



# Integration of migrant women in the EU: Policies and measures

EMN INFORM

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## 1. KEY POINTS

- A majority of European Union (EU) Member States have integration policies in place, but few specifically address women in those policies. This could be due, at least in part, to the gender mainstreaming approach followed by most Member States. In addition, some pursue a dual approach that combines gender mainstreaming with targeted policies for migrant women.
- Responsibility for integration policies is shared between the national, regional and local levels in the majority of Member States. While integration is dealt with at national level in some cases, the majority highlight the importance of involving municipalities, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in policy implementation.
- The integration of migrant women is currently not a national policy priority in most Member States, **although some have prioritised the topic, usually to improve gender equality.**
- **Labour market integration of migrant women is an important topic of debate across the Member States**, including barriers to access such as a lack of recognition of qualifications and language obstacles. Migrant women lack awareness of their labour market rights and incentives to seek education and work opportunities. **Other challenges include discrimination, a lack of social networks, limited access to childcare and other family constraints.**
- Overall, Member States **acknowledge the need for specific integration policies tailored to migrant women.** Most have developed dedicated policies that address the integration of migrant women, primarily in relation to accessing the labour market, civic integration, language training, education and health. Other specific policies address housing, protection from violence, prevention and protection from human trafficking, countering anti-discrimination and racism, and integration through sport.
- Several good practice integration measures that are gender sensitive or intersectional have been implemented across the Member States. Their focus is mainly on access to the labour market and civic integration, followed by language training, education, health, housing and entrepreneurship. Other measures concern other types of assistance, such as psychosocial or parenting support.
- The majority of Member States did not develop specific integration policies nor adapt their existing policies to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women. This is largely because the situation of migrant women was addressed in policies targeting migrants overall, or in national COVID-19 policies. Member States that developed specific integration policies directly targeting migrant women during the COVID-19 pandemic typically envisaged counselling and multisectoral assistance from NGOs, as well as residence permit extensions.
- Several Member States are planning **new policies or amendments to existing policies so as to enhance integration of migrant women**, including addressing the impact of COVID-19.



## 2. AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This EMN study documents the extent to which EU Member States consider the distinct situation of migrant women in their integration policies and measures. It focuses on the integration of migrant women in the main sectoral areas covered by the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027<sup>1</sup> and considered the basis for societal integration, namely education and training, employment and skills, health and housing. This study uses the term 'integration' in a broad sense, to encompass integration and inclusion policies and measures addressing migrant women.

*Integration policies* refer to targeted integration strategies and action plans but also broader policy instruments relevant to the integration of migrant women, such as sector-specific government programmes (health, education, employment, housing, etc.). *Measures* include systematic initiatives (multi-year / long term), projects (ad hoc) and legislative (structural) measures used to implement the integration policies (including those funded by government and implemented by NGOs).



## 3. MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE EU

In 2020, the population of the 27 EU Member States (EU-27) plus Norway was 452 687 496, 51% of whom were women, with their share in Member States varying between 49% and 53%. In that same year, third-country nationals represented 5% of the population (up from 4% in 2016). Unlike the overall population, men accounted for 51% of third-country nationals.

Between 2016 and 2020, nearly 11.5 million<sup>2</sup> first permits were granted to migrants from third countries by the EU Member States and Norway, with a peak of 2.9 million (25%) in 2019. Poland issued the highest number of permits from 2016-2020 (3.2 million), followed by Spain (1.3 million) and France (1.2 million). Remunerated activities account for the largest proportion of first permits granted

(36%), followed by family reasons (28%), other reasons (23%)<sup>3</sup> and education reasons (13%). All countries except Lithuania showed a decrease in the number of first permits granted in 2020 compared to 2019, which could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions.

First permits granted for remunerated activities across the EU Member States and Norway during 2016-2020 were skewed towards male migrants. By contrast, permits issued for family reasons show a higher share of female migrants across the EU Member States and Norway (with the exception of Cyprus and Spain).



## 4. OVERARCHING INTEGRATION POLICIES TOWARDS MIGRANT WOMEN

Most participating Member States have integration policies in place.<sup>4</sup> These can be categorised into three main policy approaches towards migrant women that are not necessarily mutually exclusive: no gender focus in integration policies,<sup>5</sup> integration policies with a specific focus on migrant women,<sup>6</sup> and integration policies with a gender mainstreaming approach.<sup>7</sup>

In 10 Member States, the integration of migrant women is a national policy priority,<sup>8</sup> which is specifically mentioned in their integration policies and action plans, usually with the aim of achieving gender equality. In most Member States, however, the integration of migrant

women is not a policy priority.<sup>9</sup> While some place the responsibility for integration policies at national level,<sup>10</sup> most Member States<sup>11</sup> share that competence between national, regional and local levels.

The majority of the Member States have developed dedicated policies to address the integration of migrant women in different areas, with 140 examples reported. The two main areas reported by 17 Member States<sup>12</sup> are labour market (and entrepreneurship)<sup>13</sup> and civic integration<sup>14</sup>, with 34 policies apiece. Language training<sup>15</sup> and education<sup>16</sup> were the next most common sectors, with 32 and 29 policies, respectively, followed by 24 policies

1 European Commission, 'EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027', COM(2020) 758 final, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uid=CDFE0088-C151-66D5-846F7C422DE2A423>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.

2 Data for DE and FI not available for 2016-2018; No data available for MT and SK.

3 First permits granted for 'other reasons' include: international protection status, refugee status and subsidiary protection, humanitarian reasons, residence only, other reasons not specified, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking of human beings.

4 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, SK.

5 BG, CY, EE, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SI.

6 AT, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, LT, MT, NL, SE.

7 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LU, MT, SE, SK.

8 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, SE.

9 BG, EE, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, SI, SK.

10 CY, SI, SK.

11 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE.

12 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI, SK.

13 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI, SK.

14 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI, SK.

15 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI.

16 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, PL, SE.

relating to health<sup>17</sup> and 12 policies focusing on housing.<sup>18</sup> Nineteen other specific policies existed in 12 Member States, covering protection from violence, prevention and

protection from human trafficking, countering anti-discrimination and racism, and integration through sport.<sup>19</sup>



## 5. OVERARCHING INTEGRATION POLICIES TOWARDS MIGRANT WOMEN

Member States put forward 54 good practice examples of integration measures.<sup>20</sup> Five Member States did not identify any examples.<sup>21</sup> Less than half (20 measures<sup>22</sup>) of the examples specifically target migrant women, while the remainder address migrants generally. The examples cover six main integration areas, with the largest share focusing on the labour market (26)<sup>23</sup> or civic integration (25),<sup>24</sup> followed by measures relating to education and training (23)<sup>25</sup> and language training (21).<sup>26</sup> A small share of measures address access to health (11)<sup>27</sup> and housing (five),<sup>28</sup> or support for entrepreneurship (five).<sup>29</sup> In addition, 12 measures concern other forms of assistance, such as psychosocial or parenting support.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of **duration**, the largest share (over one-third) of the measures considered good practice lasted from

one to three years, while under one-third of measures have been running for 10 years or more. The largest share of measures were implemented by NGOs and funded through EU and/or state funds, while the remainder were implemented by public sector organisations only or through partnerships of two or more organisations. Member States highlighted several obstacles to implementation, regardless of the type of area covered, with the largest share of measures encountering difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other obstacles were the lack of childcare preventing migrant women from participating in activities, difficulties in reaching the site of the activities, or accessing a stable internet connection to take part in online sessions, and language barriers.



## 6. RESPONSES TO COVID-19 AND FUTURE PLAN AND OUTLOOK

When implementing their measures, most Member States experienced challenges related to COVID-19, such as delays or restrictions limiting the number of participants or banning in-person participation. Nevertheless, a majority of Member States<sup>31</sup> did not develop specific integration policies or adapt their existing policies to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on migrant women. Eight Member States<sup>32</sup> considered the situation of migrant women to be sufficiently addressed in wider migrant integration policies or in cross-cutting COVID-19 policies targeting society as a whole. By contrast, one Member State<sup>33</sup> provided examples of integration policies that specifically targeted migrant women during the

COVID-19 pandemic. These integration policies focused on different areas of intervention, such as counselling and multisectoral direct assistance from NGOs.<sup>34</sup>

Four Member States<sup>35</sup> indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted new challenges for migrant women, which they subsequently sought to address by developing new measures targeting labour market and entrepreneurship,<sup>36</sup> education,<sup>37</sup> adoption of hygiene and behavioural rules (e.g. social distancing),<sup>38</sup> language training,<sup>39</sup> socioeconomic inclusion and civic integration,<sup>40</sup> health<sup>41</sup> and protection from gender-based violence. Eight other Member States<sup>42</sup> reported planned policy

17 AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

18 CY, CZ, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, MT, SE, SI, SK.

19 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, NL, SI.

20 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE.

21 BG, HU, PL, SI, SK.

22 AT, BE, DE, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, MT, NL.

23 Examples provided by AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, SE.

24 Examples provided by AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL.

25 Examples provided by AT, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, SE.

26 Examples provided by AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE.

27 Examples provided by BE, CZ, ES, FR, IE, LU, MT.

28 Examples provided by CZ, ES, IT.

29 Examples provided by BE, CZ, EE, IT.

30 Examples provided by BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, HR, IT, FR, LU, SE.

31 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.

32 AT, BE, CY, CZ, FR, LU, NL, SK.

33 DE.

34 DE.

35 AT, BE, DE, SE.

36 AT, BE, DE, SE.

37 AT.

38 DE.

39 BE, DE, SE.

40 BE, DE.

41 AT.

42 BE, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL.

developments. These future plans target the inclusion of migrant women in more general measures targeting migrants, in specific measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in dedicated integration measures for migrant women in different areas.

The EU's policy direction on gender equality and anti-discrimination overall, and in asylum, migration, and integration more specifically, draws on gender-specific approaches for groups facing particular challenges, while the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 favours a dual approach of gender mainstreaming complemented by gender-specific actions, together with intersectionality in implementation. These policies and measures should be further analysed and shared across the EU in the months and years to come.

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Romania <https://www.mai.gov.ro/>

Spain <https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/emn-Spain/>

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