

Women4 Integration

A journey into migrant women's inclusion

Recommendations and inspirations for practice



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and the W-IN project network

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Women 4

Integration: a

journey into migrant

women's inclusion.

Recommendations and inspirations for practice.

Introduction

This booklet results from a process of collective reflection and co-learning between the partners of the "Women4Integration – From neighbourhood to Europe" project, co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund between 2020 and 2022. Over the last two years, we have discussed improving the social and financial conditions of women with migratory backgrounds in European cities, starting from our direct experience in four highly stigmatised and multicultural neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Malmö, and Milan. Sharing thoughts, knowledge and expertise and comparing the different practices and policy frameworks in the various European countries, we came to understand the need for a more profound acknowledgement of the multiple social and territorial challenges connected to migrant women's inclusion in the labour market.

This booklet wants to create a dialogue with social workers, local operators and policymakers to offer food for thought and practical suggestions to develop more effective and sensitive inclusion paths and policies at the intersection between gender, migratory and territorial issues.

This booklet consists of three parts.

The first part provides an **overview** of the project's goals and activities. It describes the network of organisations and areas involved in the experimentation. This part also illustrates the methodology we have developed to conduct the project, combining local activities and translocal discussions.

The second part introduces the **project's vision**. It reports a theoretical and practical framework towards a common vision and a shared approach to the social and labour inclusion of women with a migratory background.

The third part contains **ten recommendations** which solicit a critical look at the inclusion of women with migrant backgrounds and, simultaneously, offer those directly involved ideas to innovate how they work. Concrete examples of activities and initiatives are provided in "inspiring practices", which can help readers put the suggestions into practice.

1. **Women 4 integration.**

**A network within
four European
neighborhoods**



1.1 The project's goals and the network

The project Women4Integration (W-IN) supports the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable women with migrant backgrounds in multicultural and marginalised neighbourhoods of large European cities, testing the importance of labour market inclusion as an interrelated component of social integration.

The project was carried out in four districts, namely San Siro in Milan (Italy), Raval in Barcelona (Spain), East and South-East areas in Amsterdam (The Netherlands), and Rosengård in Malmö (Sweden). These areas have high migrant concentrations, unemployment rates, and a low degree of participation in the surrounding society, especially among migrants.

Some women are vulnerable due to a mix of individual and societal factors that negatively affect their active community participation. This causes disproportionate obstacles in accessing the labour market. However, it's essential to consider the diversity of women's profiles, not only in terms of nationality. These women have different backgrounds, migration paths, family structures, and financial and cultural conditions that shape their needs, aspirations, and expectations of integration and determine their local community experiences. Some may be fragile, traumatised, or low-income, while others may be skilled and with solid social relationships. Their simplified representation as vulnerable, passive subjects can deny them the role and recognition as active agents in society and any legitimisation of speaking for themselves.

The project addresses the challenge of social and spatial segregation of women with migrant backgrounds, focusing on providing better social, financial, and educational support initiatives considering the importance of labour market inclusion as a driver for social inclusion.

These are the project's four main goals:

1. **Support** women with a migrant background living in marginalised areas to interact with their social environment, promoting their participation in social life and gender equality.
2. **Innovate** the detection and valuation of women's skills to facilitate more sustainable access to the job market.
3. **Promote** and **co-design** a territorially-based approach for integrating women with a migrant background.
4. **Provide** local services, institutions, and private actors with practical methodologies for women with a migrant background integration in marginalised urban areas.

The project combines people and place-based approaches. It works on migrant women's agency in the society, improving their participation in local community social life. It does this by promoting the shift of women from being beneficiaries to becoming active actors through a structured empowerment process. This process considers needs, vulnerabilities, and expectations to foster women's self-esteem and independence, supporting the recognition of their skills and increasing their competencies.

The project enhances the attitude and sensitivity of local community actors by increasing their engagement in the promotion of a different view on migrant women's role in society, highlighting how they can effectively become a resource to the local community. It then increases their engagement in developing tools and methods through which the territory can foster a better integration process.

The project developed an adaptable, scalable and transferrable approach starting from socio-spatial challenges associated with women's integration. It could extend its impact to other European cities using methods adopted by policymakers within integration programmes directed at women with a migrant background.

Soleterre, an Italian foundation working to recognise and enforce the Right to Health, leads the project network. Through the "Work Is Progress" (*work-isprogress.org*) programme, Soleterre worked for over ten years to socially and economically include the most vulnerable people, with long-term experience in interventions with migrant citizens. Soleterre's multidisciplinary team combines the competencies of job counsellors, legal advisors, psychologists, and linguistic and cultural mediators to understand beneficiaries' needs comprehensively. Each person who turns to the programme is supported throughout the process with personalised inclusion paths that integrate different services for the person and their family. Soleterre has its headquarters in the San Siro district in Milan. The W-IN project developed this successful approach with an operational multistakeholder consortium gathering a local authority (**Municipality of Milan**) and two organisations working with women.

Telaio delle Arti (*telaiodellearti.org*) was founded in Milan in 2014 and is located in the San Siro neighbourhood. The association supports vulnerable groups working with creative languages and art therapy to empower people and improve their ability to relate with others and express themselves.

Piano C (*pianoc.it*) is an association dealing with career redesign, job training and social and professional empowerment for women. It works throughout Italy, providing women with tools and support to discover new competencies, enhance their professionalism, focus on their goals, and enact change. The consortium is located in three other European cities, where local partners have experimented with similar approaches to migrant women's inclusion.

Yalla Trappan (*yallatrappan.com*) developed the project in the Rosengård neighbourhood in Malmö (Sweden). It is a non-profit organisation running a social enterprise that supports women with migratory backgrounds to reach financial independence and acquire new skills. Yalla Trappan employs more than 35 people in the different branches of the enterprises, guaranteeing women fair contracts and payments, high-quality training and a pleasing and welcoming working environment.

Netwerkpro (*netwerkpro.org*) is the partner organisation developing the project in Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

It is a social organisation providing training, mentoring and visibility to women through broad, local networks. Their programmes focus on improving women's professional positions so they can independently and confidently develop their talents in the labour market.

In Barcelona (Spain), the project involved **Fundación Surt** (*surt.org*), an NGO with a sound background in the Catalan feminist movement and mainly based in the Raval neighbourhood. SURT stands for women's economic, social and cultural rights and eradicating discrimination based on gender, specifically focusing on those most vulnerable and stigmatised groups, such as transgender and human trafficking victims. The organisation supports public institutions in developing policies and strategies for gender equality.

Two universities have joined the network, supporting the exchange among local partners with a territorially focused research perspective. The Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of **Politecnico di Milano** has developed the action-research initiative Mapping San Siro (*mappingsansiro.polimi.it*). **Malmö University** has started a project of public engagement and active teaching in the Rosengård neighbourhood (*mau.se/en*).

The two universities have supported the methodological development of a territorially-sensitive approach to labour inclusion.

1.2 Four neighbourhoods in dialogue: north vs south European contexts

The four districts discussed are multicultural areas located within major European cities, which suffer from marginalisation and exclusion.

These neighbourhoods have a variegated population, with different cultures and economic and social conditions, embedding more fragile profiles of economic and social deprivation and conflict issues that negatively affect the social participation of inhabitants, particularly women with migratory backgrounds. Nevertheless, these feature active local networks composed of informal groups and associations that work daily to promote social cohesion.

Along with the similarities, the differences in national contexts must be considered when setting the political frameworks and welfare policies. For example, the Netherlands and Sweden have solid welfare systems and public institutions that support migrants through different measures and initiatives. Spain and Italy's migrant integration relies on the non-profit sector and grassroots networks.

Amsterdam Oost and Zuid Oost, Amsterdam

The historical neighbourhood of Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam Oost host many low-income families.

Credit: Arlette Olaerts, Netwerkpro



A training activity to stimulate self-consciousness and self-esteem.

Credit: Arlette Olaerts, Netwerkpro

The area is spread over an extensive section of the city's eastern part, characterised by large and easily accessible green regions and water. Within this vast system, it is possible to identify several sub-neighbourhoods with unique dynamics and multicultural populations. There are three identifiable areas named Transvaal, Indische Buurt in Amsterdam Oost and Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam Zuid Oost, where the Surinamese, Indonesian and Mediterranean people are respectively established.

Inhabitants:

The inhabitants' origin and socio-cultural backgrounds are significantly geographically diverse. Migrants coming above all from Indonesia, Morocco, Turkey, Syria, Eritrea, Iran, and Afghanistan are 63 per cent of the resident population in the southeast and 32 per cent in the east (in the whole city the ratio is 30 per cent).

A relevant element for the description of Amsterdam Oost and Zuid Oost is that the southeastern part of the neighbourhood, which is more characterised by migrants mainly from Africa and Surinam, has the most fragile population with a high rate of poverty and unemployment. In other parts, particularly in the Indische Buurt area, a gentrification process is developing, attracting new activities and social categories.

Neighbourhood:

Since living in the centre of Amsterdam is costly, a process of dispersion towards the suburbs is developing. For this reason, most people living in Amsterdam Oost work in the city centre. However, with the increasing popularity of remote working, the district became home to many co-working spaces, making it possible for people working within the neighbourhood. The phenomenon involved mainly the northern part of the area that started to experience gentrification, while the southern part still lived through a process of fragile migrant population arrivals. In this last area, the municipality began a process of regeneration by developing new buildings and introducing mixed-use buildings and residential areas.

Network:

Amsterdam Oost and Zuid Oost is dotted with organisations and associations supporting the migrant population recognised by the municipality. The Netwerkpro association coordinates with several local actors in the neighbourhood, using the public space and facilities as a meeting place and activator of exchange and training opportunities, such as community centres and libraries. These spaces allow the participants to feel integrated within their areas, as they are a source for free (or inexpensive) activities with participation options for migrant women.

The private sector is also involved in integrating migrant populations. In the area, multiple private networks of organisations wish to contribute to the social and economic promotion of the city's inhabitants.

Raval, Barcelona

Ágora Juan Andrés Benítez, a self-managed space, which works through a weekly assembly to which all matters related to its operation are submitted, is a place where the neighbors can satisfy social needs.

Credit: Xantal Genovart, SURT Foundation



Raval(s) Culture Festival: art and culture give new perspectives.

Credit: Xantal Genovart, SURT Foundation

El Raval is quite a big and central neighbourhood of medieval origins, part of the consolidated city and with a high population density. Its story is strictly linked to migration since the 1920s, it was known as Barcelona's "Chinatown", and its image was correlated with migration, criminality and sex work. However, an urban regeneration process has started since the 2000s and profoundly changed the social asset of the population, contributing to a gentrification process.

Inhabitants:

The neighbourhood population comprises 50 per cent migrants (in the whole city the ratio is 16 per cent) coming from 40 different nationalities. Recently, a significant number of people from Morocco, Pakistan and the Philippines appeared in the district and replaced the previous migrants mainly coming from Southern Spain and Latin America.

Furthermore, the district is rather polarised between the northern part, which is the richest, and the southern part, which is home to the poorest and most disadvantaged. This part is stigmatised by the media due drug addiction, poverty and subletting.

Neighbourhood:

Due to its central location and proximity to the harbor, the neighbourhood is well-connected and accessible by citizens and tourists. Since the beginning of the 2000s, an urban project promoted the development of new public spaces, cultural centres, museums and universities, pushing the neighborhood toward increasing gentrification, especially in the northern part of the district.

Part of the population has been displaced, since many buildings have been demolished and replaced by new residential buildings and facilities targeted mainly newcomers instead of the original population. The intense touristification leads to higher prices and the exit from the housing market for the poorer inhabitants.

Network:

During the last few years, the number of local associations within the district that operate in social inclusion and housing rights has risen to face the increasing gentrification. Among these, SURT is one of the biggest and the most rooted. Located inside Raval, the foundation together with a network of other organisations works with migrant women, reaching more than 200 women supported annually. Moreover, many associations work in the red-light street intending to employ them in the regular market and prevent trafficking of women.

Rosengård, Malmö

A junction for bikes and pedestrians in Rosengård. Traffic separation is a reminder of the modernist planning ideals implemented in this area. It creates a good infrastructure for mobility, but not an environment that could be considered city-like.

Credit: Jonas Alwall, Malmö University



One of the women employed at IKEA after the training with Yallatrappan.

Credit: Alice Ranzini, PoliMi

The Rosengård housing estate is a residential complex housing around 23.000 people, located 15 minutes by bus to the centre of Malmö. It was built during the 1960s and early 70s as part of the "Million Homes Programme", a national housing programme to provide affordable living to the Swedish population, according to the modern style. It comprises towering buildings and vast open green spaces. As social conditions changed, the original population was replaced mainly by migrant and socially vulnerable people, generating a complex and vulnerable social situation. The neighbourhood has largely remained the same, with significant changes planned but yet not implemented.

Inhabitants:

It is an extraordinarily diverse and multicultural neighbourhood: 89 per cent of the population has a migrant background (in the whole city the ratio is 48 per cent) coming from 122 different countries. A good number have a limited grasp of the Swedish language. The most represented groups come from the Middle East or former Yugoslavia; a significant number also from East Africa.

The population suffers from low education and unemployment, considering that just 60 per cent complete elementary school, only 40 per cent have a job, and require municipal social care.

Neighbourhood:

Rosengård was a transnational neighbourhood, a place to pass through rather than stay; residents had an average stay of seven years. Today, according to changes in social conditions, those who arrive there stay much longer.

The original project conceived an industrial area's presence but never implemented to avoid the "dormitory district" effect. There aren't any attractive points or services for people living outside Rosengård, which contribute to the feeling of marginalisation within the district. Things are made worse by a wide main street that divides the neighbourhood.

This situation led to a stigmatised district associated with poverty, crime, or challenges in education divided from the rest of the city.

Network:

Among the district's notable initiatives there is Yallatrappan, a project financed by European funds more than ten years ago. Today, it is an integrated social enterprise working on families, young people and women. Since it is spread across Malmö in different locations, being employed by enterprises through Yallatrappan for the people of Rosengård represents a way of getting out of the neighborhood. Another organisation is Kraftsamling Herrgården, hosted in Varda, a meeting place accessible to the local Rosengård residents. The Varda facility is used mainly by young people, but also by other groups such as mothers, where various other organisations or associations, such as Save The Children, conduct programmes and activities. These organisations act as facilitators towards the community's wants and needs, emphasising collective alliances within a local perspective and long-term sustainable solutions.

San Siro, Milan



The courtyards of San Siro, places of encounter between different people.

Credit: Maria Elena Ponso, PoliMi



The women of San Siro have often practical competencies that can be valued to access the labor market.

Credit: Soleterre Foundation

Located in the city's western sector, the San Siro district is one of Milan's most prominent public housing neighbourhoods. It was built between 1935 and 1947 and houses almost 11,000 inhabitants. However, despite its physical proximity to the city centre, the area is perceived as part of Milan's periphery due to its challenging material and social conditions, ranging from intense intercultural and intergenerational conflicts to poor building maintenance. These conditions led to the growth in feelings of stigmatisation and subsequent marginalisation of the neighbourhood by the city.

Inhabitants:

It is a neighbourhood of complex intercultural existence between Italians and foreigners, with a percentage of residents with migratory backgrounds around 48 per cent (in the whole city, the ratio is 20 per cent). Among the different cultures, there are more than 85 different nationalities, but the broader groups are from Morocco and Egypt. In addition, there is a high percentage of children inhabitants, making San Siro one of Milan's "youngest" districts. It is one of the most fragile areas in the city, particularly from a socio-demographic point of view. It has the highest unemployment rate compared to Milan, low-income populations concentrated in the council houses, and a widespread presence of fragile dwellers like the disabled and elderly, who often live alone. Furthermore, the illegal occupations of empty dwellings contribute to the growth of intern contrast among the population.

Neighbourhood:

The neighbourhood is part of the city's urban fabric, but at the same time, it represents an "enclave" with recognisable forms and boundaries. It coexists in the same area with a wealthy population due to the presence of the city Stadium, which doesn't interact with it. Instead, the media narratives represent San Siro as a "casbah", as the neighbourhood of illegal housing squatting and "of the foreigners", contributing to spreading a sense of unsafety.

Network:

At the same time, San Siro is home to a vibrant network of individuals and organisations known as Sansheroes. They collaborate to support neighbourhood residents and ameliorate living conditions. The work of the Sansheroes network ranges from research-based, policy-oriented initiatives to the provision of daily services such as legal counselling, language courses, provision of goods and more. For some years, several organisations in the district focused on the living conditions of migrant women, providing them with different services and assistance and supporting women to socialise and orient themselves in the neighbourhood and the city.

1.3 The transnational living lab methodology

During the project, we have organised four meetings of three days each in the neighbourhood where the project has been developed. These four sessions were set up as transnational "Living Labs": interactive gatherings promoting open and horizontal dialogue on visions, approaches, and experiences about women with migrant backgrounds and social and economic inclusion. The outcome of these reflections led to the development of a common framework of action summarised in this booklet.

The four living labs have been designed as a unitary and incremental path towards a common vision and a shared approach to the social and labour inclusion of women with a migratory background in Europe. The project, developed as a platform for knowledge exchange among the partners, connected different organizations and places, reinforcing the network through an interactive co-learning process.

Within the four Transnational Living Labs, we experimented with a participatory and situated approach to collectively conducting the project, to promote open dialogue and fruitful mutual learning.

The Transnational Living Labs approach has been:

Inclusive: promoting the exchange among the partners involved in the project. By sharing our thoughts, challenges, and expectations, we promote dialogue and integrate different perspectives and sensitivity.

Experiential: set according to a logic of co-learning between peers and co-conducting the process. During the living labs, local partners played a crucial role in linking the project to their context of action and enhancing the specific features of their territories, communities and networks.

Practice-oriented: focused primarily on partners' practical knowledge and daily experience supporting women with a migrant background. The practice-oriented approach facilitated the mutual understanding between different organisations in diverse countries and with varying points of view on the project's topic.

Circular: with an idea of continuity between reflection and action. By extracting reflections from the field experience to build an everyday theoretical basis and testing theoretical frameworks through practical application.

"How is your neighbourhood?" activity during Milan living lab, sharing information and materials among partners about their districts and workspaces.

Credit: Sara Ghanem, Soletterre Foundation



Building a common framework in Malmö, brainstorming and reflections among participants.

Credits: Alice Ranzini, PoliMI

Site visit and learning from inside territories in Raval and La Mina neighbourhoods during Barcelona living lab.

credits: Daniel Fricke, PoliMI



Final Symposium public event in Amsterdam, sharing project approach and outputs with partners, administrations, associations, and citizens.

Credits: Arlette Olaerts, Netwerkpro

All four living labs had the same format based on three principles of co-learning: sharing knowledge and expertise, discussing inspiring practices, and learning from the territory.

Sharing knowledge and skills consists in setting up a labour story and interactive moments of dialogue and collective re-elaboration of the experiences during the project. During the living labs, the partners expressed their expectations, perspectives and sensitivity concerning the project. Through the elaboration of common analytical thought, they reflected together on the main challenges they face in supporting migrant women, the obstacles, and daily strategies.

Discussing international practices means collecting interesting local and European social and work inclusion case studies from which to learn. These initiatives have been discussed as "inspiring initiatives" that provide operational suggestions for developing new social and work inclusion practices.

Learning from the territory consists of visits and meetings in the neighbourhoods and the cities addressed in the project.

The participants visited the places where their partners intervened, got into their offices, and learned how their peers provide support services to women. They walked across the neighbourhoods where these live, acknowledging the local social and spatial dynamics, and meet with local operators and public officials who promote interesting social and labour inclusion initiatives in the city and discussing the different policy frameworks.

This in-the-field activity allowed a trans-local dialogue, making the participants discuss similarities and differences between areas and differentiated policy and exchange perspectives between professionals in the same sector. At the same time, it was an opportunity to enhance the local specific features in the approach to inclusion, underlining the different ways of interpreting the theme in other contexts.

#1

A territorially sensitive approach to migrant women integration

#2

A common framework of analysis and action

#3

Women and/in the neighborhood: common challenges and local specificities

#4

Supporting migrant women inclusion: what did we learn?

Milan

Malmö

Barcelona

Amsterdam



Pillars of the transnational living lab

Oct 2021

Nov 2022

2. Our vision



2.1. A common framework for migrant women's inclusion

Social and labour inclusion is the outcome of interrelated issues and intertwining dynamics. Even within the most robust welfare systems, inclusion is never a fixed path for beneficiaries or organisations. This uncertainty characterises policy frameworks and operative tools. It requires combining a short-term attitude – i.e. looking at emergent situations and interventions – with a long-term perspective focusing on consolidating tools into policies to produce change.

Being a migrant and a woman, the physical and social environment of the neighbourhood and the city and the functioning of local networks and policies are the three entry points through which we frame the inclusion of women with migrant backgrounds in society and the labour market.

They represent three perspectives whose interdependency and mutual influence are critical to understanding women's needs and developing inclusive and welcoming actions and policies that could change women's self-perceptions and trajectories.

The intersection between these three perspectives is a dynamic multi-perspective framework to analyse and critically evaluate existing measures and strategies at different scales and develop tools and initiatives more sensitive to the contemporary gender and migratory conditions in Western society. This framework suggests the emergence of four interrelated working fields as strategic trajectories of intervention.

We placed women's agency, meaning the possibility of a full expression and development of one's identity, desires and the capacity to reach one's goals at the vision's core. A multi-stakeholders and multiscale concept of inclusion that involves the actors in a common path of mutual recognition and collaboration.



Migrant, woman, other

Some women with migrant experience in Western countries are under-represented actors and voices. So, the first perspective to be considered about inclusion refers to the target, i.e. the woman and her characteristics. The experience of social and urban inclusion of women with migratory backgrounds in marginalised territories is symbolic of the intertwining between class, race, and gender issues in urban societies. These women suffer from "triple discrimination."

The first discrimination is **gender**; they are more likely to be accepted in the arrival communities and integrated into the job market more quickly than men. However, they have access mainly to specific labour branches, such as care work professions, that reproduce gender stereotypes and relegate them into the private and domestic realm. Moreover, an entrenched patriarchal culture has deeply nurtured the misleading idea that men are the leading actors in migration processes. Consequently, women are depicted as passive to their male relatives. They are supposed to suffer from their relatives' decision to move and worsen their living conditions, autonomy and opportunities during migration. However, women have always played a central role in migrations. Since the 2000s, more women have migrated alone to increase their autonomy and social position. At the same time, those who follow their partners play an active role in the family. They are more likely to be in charge of maintaining relationships with the arrival community, even though their function is underestimated.

The second discrimination factor is **race**. Migrant women's inclusion is profoundly affected by our society's biases and narratives that shape perceptions and discourse on diversity. As migrants, they frequently suffer from stigmatisation due to their nationality, religion, or physical features. Moreover, they are often victims of stereotypes about their culture. Familiar narratives in European countries tend to depict migrant women, especially those of Islamic religion, as stuck to traditional gender and family roles and fully embedded in the culture of their origin, which is addressed as the leading cause of their exclusion.

The third discrimination factor is **class**. The financial deprivation that some women experience after moving to another country pushes them into the most marginalised segments of society, amplifying the exclusionary effects of the other deprivation factors, such as the precarious juridical status they might have at the beginning of the migration path. They are more exposed to misrecognition of their previous work experience, educational backgrounds, professional qualifications, and skills, prevented from full participation in the labour market.

The condition of being a woman with a migrant background cannot be taken for granted. It has different nuances in each country and in each woman's path that should be considered and addressed in how these variables affect their capacity to act. Social workers, public officials, professionals, and researchers in the social and economic inclusion field, need to reflect on which categories which define their target group to detect possible biases and preconceived ideas about it. It's essential to consider these women's different conditions and backgrounds, and avoid generalising representations. Providing adequate support means acknowledging all these differences and making them the ground of discourses and initiatives to expand migrant women's agency and support their role in society. Tailored-made support and broad acknowledgement of women's situations are needed, when questioning the separation between social support, community-based initiatives and job placement measures.

Multicultural neighbourhoods, marginal neighbourhoods?

In western cities, migrant communities are deeply affected by impoverishment and stigmatisation. Due to their difficulties settling in the new country, they often find themselves pushed into the more marginalised urban areas. Neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrant population frequently register the highest rates of poverty; they undergo significant public stigmatisation that limits a deep understanding of social and spatial dynamics. Local-scale dynamics such as segregation, gentrification, and urban decay restrict access to opportunities for inclusion, making services, networks, and information less reachable by inhabitants in marginal areas.

The second perspective on inclusion suggests considering **the role of the territory in women with migrant background trajectories** and testing tools and methodologies in the field. This focuses on those spatial dynamics occurring in marginal neighbourhoods that may affect women's paths and everyday life negatively and on material and immaterial elements that may facilitate their inclusion, welcoming and supporting them in their daily needs.

Considering that the neighbourhood could act as an "invisible barrier" to women's integration is essential. Migrants' identities may be strongly stigmatised and addressed as "out of place" by groups with more political power, driving them to fear, mistrust, and self-segregation. These **conflicts**, which may not be visible, can profoundly affect the sense of belonging in the community.

It is necessary to question the entrenched idea that low-income multicult-

tural neighbourhoods are places without resources. This narrative has nourished a misleading representation of migrants as unable to contribute to the well-being of our cities and society and in need of guidance to become full citizens. On the contrary, European multicultural neighbourhoods are **super diverse environments**, mixed in inhabitants' origins and social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. In these areas, the conditions of coexistence between groups and people are determined by many different factors and elements, such as the quality of spaces and facilities, the mix of cultures and ages, or public initiatives.

Public spaces such as gardens, squares and streets, or public services such as public offices, schools, or libraries, are places where people naturally meet and "learn" to deal with diversity. The relationships and the uses of the shared space in these places show the quality of standard inclusion into a territory. These places can strategically support conviviality and mutual recognition among dwellers of different backgrounds by engaging people in shared activities based on their everyday needs.

Deprived multicultural neighbourhoods are often rich in **networks**, cultural and religious groups, and organisations that turn common space into a welcoming and inclusive environment. Local actors often have a deep knowledge of local dynamics due to their everyday presence in the neighbourhood and can be the key to engaging inhabitants and community leaders. At the same time, they could mitigate territorial gaps and improve the accessibility of local resources.

Considering these issues, the neighbourhood perspective offers interesting insights into the conditions and factors that limit or facilitate their social and professional paths. The neighbourhood could strategically enhance women's social and territorial agency through more sensitive engagement, turning them into an empowering environment.

Inclusion between formal and informal

The third perspective on migrant women's inclusion refers to networks and policies that possibly affect or enhance their inclusion paths.

Informal cultural-based networks provide people with information and material support to their members, bonded by origin, religion or other identities. Some women are embedded in multiple networks, engaging in physical and virtual relationships with friends and relatives from the same country that can provide them with resources even at a distance. This condition of translocality is becoming more common among migrant women that leave their families and children to work in another country. Despite long-term settlements in the same place, these women may not expect to root in the

arrival country but enact a condition of "permanent temporariness": they remain connected to their countries of origin thanks to low transport costs and communication technologies, expecting to move back. Other women develop relationships of mutual help based on proximity and cohabitation in the same territory. These networks can overcome the limits of the ethnic group, supporting access to opportunities and resources in the city, often by informal means. These different networks produce spaces, identities, and practices that are strategic resources for migrants in their everyday life, even though they are often invisible, less accessible by natives and vary from one person to another.

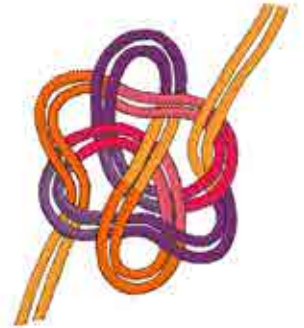
However, **local policies and formal networks of organisations** actively shape the opportunities for migrants to be part of the arrival society. This includes community hubs, local services, and public facilities run by private and public organisations in the neighbourhood. The public services spread throughout the city form a receptive network where people can turn and express their needs and desires. These places are strategic "contact zones". They support migrants in accessing the city and interacting with people of different backgrounds and provide helpful knowledge on vulnerable and unrecognised populations such as migrant communities and how to deal with them, effectively.

This perspective on networks and policies **connects the analysis of public discourses and policy frameworks on migrant inclusion** in different countries and cities with a minute understanding of formal and informal tools that actively shape their inclusion condition in the arrival community. Even if the policy framework changes profoundly in each country, local public initiatives and community-based services act as "safety nets" for migrants' inclusion.

2.2 Our approach: four interrelated working fields

INTERSECTIONAL GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH

What does it mean to apply an intersectional gender-sensitive approach while supporting women with migrant background paths?



Intersectionality refers to how systems of inequality are based on the intersection between different individual features, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability, class and others. This intersection creates exclusionary dynamics and affects people's trajectories in multiple ways. For example, when a Muslim woman wearing the Hijab is being discriminated against, it would be impossible to dissociate her 'female' from her Muslim identity and isolate clearly which dimension(s) is causing her discrimination.

The intersectional gender-sensitive approach differs from the traditional gender-sensitive method, which considers gender as the only axis of inequality and emphasises the importance of women's empowerment to overcome it, risking slipping into the stereotypes of "the woman". On the contrary, **the intersectional gender-sensitive approach considers many axes of inequalities and their interconnections, underlining the importance of empowering all women and those suffering from discrimination.** This perspective focuses on the more vulnerable and misrecognised subjectivities, whose individuality is limited.

Moreover, according to this approach, it is essential to understand and address inequalities with a specific contextual perspective. Sources of inequalities, stigmatisation and misrecognition are also culturally-based and change from different countries and local societies.

To design effective and sensitive intervention tools, it is essential to conduct a complex analysis of the reality in which each person is embedded by addressing a person's different needs and encompassing the structural levels of discrimination. Individually, everyone has a unique

experience of inequality due to personal perceptions and reactions; collectively, society excludes specific groups, professions and so on. Intersectionality allows us to consider and reach more people's needs, avoiding the risks of the non-representation that a gender-sensitive approach may produce.

From an operational perspective, the approach suggests working in multidisciplinary teams to address different issues simultaneously without losing the picture of the person and her well-being. The coordination and mutual exchange between counsellor experts in other fields and the organisations working with the target groups are crucial. Merging the different expertise, they can better understand the complexity of each situation and share a common strategy of support by which the different aspects mutually reinforce. The intersectional genders-sensitive approach is simultaneously: people-centred, valuing people's stories and acknowledging the body as a map of experiences; context-sensitive, providing contextual diagnosis to reach a complex understanding of a problem; community-based, involving all actors and their diverse viewpoints and approaches.

TERRITORIAL APPROACH

What does it mean to develop a territorial approach while supporting women with migrant background paths?



The territory plays an essential role in women living in marginalised neighborhood, hindering their integration and upward mobility. **The challenge of labour market integration is not solved only individually, by strengthening people's skills and guiding them towards opportunities, but it requires acknowledgment on how spaces and places may affect women's life and working paths**, acting as a lever and an obstacle for inclusion. Along with a people-centered approach, that addresses individual difficulties and enhances personal competencies, a territorially

sensitive approach is needed. People-centered policies can be less effective in addressing the daily difficulties of people living in the worst-off areas. Spatial and social agency are capabilities to be developed and they should not be taken for granted.

Developing a territorially sensitive approach to inclusion means considering the urban space as an agent within women with migrant background paths, recognising it as a non-neutral setting. It means addressing the issue that the city is not a homogeneous space and neighbourhoods differ in terms of facilities, connections, quality of public spaces and housing affordability.

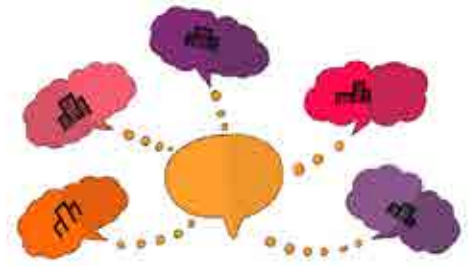
It means to embed interventions and policies into local networks, imagining the neighbourhood as a platform for cooperation and innovation. This approach may entail supporting or partnering with organisations and communities that operate in a more horizontal and participatory manner, at a smaller scale, informally, at the grassroots, enhancing the role of groups and collectives to whom immigrants, refugees and otherwise outcasts often turn to and seek help.

Local actors and grassroots networks often show a great knowledge about dealing with the more vulnerable and segregated groups, due to their long rooting in the territory and daily face-to-face interactions with the inhabitants. These actors show improvisation and emergency management skills, developing tailored solutions to the needs and fragilities of inhabitants.

Their practical knowledge is a strategic resource to design more effective solutions for supporting underrepresented populations, such as women with a migrant background, and improving the quality of their lives. Tackling the elements of deprivation as a source of knowledge to redesign strategies and tools to support women's needs could turn marginalised places into places of opportunities. A 'territorially sensitive' perspective in designing support strategy and labour inclusion could overcome structural inequalities that make the most fragile 'invisible' to local institutions renovating the modalities through which social support has been provided.

NETWORKING WITH PRIVATE COMPANIES

How to build sensitive and effective alliances and networks to support women with migrant background paths in the labour market?



The private sector is critical in helping migrant communities integrate economically into their new host communities. Particularly, the growing concern regarding "people sustainability" puts private corporations in a unique position to contribute to social integration, as the stride for innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit provide an inherited changing landscape in the job market.

However, establishing a valuable relationship with private companies can take time for social organisations as they act with different perspectives and priorities. Although there can be companies with high social responsibility, it is worth remembering that they still are economic actors that should comply with market laws. Philanthropic behaviours, if any, are usually related to the narrow field of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).

For this reason, it is essential to **consider the company's unanswered needs** to build effective alliances and cooperation. For example, some companies may lack workforce or professional skills and require specific support in selecting and matching employees. Some others may need more professional consultancy to solve particular issues, i.e. legal and bureaucratic consultancy, social and cultural mediation, and psychological consultancy. Others may be willing to implement CSR programmes but need additional knowledge to co-design specific actions.

Concerning these needs, social organisations could lead a shared reflection on possible solutions, supporting the company towards common paths.

Dealing with this kind of stakeholder involves establishing **trust and communication** and reporting the organisation's activities, achievements and network, particularly during the approaching phase. Since the communication patterns of profit and non-profit actors are different, trust building is a two-fold process that can take a long time and is based on the clarity of respective roles and purposes.

The cooperation with private companies could include different initiatives to ease women with migrant background integration, such as training courses, legal and bureaucratic consultancy, mediation, training, mentorship programmes, volunteering and sharing other successful inclusion practices.

Private companies may need to learn women's multiple problems in the labour market. Sharing information with them and promoting the encounter could raise awareness and clarify how and when the social organisation can facilitate the labour inclusion process. Mediation could be helpful generally and on specific matters that include the job market, such as using the veil in the workplace, handling certain types of food and alcohol, religious dictates, gender relations etc.

The process core is identifying possible solutions that meet the company's and women's expectations. However, it is crucial to remark that the social organisation should carefully evaluate which companies to engage with, selecting only those that guarantee the respect of workers' rights and a safe environment for migrants and women.

INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICIES

What does it mean to advocate for more supportive public policies for women with migrant background inclusion?



The importance of integrating women with migrant background to establish equity in our cities has emerged as a policy priority in many local government agendas with an increasing need to privilege a gender and territorial-sensitive perspective. To address this, a bottom-up approach to policymaking that promotes active participation of women with migrant backgrounds should be adopted to elevate their voices in policy design and debate. In this way, stakeholders can determine targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of financial, economic, environmental and social policies that affect women. It is crucial to organise around the objective of making migration-related pol-

icies across European and national platforms more inclusive of women, **creating mechanisms that ensure women with migrant background voices and perspectives have a space within policymaking processes.** Through developing a gender-responsive policy, the agency of migrant women can be recognised, promoting their empowerment and leadership, moving away from addressing migrant women primarily through a lens of victimhood and towards their self-actualisation. In spite of limited capacities in many countries, local governments play a major role in transforming policy-making that make it more sensitive to the needs of migrant women. To support these initiatives, there is strength in **multi-stakeholder partnerships, by combining efforts, knowledge, assets and capacities**, as working in isolation limits the impact of engaging with public policy. Increasing local capacity through strategic partnerships with civil society and other actors can provide capacity for action, providing support to where the local government has limited mandates and experience barriers to addressing realities on the ground. Drawing on this action, there is an opportunity to develop networks and spaces that build strategies towards a shared objective and encourage ownership of policy processes and public discourse, encouraging a stronger connection between policymaking and the realities of European neighbourhoods and societies.

3. Inclusion in practice: ten recommendations to support migrant women's inclusion



3.1 Instructions for reading

At the base of the following recommendations there are two principles that we found sharing as a project network:

- the **centrality of the person**, that is, the construction of paths that respect the rights and desires and expectations of women with a migrant background, giving the possibility to switch from being the beneficiaries to being actors.
- the **sharing of responsibility** among the social components involved in the inclusion path, in terms of thought, resources and action.

Each recommendation is structured by three elements: a general description of a **critical issue or challenge** we have detected related to migrant women inclusion (or exclusion), **some suggestions** about how to face or deal with the challenge, and some practical examples of possible initiatives. At the end of the text, some **"inspiring practices"** related to the recommendation are briefly listed to stimulate creativity and action. The inspiring practices are internationally well-known initiatives and promoted and experimented by us directly.

At the end there is a suggestion about how to "use" these recommendations. This is not a toolkit that clearly describes and prescribes what to do. Inclusion is not a mathematical formula but must be modulated according to the different conditions and needs. Moreover, while designing inclusion strategies and initiatives, we frequently find ourselves "fluctuating" between our goals, opportunities, and constraints. With this awareness, we want to offer suggestions and a "bridging space" to those who are making our society more welcoming and for women who migrate to Europe. We have created a collection of ten critical reflections that solicit a careful and multidimensional look at the inclusion of migrant women to offer a tool as open and adaptable as possible. Therefore, the ten recommendations and examples of activities and initiatives can be used alone or in combination depending on the situation and opportunities.



Support women's capacity to communicate

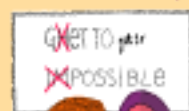


Provide safer spaces for women



Promote an active role of women

Change the public narrative



Provide informal support



Guide women towards local resources



Stimulate the awareness of private companies



Address women's economic inclusion as a collective challenge



Learn how to value women's competencies



Reconnect labor and social policies



Support women's capacity to communicate

Communication is essential for interpersonal relationships and finding one's way into a new community. Communicating the migration experience is challenging. Each woman has her background and experiences, so every story is unique and complex in diverse ways.

However, women could have different kinds of difficulties with communication. Some migrant women could suffer from a lack of knowledge of the language of the arrival city. They may encounter obstacles in building relationships and understanding relevant information about their new home. Other women may feel uncomfortable talking about themselves and their subjective experiences, despite having good language skills. Others may have difficulties learning a new language but possess manual or interpersonal skills so they can communicate differently.

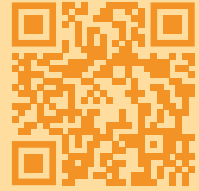
For these different reasons, it is crucial to enable each woman to express her feelings, doubts, desires, and fears allowing various forms of communication to strengthen migrant women's capacity to participate in the local society.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to provide women access to the conversation and strengthen their voices. It is essential to offer women spaces to engage, express themselves and be visible, active and heard. Considering the difficulties with learning and communication described above, it is necessary not to focus on the oral and written language of the arrival country as the only means of expression but to **encourage women to find their communication strategies by experimenting with other forms of non-verbal language**. While putting them into a welcoming and non-performing environment, art, craft, and moving activities enhance women's creativity and stimulate them to cooperate with others **[see inspiring practices #2 and #3]**. These practices could be particularly effective for fragile women, such as those illiterate or with low levels of education, and support the recovery of women with traumatic background experiences.

At the same time, it is crucial to facilitate access and attendance to language courses. Women often encounter obstacles in their everyday life that prevent them from focusing on their goals. Because they often have to give up on their interests to accomplish family duties, it is crucial to **reward learning continuity**. This can be done by providing courses adequate to the participants' level and learning needs, linking language learning with everyday experiences and conversation **[see inspiring practice #1]**. Public events during which women can show their skills or special courses to attend language certification can provide women with recognition and the desire to pursue reachable goals. It is essential to **celebrate even small achievements**, preventing a decrease in motivation and self-esteem.

Clear and direct information must be provided to everyone, no matter the language skill of the audience. It is a means to support the empowerment and independence of women. Documents, instructions, laws, and regulations must be translated into multiple languages. It is paramount to provide cultural and linguistic mediation while discussing relevant aspects of women's life. These instruments support migrant women in making conscious decisions during counselling, psychological interviews, or conversations with teachers and pedagogists.

Inspiring practice #1 – Livstycket: sewing the language



Where: **Tensta neighbourhood, Stockholm, Sweden**

Promoter: **Livstycket nonprofit association**

The initiative started in 1992 in the Tensta neighbourhood as a non-profit organisation and operated thanks to subsidies from Stockholm Municipality and various other project grants. Its mission is to provide a safe space where migrants can learn language and practical skills to increase their confidence and self-sufficiency, enabling them to participate in the community. The experience combines artistic activities like sewing, embroidery and textile printing with theoretical education in Swedish, social studies, and IT, implementing the learning process and providing basics to access the labour market.

Through this approach, women are encouraged to express themselves with sketches and drawings that are turned into models by professionals and then sold by a spin-off company.

Inspiring practice #2 – Fakti: a garden for fragile women



Where: **Nørrebro neighbourhood, Copenhagen, Denmark**

Promoter: **Fakti association**

FAKTI is one of the three Integration Houses in Copenhagen created to support refugee women in the Nørrebro neighbourhood, a district where many migrants live. Compared to other Integration Houses, FAKTI is more focused on vulnerable women, often above 40 years old and suffering from trauma or mental illnesses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The centre, started in 2002, and represents a safe and inclusive space for these women to break their isolation and boost self-confidence. The atmosphere creates a welcoming and calm place where visitors can informally and anonymously join the activities free of compulsory attendance. It supports the visitors through Danish lessons, and recreational activities such as sports or gardening. This experience interests almost 50–70 women daily, among them regular or one-time visitors. The prominent financial supporter is Copenhagen Municipality, aided by ministerial funds

Inspiring practice #3 – Telaio delle Arti: dancing, singing, and playing women’s life experiences



Where: **San Siro neighbourhood, Milan, Italy**

Promoter: **Telaio delle Arti Association**

The Association has been working since 2014 in San Siro popular neighbourhood in Milan, to promote social inclusion and dialogue within the district.

Through art therapy and creative language, the Association works with fragile individuals, such as children and women with migrant background or people with disabilities, to promote personal well-being and self-awareness and enhance expressive qualities. It is building a network among migrant women in San Siro by being in direct relationship with them.

It is part of the Women 4 Integration project alliance, under which it was responsible for developing a work line aimed at boosting integration between women, emphasising personal competencies and promoting local services knowledge. During the meetings, participants are asked to practice art therapy such as music or dance and can obtain knowledge about others and the neighbourhood in which they live.



Fakti Integration House garden in Copenhagen
Credits: FAKTI Integration House



Provide safer spaces for women

Everybody wants a sense of belonging and to be part of something, despite their gender, age or background. Leaving your home, occupation, friends, and family and arriving in a new country with a different culture gets you lost when losing pieces that make your identity.

Factors like these, patriarchal structures and preconceived ideas of a woman's position and duties increase the risk of social isolation and violence. Some women never enter the labour market and become financially independent because they live in involuntary exclusion, sticking into local communities and subcultures in a society where traditions and values limit room for action and development.

It is necessary to acknowledge the need to provide safer spaces for these women, considering their unique demands. Only by listening can we create welcoming spaces for everybody.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to provide women with migrant background access to safer spaces in our cities and communities. It's important to **consider women's physical and emotional wellbeing**. Individual psychological support, mutual-aid groups and meditation sessions can support women during their paths helping them to express and understand their difficulties and to stay focused on their goals.

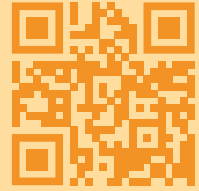
These initiatives should be designed in partnership with local public institutions, experimenting with innovative **alliances between local organisations and public services, and promoting mutual learning**.

Physical space has a role in women's wellbeing so it is important to welcome them into happy, comfortable and relaxing places, where they can recharge and get some distance from their daily responsibilities by engaging in activities and **accessing places that they usually do not attend**. Such places could include gyms or swimming pools where they can enjoy body health, a herbal garden, or a pleasant room to have tea **[see inspiring practice #4]**.

It is important to guarantee moments for women to engage with other peers **[see inspiring practice #5 and #6]**. Child-friendly places are a great support for women who need to combine personal interests with family duties. Some migrant women need time and space to focus on their desires and feelings and experience autonomy. Informal groups of peers that share time and are **demand-free situations that can improve women's self-perception and self-esteem**.

The location of safe space in the city and in the neighbourhood is important. While for some women the proximity to their house is essential to guarantee their access to services and participation, **others may perceive the neighbourhood as a threatening environment** due to negative encounters, violence and discrimination.

Inspiring practice #4 – Josephine: treating poverty with beauty



Where: **Goutte d'Or neighbourhood, Paris, France**

Promoter: **Josephine association**

Josephine is a solidarity beauty salon for women living in problematic situations, where beauty care treatment is used to boost self-esteem. Based on the assumption that having a positive view of themselves is essential to entering society and the labour market, the hairdresser Lucia Iraci started offering treatments to vulnerable women in 2006. Due to its success, two other saloons were opened. Josephine is mainly visited by women in a vulnerable stage of their life – unemployment and lacking self-confidence. They access the service through social services. The project approach makes them feel like real customers who can make an appointment and choose the treatments to boost their self-esteem, it teaches knowledge about long-term self-care.

It is funded by public authorities as a community social service, and it has a strong link with private partners that contribute by donating products or funds.

Inspiring practice #5 – Barn till ensamma mammor: support single mothers' recovery



Where: **Stockholm, Sweden**

Promoter: **Fryshuset non-profitorganisation**

Barn Till Ensamma Mammor started in Stockholm in 2007 to support single mothers and their children to enable kids in difficult family situations have access a happy childhood.

The team organises monthly group meetings where women network and support each other in learning to handle daily situations. The centre offers extra sessions with experts on different issues, such as legal aspects, health services, etc. For many mothers, these represent the first steps in establishing a relationship with appropriate institutions. During these meetings, children are entertained by participating in sports and artistic or musical centre activities. The project organises some mother-child activities (museum, swimming pool, zoo etc.) to support the relationship between mother and child and strengthen the positive role of the mother in the family.

It's promoted by Fryshuset, a non-profit organisation financed by private and public funds and active through volunteers.

Inspiring practice #6 – Girls' afterschool: empowering young second generation girls

Where: **San Siro neighbourhood, Milan, Italy**

Promoter: **Off Campus San Siro and Equa social cooperative**

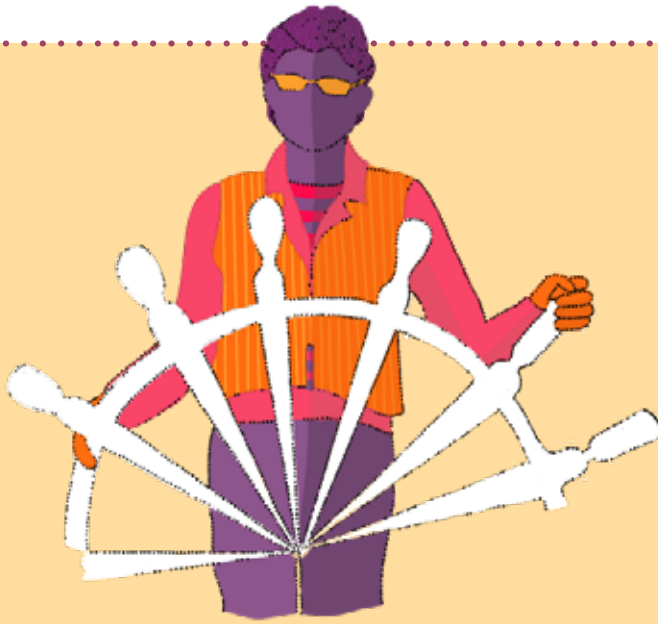
The afterschool project is a weekly support meeting targeted at girls with a migrant background attending high school and living in the San Siro neighbourhood. The initiative started to address the demand for tutoring, linguistic support, and career guidance, particularly during the transition between middle and high schools, working on individual vocation and skills.

Young girls are underrepresented in San Siro compared with males of similar age since families consider the public space unsafe and inappropriate for them. Afterschool offers a space where girls can interact and express themselves as individuals and as a group, receiving a teaching service simultaneously.

The activity is led by two stationary educators and random volunteers working with a regular group of eight girls, and it is planned to extend the meetings twice a week to consolidate the group.



**Josephine beauty
salon in Paris**
Credits:
association-josephine.fr



Promote an active role of women

Some women with a migratory experience may be passive in their relationship with local services and disengaged from attending proposed initiatives. There could be several reasons for their limited proactivity, but assimilated gender stereotypes often force them into passive attitudes, preventing them from putting their needs and desires first.

As women, they are not expected to be self-confident or aggressive, but passive and accommodating. In some countries, social, political, and economic participation is mainly reserved to men, so women might be unused to engage actively. They rely on someone else's project, generally the husband or another family member, who might have migrated before, and absolve themselves any sense of responsibility.

Participation in the civic initiatives can be a fundamental lever for influencing the content and construction of their process of social and work integration. Taking part in collective initiatives and in public life gives the possibility to practice citizenship even without the legal status.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to encourage the participation of migrant women in the services and initiatives proposed for their better social and work integration.

We suggest to **co-design paths with the beneficiaries**. [see inspiring practices #7 and #8] making them suitable in content, timing and organisation to women's needs which they can promote. When it comes to proposing an activity, a framework of reference is useful, but it is better to observe and listen to women's needs, concerns, desires, and interests. In our experience, it takes a few years of stay, before migrant women (and not all of them) can affirm their role in the new society and become self-confident protagonists of their own story. This process is facilitated and accelerated by creating a climate of welcome, non-judgemental listening and appreciation of what they bring, truly respecting women's family, social and cultural conditions, favoring self-expression and trusting them and encouraging their active role. That's why we don't suggest compulsory activities but prefer that rules of co-responsibility are established with women. Agreements of co-responsibility between beneficiaries and the organisation, even if they don't have legal values, could be useful tools to promote reciprocal engagement and trust.

Collective activities contribute to mitigate the feeling of being alone [see inspiring practice #9] and bewildering in the journey. In addition to social aggregation, they facilitate useful social networks (exchange of information, mutual help etc...). It is important to focus on group dynamics, so that they create opportunities for growth, comparison and collaboration, rather than competition, judgement, or conflict.

It is important to acknowledge the specific features of each situation **embracing flexibility and the possibility to reset the path**, as integration is a personal issue and isn't necessarily a linear process. Women can be at distinct stages and might have different needs, so there should be the willingness to accompany the beneficiaries only in a part of the path planned together or to shuffle the order of activities and interventions. Finally, individual support should be provided if requested, tailored to precise needs and with the awareness that different aspects of life are interdependent and failure to resolve some problems may adversely affect other factors.

Inspiring practice #7 – Commissione Intercultura: together at school

Where: **San Siro neighbourhood, Milan, Italy**

Promoter: **Cadorna School Parents' Assembly**

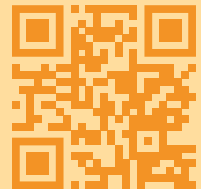
The Intercultural Commission of the Cadorna Primary School promotes the school as a welcoming environment for native and migrant families, supporting their participation in the school community and neighbourhood life. It supports migrant families getting involved in the school organisation and being an active part of the parents representing the Commission organising different services such as babysitting during the class meetings, language mediation during teacher interviews, pedagogic support to adapt to the new education system. The Commission engages parents of different backgrounds in rethinking the value of citizenship, educational responsibility and social cohesion.

Inspiring practice #8 – Multidisciplinary support: strengthening transversal competencies

Where: **San Siro neighbourhood, Milan, Italy**

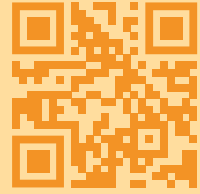
Promoter: **Soleterre Foundation – WorkISProgress**

Programme



The WorkISProgress programme has been part of Soleterre Foundation activities for more than ten years and is targeted at labour inclusion of the most vulnerable people. Migrant women face multiple challenges integrating into the arrival societies and cities since the migratory process deeply affects their condition. The project defines a personalised path for these people by providing different skills and strengthening transversal competencies. To effectively acknowledge each situation, a tailored, multidisciplinary support is needed. This tool consists of an interdisciplinary case management activity carried out by a diverse team comprising job counsellors, legal advisors, intercultural mediators and psychologists that assesses and treats the obstacles that women may face, providing professional assistance simultaneously on different aspects. This practice prevents people from feeling bewildered and overwhelmed because of the difficulty of solving different needs independently.

Inspiring practice #9 – MIRA Center: minorities take the floor



Where: **Oslo, Norway**

Promoter: **MiRA Resource Centre for Black, Immigrant and Refugee Women Non-Governmental Organisation**

The MiRA Centre is a historical meeting place and resource centre for migrant and refugee women and girls in the city of Oslo, supported by public funds. It was opened in 1989 to create a place where people could participate in various activities, embed themselves in a network of migrant women, and support their standing within Norwegian society.

The centre offers counselling and workshops to support and inform women about their rights and helps them face their problems and status. Experts and professionals help through peer-to-peer counselling organised by other migrant women (such as the Neighbourhood Mothers experience) or through group sharing. The "Let me talk" project targets young girls with different backgrounds aged 13–26 years, helping them boost their self-confidence.

The participant can attend at different engagement levels; they can busily contribute to various activities or remain anonymous. Workers are placed under a confidentiality rule.



WorkISProgress
project
activities in Milan
Credits: Soleterre
Foundation



Provide informal support

Upon settlement in the new country, it is undeniably tricky for women to access information regarding the context of arrival and the opportunities and services provided. These difficulties come firstly due to language barriers and the diversity of practices and procedures to access the city and its services in different countries. Bureaucratic systems can be complex, stressful, and confusing for newcomers that may feel overwhelmed and unable to interact in the new society.

Western society still struggles to develop a multicultural society, with the consequence that some places could be hostile to non-western, non-white and not-language speaking identities. As part of minority groups, women with a migrant background are often forced to ask for help from people they do not perceive as peers due to their origin or education, sharing a sense of discomfort while addressing public officials and feeling judged as unable to take care of their family' needs.

Considering non-conventional practices to support women, using the existing local networks and resources could facilitate communication between them and the resources they could benefit.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to overcome the sense of mistrust that prevents women from fully accessing the city's opportunities.

We recommend **experimenting with informal and peer-to-peer support practices**. [see inspiring practices #11 and #12].

Encountering people with whom they can identify becomes fundamental in building relationships of trust between women and those who run services. Building trust relationships and informal support networks can take a long time. To facilitate it, it is important to **identify those places already recognised by women as welcoming and reinforce this role of convivial encounter** to provide them with information and support in a more comfortable environment. For example, school courtyards, churches, local markets and even public playgrounds where women occasionally meet can be the places where most of them ask for help from friends and peers. Sometimes informal street communication allow an easier understanding of information and facilitate women confiding with someone about their troubles.

Working in the neighbourhood is fundamental to accomplishing this kind of informal support. Proximity facilitates daily encounters and the possibility of turning to someone for help. In addition, some experienced women can facilitate the transfer of knowledge, information, and news to the newly arrived, activating new relationships of trust and friendship.

It is essential to **identify those who are recognised as references in the communities** [see inspiring practices #10] or those more skilled to train them as community leaders.

Working on activating informal networks may have a twofold positive outcome on migrant women's inclusion. It allows identifying people with high relational skills who need the training to develop their natural competencies professionally. It also provides a welcoming community to those newly arrived and more fragile. Informal support practices recognise migrant women with new roles in the communities as competent people endowed with quality, resources, and agency that can contribute to the innovation of local services and facilities.

When looking at non-conventional practices to support women, existing local networks and resources could facilitate communication between them and the resources they could benefit.

Inspiring practice #10 – Neighbourhood Mothers: a little help from a friend



Where: **Berlin, Germany**

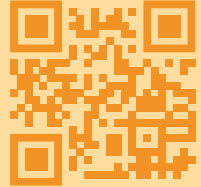
Promoter: **Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family in Berlin**

Neighbourhood Mothers is a peer-to-peer counselling service supporting migrant mothers living in deprived Berlin neighbourhoods.

It has been promoted since 2019 by the institutions based on the experience of different projects operating in Berlin for more than ten years.

The project conducts an integration process in migrant families, creating a group of unemployed women with migrant backgrounds trained for six months by the social services and hired by the municipality to introduce newly arrived women to local services and facilities. The beneficiaries enter an individual path supported by the same neighbourhood mother to provide confidence and trust. Acting in this way, the experience promotes inclusion and service accessibility to new migrant women. Additionally, it gives neighbourhood mothers, recognised by their red scarf, a sense of responsibility and recognition, providing them with employment income.

Inspiring practice #11 – International Centre for women: informal outreach to provide women with information



Where: **Barriera di Milano neighbourhood, Turin, Italy**

Promoter: **Almaterra association**

The Alma Mater Intercultural Centre for Women is a historical feminist community centre in Turin that opened in 1993 through the cooperation between feminist associations, migrant women, and the Municipality. It aims to reduce gender discrimination and overturn the migrant women stereotype as destitute by emphasising their individual resources and skills and using them in participative projects. The centre is conceived as a welcome support desk and an informal meeting point for women to share knowledge and practice intercultural. It became a place of intermediation between women and the city by providing courses, job training, space, and work facilities. Due to the high percentage of migrant women living in the neighbourhood, the centre created a group of professional mediators who encounter women in streets to inform them of the services offered by the centre and how to access them.

**Inspiring practice #12 – Neighbourhood academy:
learning from each other**



Where: **Overvecht neighbourhood, Utrecht, The Netherlands**

Promoter: **BMP Foundation**

Stromend Overvecht Neighbourhood Academy is an informal group of refugees and long-time resident migrant mothers promoted by the BMP foundation since 2017 in the Overvecht neighbourhood of Utrecht. The project's motto is «Learning from Each other», pursued through various activities focused on a core group of 20 migrant women living in the neighborhood. The Neighbourhood Academy experience is mainly based on a close knitted network group, where personal experiences and issues can be exchanged between recent migrants and residents, providing them with a common meeting space in the neighbourhood to foster a local self-help process.

These women regularly meet to face daily individual and local problems and formulate their personal goals every year, discussing with the group how to achieve them. They set up gatherings with other associations and organise local festivals to involve the community and boost exchange.



**Information trials
activity in Turin's
primary school**

Credits: Almaterra
association



Guide women towards local resources

The sense of displacement resulting from the migratory experience could prohibit women from exploring their neighbourhood or city. Consequently, they do not feel or believe they belong. This condition could have a lasting impact on their emotional and mental health, potentially affecting their children, such as reducing their social opportunities outside the home, especially if they are not attending daycare or school.

Additionally, this has dire systemic consequences as isolated migrant women struggle to understand the resources, services, and opportunities available to them and where they are. This reinforces migrant women's fear and mistrust of authority, and for the same reason will not seek out social services when in need.

Encouraging community-level programmes amongst migrant women over a longer timeline that promote women's building of social ties and their sense of belonging to the city became a central issue in women's social inclusion.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to facilitate building relationships between women and the local territory.

Boosting the quantity and quality of interactions amongst women with a migrant background and the local communities in which they settle. is an essential process to creating a new sense of belonging in their neighborhood. Mentorship and peer-to-peer programmes effectively provide a live experience of the arrival city and community.

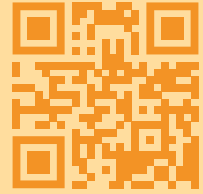
Practices fostering social networks can be critical in integrating migrant women. Neighbourhood activities led by migrant women who have been in the neighbourhood longer can offer a critical steppingstone. For example, neighbourhood walks can orient migrant women about their surroundings, highlighting important locations such as hospitals, daycares, and community centres **[see inspiring practice #14]**.

It is crucial to **facilitate community interactions in neighbourhood meeting places**, such as gardens or community centres, which can promote social connectivity and provide women with the space to mingle openly **[see inspiring practice #13]**.

This action can spur further activities such as collective visits to local services and facilities, where the mentors act as a bridge between women and social services, initially assisting with translation, conveying important information and helping each woman establish her relationship with local services. These guided walks and tours can expand beyond the neighbourhood and further into the city and other areas. This is fruitful as it allows migrant women to connect with others besides their community and establish networks encouraging them to go beyond their comfort zone. Additionally, the guided visits can relay important information about the city, for example, how the public transport system operates, knowledge of public spaces such as libraries and city parks and attending various city events and functions.

Offering migrant women the opportunity to know their neighborhood and city can unlock significant potential in engaging their communities, catalysing benefits for their children and their community.

Inspiring practice #13 – Open Pre-Schools: education for children and parents



Where: **Rosengård neighbourhood, Malmö, Sweden**

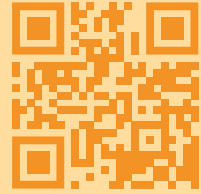
Promoter: **Yalla Trappan's Yalla Lotsar project**

The project started in partnership with Malmö City Preschool Administration, the Church of Sweden, Uppsala University, the Children's Law Institute at Lund University. Malmö city council's open preschools are places where children and parents that miss the enrollment in preschools for different reasons, can learn things that prepare them for school.

Attendance is free of charge, and parents do not need to apply for a place. Open preschools are staffed by trained educators, who arranges sing-alongs and read books to the children, while other social workers provide parents with advice and support or language training.

The Hera preschool in the Rosengård neighbourhood is dedicated to newly arrived families and provides guidance to their duties and needs in the Swedish welfare system in small groups with a municipal social assistance and a mediator.

**Inspiring practice #14 – Neighbourhood walks:
improving women mobility in the city**



Where: **Rosengård neighbourhood, Malmö, Sweden**
Promoter: **Yalla Trappan's Yalla Lotsar project**

The practice, included within the Yalla Lotsar project, consists of a series of visits to public places and services to increase women's knowledge of the city, promoting their autonomy and expanding their opportunities for inclusion and social expression. Women are accompanied in learning the rules to use and access the services directly by service operators to develop familiarity with these city facilities and access them independently. This tool promotes a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and city by offering positive experiences of interaction with services, often perceived as hostile or not understandable. Depending on the group's needs and the participants' level of autonomy, the activity may concern different services such as public transport lines and tickets, essential public services, cultural attractions, or city events.



**Yalla Lotsar activities
in Rosengard
neighbourhood**
Credits: Yalla Trappan



Change the public narrative

In the last 30 years, radical economic transformations and the dismantling of the western welfare states have raised a sense of uncertainty and fear all over Europe, weakening social cohesion and solidarity. Migrants have suffered the most from these processes due to material deprivation and lack of social and political recognition in the arrival countries. Negative narratives and representations of migrant communities and their practices of city-making have become the dominant discourse throughout Europe. These representations have replaced migrant communities' voices affecting the collective perceptions and the public agenda setting.

Women are more disempowered by these representations that tend to depict them as weak and passive, confining them into gender stereotypes that deny their efforts to give new meanings to their living space in the arrival country.

To oppose the power of public representations and the social stigma placed on migrant communities, it is necessary to build counter-representations and new discourses on the multicultural city, capable of spreading solidarity and acceptance in the society.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to enhance the sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, addressing stereotypes and discrimination during the work with migrant women, enabling them to raise their voices against them.

As migrant communities suffer from political disempowerment and less visibility, it's important to **offer women with migrant background the opportunity to express their identity in society** to make them feel fully recognised and legitimised in acting. Neighbourhood festivals in multicultural stigmatised urban areas that enhance diversity and boost convivial encounters among people with different backgrounds can actively support migrant women to be more visible in the community and push them to engage in new and different networks **[see inspiring practice #15 and #17]**.

It is important to **promote ordinary contacts with different people living in the same area** boosting positive relationships between neighbours of different origin. Initiatives and services must be open and inclusive and widespread throughout the neighborhood.

When possible, avoid migrant-targeted initiatives but figure out how to support them in accessing broader audience initiatives, ensuring their participation, for example, accompanying them or guaranteeing linguistic mediation while attending.

These initiatives may benefit from a **sound and diffuse collaboration among the organisations active in the same territory** **[see inspiring practice #16]**.

Promoting neighbourhood networks could stimulate local actors to share ideas and codesign projects and initiatives that use the neighbourhood as a platform for inclusion and innovation.

Community-based organisations and enterprises that boost local resources into a positive circular ecosystem of social support, economic development, and cultural innovation can provide stigmatised areas with new narratives and make them interesting for the rest of the city.

Inspiring practice #15 – Raval(s) Culture Festival: art and culture give new perspectives



Where: **El Raval neighbourhood, Barcelona, Spain**
Promoter: **Foundation Tot Raval**

The Raval(s) Culture Festival is a process of artistic, community and participative creation to promote the involvement of the Raval's neighbours and the diverse organisations based within, taking place every year since 2003. Participating agents develop a common collaborative socio-cultural project to foster a sense of identity and co-responsibility towards the neighbourhood and its context from various artistic and cultural perspectives. A large number of collectives, agents, entities and associations (more than 80), which usually bring life to the neighborhood, actively participate in defining and organising the Festival, suggesting a socio-cultural and artistic programme. This comprises many collaborative activities offered and developed between the participating organisations to enhance networking, mutual knowledge, and cooperation. The Festival and its programme are planned and prepared in various plenary meetings months in advance, open to everyone's participation.

Inspiring practice #16 – Afrikan-deerwijck cooperative: recognise the informal competencies and networks



Where: **Afrikaanderwijk neighbourhood, Rotterdam, Netherlands**
Promoter: **Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative**

The Cooperative was officially founded in 2013 as a self-organised body by the Freehouse Foundation that started to work in the Afrikaanderwijk multicultural neighbourhood in 2008.

It fosters community resources and economy through several local-based projects strengthening a network of companies that address their services to the inhabitants. Its approach focuses on recognising and enhancing informal competencies and production services to develop and boost local skills by creating collaborative spaces. It started its project working on the local market through partnerships with artists and market sellers, evolving it into an attractive place for the residents and those who lived in the area.

It created independent organisations to channel residents' resources in several projects that can produce local economies, such as a neighbourhood kitchen, a textile workshop and catering and cleaning companies that became a service for the whole district and the city.

Inspiring practice #17 -ABCittà Living Library: connect people's stories



Where: **Italy (several cities)**

Promoter: **ABCittà**

The Living Library (Biblioteca Vivente) is an innovative method introduced originally in Denmark and then developed in other countries promoting dialogue, reducing prejudice, and fostering mutual understanding. The Council of Europe recognises it as a good practice for intercultural dialogue and a tool promoting human rights, facing stereotypes, and positively and constructively challenging the most common prejudices.

As in a conventional library, it is possible to consult books on various topics; in the human library, usually organised in places where victims of prejudice and discrimination live. They are given the possibility to "borrow" a human book from the above groups for a set time.

With the ALL (ABCittà Living Library) experience, the "readers" can get in touch with "living books"; people with whom they do not have the opportunity to meet, and start to question their stereotypes and preconceptions, challenging their prejudices.



Living Library
project activity
Credits: ABCittà



Address women's economic inclusion as a collective challenge

Labour market inclusion is essential for integrating women with a migrant experience in their new country. Since they have historically been excluded from the labour market due to social and cultural barriers in the arrival countries and their country of origin, a job could enable their financial and social independence while facilitating inclusive societies where everyone plays an active role.

The critical point is that society still doesn't consider women's labour exclusion a significant obstacle. Sometimes women develop a sense of recognition in fulfilling stereotypical gender roles, avoiding the labour market access from scratch. Until society recognises the importance of the financial independence of migrant women, a fully inclusive community is impossible. It is crucial that all the actors involved, such as administrations, private companies, third-sector entities and even relatives, recognise their responsibility for women's exclusion and agree on relieving women from the burden of (unpaid) care work.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to overcome this exclusion, developing initiatives and policies sensitive to gender roles in society, which interest both sides of the labour market.

It is essential to consider the whole system's needs and expectations, **working on employers and employees to shorten the distance between the two parts**, considering the importance of accompaniment and monitoring of the employment search, and recruitment, at all stages and levels **[see inspiring practice #20]**. Some suggested practices must involve different agents that provide their expertise to best support the women in this process and making it integral and inclusive.

This means empowering women to gain and enhance job-related skills while providing psychological and emotional support.

Since strategic alliances between different local actors facilitate a connection between offer and demand, **an activated local network and community-driven strategies for labour market inclusion of organisations in the neighborhood provide invaluable resources** regarding knowledge, practical training, installations and visibility **[see inspiring practice #19]**. **Private companies must be integrated in the strategic plans**, as they provide the most significant resource of practical expertise related to the labour market. Understanding the national work culture within an organisation will enable migrant women to develop their practical job skills in a realistic environment and feel more comfortable in the labour market **[see inspiring practice #18]**.

Voluntary work can be a source of learning and development for migrant women starting their integration process in a new country. They can develop and assimilate skills to be applied later in the workplace and start social integration. In addition, local social organisations can actively recruit new volunteers while serving as key partners in implementing a multi-layer integration process. Having different parties providing counsel and advice (teachers, coordinators, social workers, other employees, and employers) ensures the integral development of each person and allows for successful results. This guidance must be available once the women enter the workplace to guarantee their integration. Setting clear rules and boundaries with employers and employees, and managing their needs or expectations, facilitates a smooth integration of the migrant (women) into the workforce.

Inspiring practice #18 – Interviews to employees: gaining from others' experience

Where: **Milan, Italy, also online**

Promoter: **Associazione Piano C**

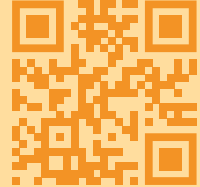
The initiative led by the Piano C Association works to connect women and the labour market in two different phases. The first works on the emergence of talent and skills and empowerment of the participants. At a later stage, it works on identifying, contacting, and interviewing people who may be the bearers of valuable and important information about a job area. The experience fosters women to collect preliminary data on different issues regarding a new role or sector, such as skills required, access channels, processes, tasks, and activities to be covered, internal climate, etc., and information which is not easy to find.

This promotes networking, which is often a tool for finding new opportunities. This tool is suitable for people with a high level of language skills and the right level of autonomy and energy since it requires a minimum of relational skills.

Inspiring practice #19 – TOT Raval network: strengthen local connections

Where: **El Raval neighbourhood, Barcelona, Spain**

Promoter: **Tot Raval Foundation**



The Tot Raval Foundation groups around 50 social organisations, educational centres, cultural institutions, commercial associations, and individuals active in the Raval neighbourhood, which work in a network to improve social cohesion, coexistence and quality of life. The Tot Raval network promotes the community as a "socially responsible territory", stimulating the involvement of everyone who lives or works in Raval to improve the district. The network promotes working groups in different strategic areas intending to involve as many actors as possible in the Raval, promoting and supporting the participation of local associations and improving their coordination. The network coordinates collective community projects and supports dozens of activities which involve and benefit hundreds of people in the neighbourhood, communicating its identity and promoting and inclusive environment for living and working.

Inspiring practice #20 – GAMI Immigrant Women
Support: ensuring a dignified job



Where: **Lisbon, Portugal**

Promoter: **Solidariedade Imigrante (SOLIM) Association,**
Alternative Women's Union and Response (UMAR)
Association, Dinâmia CET Centre for Studies

The GAMI (Grupo de Apoio às Mulheres Imigrantes) is an initiative led since 2011 by different bodies operating in the social sector.

It is funded by the Lisbon City Council. It recognises women's power and give dignity to the domestic service, avoiding its social devaluation and promoting gender equality in social and work environments.

The project carries on an initiative called Secure Home Service Employment Grant, which creates a network of potential workers and employers based on a dignified agreement and salary, preventing the implication of third intermediaries who take percentages on salary and boosting trust among parties. The project creates a solid and secure network for beneficiaries and employers and ensures a regular pattern of job searching, highlighting the legal issue of domestic work in Portugal for migrant workers.



Stimulate the awareness of private companies

Employers have become an integral part of ensuring and promoting the integration in the work of women with a migrant background.

Deploying resources into increasing their awareness towards this target group and the value in hiring migrant women is essential for creating an inclusive job market for everyone. A diverse and inclusive work culture attracts and retains the best talent, leading to competitive advantages for private companies with inclusive work cultures. Diversity could have a positive effect in the internal decision-making process: idea creation, opportunity origination, risk identification and mitigation strategies are improved.

It is essential to promote the vision of diversity as a resource for private companies, supporting possible methods to overcome the relational, cultural and bureaucratic issues which could prevent integration in the labour market.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to boost companies' employment, hiring and corporate policies to support the onboarding and retention of people who have a migrant background. Employers should receive guidance on supporting new employees during the onboarding process, to ensure that their inclusion in the company is positive and permanent. It is fundamental that the employers (and other colleagues) realise that they are dealing with people from different cultures and backgrounds with unique stories: having a sensible and informed approach is important for guaranteeing integration.

Organisations could create **migrant-specific employment roadmaps** [see **inspiring practice #22**], aiming to close information asymmetries by offering training to increase awareness in multiculturalism and inclusion, setting realistic goals and expectations and granting enough (practical, emotional, cultural) support for women entering the workforce. Companies could implement a **"buddy" or mentor system** that allows the new employee to confidently enter the workforce, as it provides security and one-to-one support [see **inspiring practices #23**]. This could strengthen professional job training, maintaining and improving the skill set, enabling women to become more self-reliant.

Companies and social organisations can have an influence in the market inclusion of migrant women beyond employment. The private sector is essential for work-oriented training: skills training, company visits, job vacancies presentations, developing social and cultural skills, etc. **Collaboration within training organisations and private companies** allows migrant women to gain specific talents for their personal and professional development. By establishing agreements with these training organisations (non-profit or public entities), private companies can incorporate CSR practices that go beyond donations in their governance organisation to support labour integration of target groups.

We recommend public corporations and the third sector to accompany employers to ensure they are fully informed and up to date with the labour legislation, regulation and possible incentives. They can **provide answers to the business's concerns and needs when employing migrants** [see **inspiring practices #21**]. This releases stress and uncertainty when dealing with the bureaucracy processes that are mandatory when hiring those within this target group.

Inspiring practice #21 – Legal support for private companies: approaching bureaucracy



Where: **San Siro neighbourhood, Milan, Italy**
Promoter: **Soletterre Foundation**

The initiative, led by Soletterre Foundation, arises from the need to face private companies' concern about hiring migrant women, who are not seen as resources for their business and are associated with the long bureaucracy for hiring them. It is important to support companies in raising awareness of their possible contribution to supporting migrant women and taking an active position. Through the Work Is Progress programme, Soletterre guarantees free legal support for private companies to clarify the doubts and concerns regarding residence permits, contracts and the possibility of contracting. In addition, the programme supports private companies and trade associations through this specific service.

Inspiring practice #22 – Yallas road to work: open labour market doors



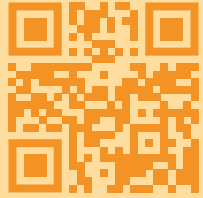
Where: **Rosengård neighbourhood, Malmö, Sweden**
Promoter: **Yalla Trappan**

Yallas road to work is a partnership between Yalla Trappan, the Swedish Public Employment Service and the City of Malmö.

The project's purpose is to increase employment and reduce exclusion for foreign-born women who are locked out of the labour market. During the project, the participants' six months are divided between an internship in one of Yalla Trappans businesses and theory about the labour market and industry-oriented Swedish. The goal is to approach the labour market and strengthen the individual through new knowledge and motivation. Yallas' "road to work" programme increases the participants' self-esteem by finding everyone's unique skills, qualities and expertise.

The goals and results are individually tailored plans where participants are given motivation and knowledge to move on to employment or education.

Inspiring practice #23 – Mentorship programme: guide women towards labour market



Where: **Amsterdam, Netherland, also online**

Promoter: **Netwerkpro**

The initiative started to answer migrant women searching for work who could greatly benefit from being paired with a professional mentor. Through the mentorship programme, the mentors guide, advise and motivate the women in terms of (net-)working and participation, and provide support when entering the national labour market.

Those on the programme set the relationship goals and the actions advised by the mentors will vary in each case. One-on-one guidance is central to strengthening and maintaining self-confidence. The mentor can provide advice and guide the mentee based on the circumstances of the women and their set of goals and talents. The programme also benefits the mentors: they develop their coaching skills, enter a network of professionals with social inclinations and gain insight into diversity benefits.



NetwerkPro activity

Credits: Jacobien
Geuze



Learn how to value women's competencies

Migrant people particularly women, are affected by a "flattening" vision that simplifies their different migration stories, underestimating their efforts and difficulties, affecting their access to the labour market.

One of the most significant losses in the migratory process is that job-related competencies and skills are unrecognised in the arrival country. This condition affects highly and less qualified people, who aim to access new training and job possibilities. Bureaucracy and different standards may negatively affect the recognition of degrees and professional certifications. Vocational guidance counsellors and HR managers may lack proper expertise to recognise and evaluate migrants' basic and transversal competencies.

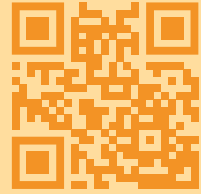
These obstacles generate a sense of disappointment in migrant people, who may decide to give up in looking for a qualified job or acquiring new skills feeling not recognised in the arrival society, requiring multiple actions to enhance their competencies.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations that work for beneficiaries and employers.

It is essential to enhance people's different experiences by working on their self-esteem and helping them recognise their abilities and possible job opportunities. **Sharing stories could help employers and companies to understand and discover unknown and hidden resources** and start unexpected new careers in which migrant women could enact valuable and considerable contributions.

Tangible qualifications such as certifications or degrees should not be the only skills considered. Informal competencies should be detected and presented as job skills. As the job market is different among countries and informal labour is common among migrants, it is crucial to **encompass different ways to evaluate competencies**. To reach this goal, the dialogue between women and operatives is essential, giving the possibility to grasp potential skills in people's stories and start a process of personal and common reevaluation **[see inspiring practice #25]**. Some highly skilled women sometimes cannot access job positions since they are unfamiliar with labour market mechanisms. Initiatives like training to effectively attend an interview or tailored consultancy for job opportunities can **facilitate the access of women with migrant background to the labour market focusing on their needs and expectations**. This could lead to a win-win situation where migrant women find themselves suitable for job positions that they haven't considered, and companies could find employees that may better match their requirements while enriching their working environment. The hiring process could entail diversity as a value, **stimulating companies to consider mixing cultures and backgrounds in the workplace as a strategic issue for enhancing their employees**, especially within the most selective places that do not consider migrants sufficiently skilled. Social organisations may play a crucial role in promoting this change in the approach to diversity towards private companies, providing innovative counselling services and customised training paths to facilitate the access of migrants to different working environments, avoiding the concept of the stigmatised migrant worker **[see inspiring practice #26]**. It is important to consider the fragile situation that people moving to a new country are living and the relevance of celebrating and enhancing small achievements and results. This could improve women's self-esteem and empowerment related to job access since this is seen as being far from their reach.

Inspiring practice #24 – Divem: promoting cultural diversity



Where: **Spain**

Promoter: **Accem Non-Governmental Organisation**

Divem is a project led by Accem NGO, funded by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations and the European Social Fund to raise awareness in business companies about the strategic value of cultural diversity.

The project promotes a new business model based on equal treatment and non-discrimination and provides access to the labour market for people with a migrant background. It consists of a counselling and training service that offers workshops and tools for implementing diversity management plans and corporate social responsibilities policies and actions.

The initiative is intended for social enterprises, family businesses, multinationals, and freelancers. It favours gender equality and equal access to foreign women, the most fragile category in labour market access. It establishes the Divem Awards which recognise companies' inclusion projects and provide a category for "Company with the best Women's diversity initiative."

Inspiring practice #25 – Mapping skills acquired in different life roles

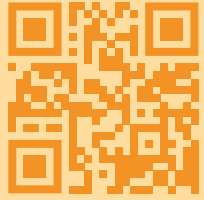
Where: **Milan, Italy, also on-line**

Promoter: **Piano C Association**

Piano C association gives space to emerging talents and skills that are present but unrecognised by the participants as they were acquired informally and outside the work experience. The experience defines a set of exercises mapping the transversal skills that can emerge from life-based learning: from care loads, volunteering or experiences at the service of their community, and the migration experience etc.

The tool's focus is helping the participants translate (practically and linguistically) their life experiences into skills that can be formally recognised and easily understood by HR, recruiters and employers.

Inspiring practice #26 – IQ Network: Integrating through Qualification



Where: **Germany**

Promoter: **Federal Office for Migration and Refugees**

The IQ (Integration through Qualification) Network is a project funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund to address the problem of the non-recognition of migrants' professional qualifications in Germany. The project enhances job opportunities for refugees and entry into the labour market, encouraging social and economic inclusion. It offers a counselling service to support people in recognising procedures for qualification achieved in the country of origin and in choosing possible appropriate professional training to fill the qualification equivalence gaps. It provides a counselling service to refugees with an entrepreneurial background and experience, giving procedure and training support.

The project works on labour market integration by advising employers about the recruitment possibilities of international workers and raising awareness of intercultural issues.



IQ Network
counselling service
Credits: Alvarez, Getty Images



Reconnect labor and social policies

Social and labour policies are seen as separate domains that correspond to different phases of the inclusion process. Social support is the first step to enabling people to get further into training and job placement programmes. Even if this could be reasonable in some cases, the needs and social conditions of some women with migrant backgrounds may not match the timing foreseen by policies and programmes.

The rigid separation among different phases and kinds of support negatively affects especially those more vulnerable migrant women that may need more comprehensive and durable help. In some cases, social issues may affect some women for a long time, and in the meanwhile, they may find themselves unable to access training, delaying their inclusion process. Some others might encounter practical difficulties or need support in caring for their relatives while attending training courses to acquire new competencies or professional certifications.

These conditions may hinder migrant women's participation in the labour market and must simultaneously be supported in their needs and skills acquisition.

PRACTICALLY, WE SUGGEST a few recommendations to foster social and labour market inclusion as a synergic dimension, acknowledging that financial independence contributes to social integration and individual well-being facilitates labour activation.

Therefore, it is essential to introduce a multidimensional perspective in the local public policies of labour inclusion that could guarantee access to rights and equal opportunities.

To create a more accessible, inclusive path for migrant women that boosts the social value of financial and working conditions, we consider the importance of **overcoming the hierarchy between social and economic integration, regarding them as a circular and synergic path.**

A broader concern in society about the labour market inclusion of migrant communities is stimulating solidarity networks within the public institutions and third sector organisations to promote shared strategies and policy innovations **[see inspiring practice #27]** associated with the concepts of "public good", inclusion, anti-oppression and no discriminatory practices, and have a demonstrated ethic of social responsibility and social justice. With the networks' higher flexibility and adaptability, these multi-stakeholder initiatives detect relevant issues and areas of focus and foster exchange among policymakers, civil society, and corporations.

Some practical precautions could promote this vision. Among these, it is essential to **consider different working perspectives and possibilities** that define each woman for her skills and culture, providing different ways of accessing the labour market.

Awareness of various situations could lead to inclusive working policies aimed at everyone. We suggest **considering the financial barriers that could prevent women's training access** and overcoming them through financial support during training periods. This way, women could easily access financial independence benefits and affirm themselves in society.

Moreover, it would be helpful to **involve and cooperate with social services** to reach working policies for women who are facing a difficult period and are receiving social support. For these women, upgrading their working situation could be a way to unlock their social conditions.

We think it is essential to **focus on the most fragile women**, who can't access some services for many reasons. For them, having the possibility to consider new working perspectives could represent the greatest chance of the migratory experience. In these most fragile situations, we believe that building partnerships with social services and providing basic training-to-work could positively impact women's lives.

Inspiring practice #27- Casa do Brazil de Lisboa: public policies for and from migrants



Where: **Lisbon, Portugal**

Promoter: **Casa do Brazil Association**

The centre was founded in 1992 by the Brazilian community living in Lisbon to promote access for immigrant people coming from different nationalities.

Among its activities, the association developed an online welcome portal (Lisboa Acolhe) to ensure migrant rights and participation within the Municipal Plan for Migrant Integration.

Casa do Brazil organised some focus group sessions participated by migrants and mediators to address issues such as the rights and duties of migrants, access to health, women's migration etc., creating a new space for information and sharing. These groups explored different themes using an Information Session Cycle that helped migrants understand their rights and shortcomings. Finally, this initiative led to the drafting of a final participated report of recommendations of public policies for migrant people in Lisbon addressed to the administration to bridge the gap between the two parts and create a space to bring demands and opinions.





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The project "Women4Integration – From neighbourhood to Europe" supports the social and financial conditions of women with migratory backgrounds in European cities.

It creates a dialogue with local operators and policymakers, triggering thought and practical suggestions to develop more effective and sensitive inclusion paths and policies at the intersection between gender, migration, and territory.

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