocational Training
- Certificates
- Different Languages

Migrant Women's Needs

- Networking & Contacts
- Communication & Interpersonal Skills
- Social & Legal Support & Guidance
- Certification of existing skills
- Professional Language Skills

In the post-migration period the 'dream' objectives of migrant women turn into 'available' objectives due to barriers.

Barriers

- Lack of knowledge on available volunteering opportunities
- Difficulties in balance between volunteering & job seeking time
- Lack of Required Skills
- Lack of inter-agency cooperation

Discrimination & Social Exclusion
- Family Obligation & Lack of Child Care
- Legal & Economic Dependency
- Non recognition of existing skills
- Lack of Professional Language Skills
- Lack of awareness among authorities
Most women, especially newcomers, are left without guidance and cannot easily access information on national system, training and employment opportunities. More coordination between authorities and support are required to help women achieve their goals.

Benefits of Volunteering for Migrant Women

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL**: Empowerment, Confidence, feeling valued & recognised, Feeling connected to community
- **SOCIAL**: Eased & improved integration, New friends & contacts, Being socially active
- **ECONOMIC**: Increased & acquired skills, Job-related networks, Legal & economic knowledge, Confidence in job seeking

Key Challenges Faced by Migrant Women in Volunteering

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL**: Keeping up the motivation to continue volunteering in long term
- **SOCIAL**: Lack of time, Burden of Family, Unstructured & inefficient state support
- **ECONOMIC**: Pressure to find paid jobs, Focus on youth volunteering & lack of opportunities for women above 30 to move from volunteering to employment
Skills Acquired by Migrant Women through Volunteering in CSOs

Communication
Interpersonal
Multi-Tasking
Teamwork
Self-Efficacy

Cultural Awareness
Writing
Digital & ICT
Self Confidence
Time Management

TCN women mostly volunteer to help other newcomers through interpretation & sharing information on legal-administrative system. Ethical reservations of NGOs about unpaid tasks limit the chances of TCN women for whom volunteering is the only opportunity to develop their skills.

Main Barriers Faced by CSOs in Providing Volunteering

Lack of recruitment strategies to reach migrant women
Lack of time & resources
Lack of information on rules & regulations on volunteering
Miscommunication

Cultural & religious differences
Lack of knowledge on how to make volunteering available for TCN women
Ethical considerations of not using unpaid labour
Lack of language skills of migrant women
There is a shortage of information & lack of awareness about the 'formal' volunteering and the advantages it might bring, among CSOs

**Key Benefits for CSOs in Working with Volunteers**

- Combatting stereotypes about migrant communities & migrant women specifically
- Creating diverse & gender balanced team
- Contributing to social cohesion in communities
- Improving self-image in the eyes of partners, funders and communities
- Volunteering is particularly beneficial for grassroots NGOs

**Key Challenges Faced by Migrant Women in Volunteering**

- Unorganised Voluntary Work
- Lack of social support from organisations
- Lack of training & skill development in volunteering
- Financial pressure to engage in paid activities
Training Needs of Business Sector

- Gender Equality
- Intercultural Awareness
- Managing Diverse Groups
- Social Inclusion
- Interfaith Dialogue
- Interviewing Skills
- Conflict Management
- Engagement with Ethnic Minorities
- Intercultural Teamwork
- Negotiations Skills

Most private companies believe that business sector does not have sufficient knowledge and awareness of the diverse groups in Europe.

Main Barriers to Volunteering Reported by Business Sector

- Cultural differences
- Prejudice & Lack of Trust
- Unreliability
- Bad time management
- Lack of relevant skills
- Language barriers
- Different work ethos & culture
- Integration Problems

Language barriers, lack of relevant skills and difference in cultures are the most frequently mentioned challenges by the business sector.
Diversity in Private Sector: Key Elements

- 78% of participants have not taken any training programme about working with disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities.
- Only 22.2% have training experiences in cultural awareness, disability/accessibility, diversity strategies, disabled migrants and intercultural education.
- Almost 54% have experience in working with ethnic minorities.
- Only 11% have specific strategies to connect to ethnic minorities.

- Communication is encountered as a challenge for companies, as well as for the interns, however, the internship programs do not provide them with such skills.
- Internship programmes focus on professional, technical skills and the number of coaching/mentoring programs remains low.

Despite the striking lack of diversity skills in business community, most do not see the need to improve their cultural & gender equality skills. This can be explained by the lack of sensitivity and of information on the possible contribution these groups can make in the business sector.