ENGAGE

'Development of inclusivE iNteGration pAths 4 miGrant womEn'

WP2: Up-Skilling Workshops for Labour Market Stakeholders (LMS) and Third-Country National (TCN) women

National Report by

UCLL

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AMIF ENGAGE: Aims & Purposes

The project *Development of inclusivE iNteGration pAths 4 miGrant women* / ENGAGE aims to increase TCN women's capability for entering the labour market and social life of the host society. The above will be achieved via the organization of Up- Skilling workshops, Job Shadowing Programme and Cross-cultural activities. The direct and indirect target groups are TCN women, LMS, TCNs and local citizens (women and men), professionals, policy makers, NGOs and the general public.

TCN women, which are representing the 45% of refugees in the EU, have lower activity and employment rates, a higher risk of poverty and are more likely to be in lower skilled occupations. Most of them face particular integration challenges associated with lower education and labour market outcomes compared to refugee men. A main reason is that they are coming from countries with high gender inequality and low employment rates for women. Therefore, an effective integration process of these women in the new social environment, can contribute to their social and economic inclusion.

Although the integration issue is at the heart of the political discussion in Europe, many countries face difficulties in absorbing a greater number of migrants, as well as in the latter's willingness to integrate. Much has been said and written on migration and integration, but too little attention, however, has been paid to women. While TCN women are highly qualified, most of them are directed to jobs and training mostly for household, care sector, secretary, and back-office services, unsuitable to their qualifications. Across the EU and specifically in Southern Europe, over 30% of TCN women work in low-skilled jobs, although they have tertiary degrees.

As a direct response to these facts, the project aims to organise targeted workshops for TCN women and Labour Market Representatives and serves a dual aim:
1. to support TCN women's first steps in the host community's labour market through the acquisition of employability skills
2. to increase LMS' awareness on TCN women's specific needs and gender issues
3. to introduce Job Shadowing as an efficient integration measure

National Report: Investigating practices, gaps & needs

The aim of this report is to investigate the current scene in partner countries in relation to the integration practices and to identify good practices and gaps for the development of new innovative ways to attract migrant women. Though there is evidence in existing practices and policies for TCN women's integration, the project consortium has organized 2 focus groups from each partner country with local key players such as representatives from NGOs, labour market, local authorities and the target group, TCN women, in order to collect valuable information about attitudes and perceptions. The data collected, which will indicate the vulnerability of TCN women in specific topics, will be highly useful for the development of the consortium's targeted approach towards TCN women. Mapping and analysis of needs, gaps, good practices and policies in partner countries, is of great importance, as they will be used as the basis for the design of complementary and tailored integration tools. The proposed activities aim to provide useful information for the hosting country, such as introduction to social and cultural aspects, labour market policies and the delivery of an Employability Skills targeted training.

The report will reflect the state-of-the-art practices and the profile of migrant women in terms of needs and gaps in each partner country.

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1. Introduction: description of the target group

In this report, we will use definitions formulated by the Flemish Economic Social Consultation Committee (SERV) and the Flemish Service for Job Placement (VDAB) to describe the target group of low-educated TCN Women in Flanders. According to the SERV, TCN women are persons who currently have a nationality or were born in a country outside of the EU15 countries, or a person of whom at least one parent or two grandparents currently has a nationality or was born in a country outside of the EU15 countries. According to the VDAB, low-educated persons do not possess a degree or a certificate in secondary education. This group also includes persons who have a foreign certificate of secondary education which hasn't been recognized yet by the Flemish government. [1]

According to numbers from the Department of Economy and Work, only 35% of the women who answer to above described definitions, are employed. This number is significantly lower than low-educated Belgian women (43%) or than high-educated TCN women (57%). This gap between high-educated and low-educated, or between Belgian women and TCN women is also higher between women than it is with men. This points at the fact that level of education, ethnicity, and gender all play a role in the chance of being active on the labor market.

Of the 65% of women who are unemployed, 57% fall under the category of inactive unemployed persons. This means they are not actively looking for a job or don't have a clear reason for being unemployed, such as being ill or studying. The main reason these women indicate for being inactive, is that they take up the role of housewife in their family, and therefore they are not employed or actively looking to be employed.

Low-educated TCN women can experience discrimination or thresholds for integration or entering the labor market on three aspects of their identity: their ethnicity or religion, their gender, and their socio-economic situation. It is this combination of multiple discriminations that makes them one the most underrepresented groups on the Flemish labor market. Hence it is important to keep in mind that initiatives and policies aimed at improving the position of these women on the labor market, take into account all three aspects of their identity.

2. Policies and legislation aimed at supporting TCN women

Because TCN women are at the intersection of three different dimensions, their position on the labor market is influenced by multiple policy domains. In the first place, there is the Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy, which in 2020 announced a plan to relaunch the economy and the labor market post-Covid. In this plan, there is extra attention for the most vulnerable groups, such as persons with a lower socio-economic status and persons with a migrant background. Inclusion is an important part of the plan, and means the inclusion of all vulnerable groups. There is no specific focus on low-educated migrant women, even though they make up a large portion of inactive or unemployed persons in Flanders.

Next to that, the policy domain of Wellbeing and Family has an influence on TCN women's access to the labor market. In the first place, it determines which financial and social support these women get when they are unemployed. Moreover, this domain stipulates the possibilities and availability for child care, an important aspect in the lives of women who are looking for education or employment.

[1] Advies Commissie

Education is the policy domain which stipulates the quality, content and admission requirements of education that is available to TCN women. Access to Dutch classes is easy for this target group and encouraged by the integration policy. For recognized refugees, level 1.1 and 1.2 in Dutch are free. For professional education however, admission requirements are higher and less inclusive.

Across all of these policy domains, there is the horizontal policy domain of **Equal Opportunities and Integration**. It is horizontal because its policy should apply to all other policy domains, among which the ones described above. This ensures the application of an inclusive and equal approach for vulnerable groups in the domains of work, education and wellbeing. In each policy, inclusivity and equal opportunities should always be a prerequisite.

In all policy domains affecting the target group however, a specific approach for low-educated women with a migrant background that takes into account their specific situation is often lacking. The policy aimed at reactivating unemployed persons is mainly targeted at those who receive a living wage and who are available for the labor market. The large majority of TCN women however are active and do not receive a living wage. They therefore often fall outside of the initiatives by the government to get everyone on the labor market. The support that is offered by wellbeing and family often is not flexible or accessible enough for the specific target group of TCN women. They are either not informed about the services, or the services are not adapted to their needs (flexibility, accessibility, costs, …). There is a clear lack of sensitization and awareness. In the field of education, some services are easily accessible for TCN women, while other forms of education which might lead to professional skills are not accessible due to strict admission requirements or high costs. Moreover, there is a lack of a clear policy in recognition of formerly acquired competences. Because these women often take up care in their families or have acquired informal experience in certain contexts, they could benefit from a policy in education where these informal competences are recognized formally so that they can be taken into account for their access to the labor market. Finally, in the field of Equal Opportunities and Integration, there is often a lack of an integrated approach for this specific target group. The policy of equal opportunities is mostly aimed at equal opportunities for men and women, while the policy of integration is aimed at integration of persons with a migrant background. Both policies however are often too pillarized, and there seems to be no specific focus on this target group, where discrimination on the basis of gender intersects with discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

3. Support services

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

In each policy domain described above, there is an important support service which can influence TCN women's access to the labor market.

In the domain of **Economy and Work**, there is the Flemish Service for Job Placement (VDAB). They support people in finding employment, going from education in job seeking skills to consultancy. The VDAB is aware of the vulnerable situation of low-educated TCN women and in 2019 organized a steering committee to work on initiatives to activate this group in employment. The steering committee decided to focus on various aspects in order to lower the multiple thresholds for TCN Women. The main focus points were: education, reaching the target group, co-creation and informal learning and working spaces, flexible child care, volunteering as a stepping stone to employment, recognition of informal competences and training in inclusive employment for companies. So far this is still a work in progress, which hasn't clearly led to concrete initiatives on the part of VDAB. However, it is an important step in combining multiple policies and organizations in order to address the specific situation of TCN women on the labor market. Their focus points also give us an idea of the thresholds ánd leverages for these women to access the labor market.

In the domain of **Welfare and Family**, the Public Service for Welfare, or OCMW is an important support service for low-educated TCN women. The first condition for receiving help from the OCMW is being in need. Aid from the OCMW can and may only be granted if the person has insufficient means of their own to lead a decent life. In addition, the applicant must have exhausted all other possible sources of income, both domestic and foreign social support. The OCMW offers different kinds of support, such as granting a living wage. The conditions for receiving a living wage are: being of age or equivalent, being Belgian, registered as a foreigner, stateless or a refugee; being available for the labor market except for health or with good reasons. Persons who are staying Belgium illegally are only entitled to urgent medical assistance. The OCMW can also support financially in child care. As mentioned above however, the majority of TCN women are inactive in the labor market, which means they are not available for the labor market. Hence they do not answer to the conditions of receiving support by the OCMW.

In the domain of **Education**, there is the Centre for Adult Education (CVO) and Ligo, who provide courses for low-educated persons. Both centres offer courses in Dutch, but those at Ligo are at a slower pace. The Agency of Integration assesses someone's level of language and skills, and then refers this person to either the CVO or Ligo, depending on their competences. Ligo also offers courses in basic digital competences, administration or support in family life, all at the level of low-educated persons or newcomers.

In the domain of **Integration**, there is the Agency for Integration, which offers a wide scope of support services. The Agency offers their service to anyone living in the Flemish region and who:

- has the Belgian nationality, is born outside of Belgium ánd who has at least one parent born outside of Belgium
- doesn't have the Belgian nationality, but with a legal residence in Flanders which is valid for over a year
- has put in an asylum request which has been running for longer than four months

The Agency offers support on four levels:

- assessment of skills and reference to an education institution based on the assessment
- a course and a test in *social orientation*.
- personal counselling and job counselling
- social integration through participation in the community (new)

For some newcomers to Belgium, the track offered by the Agency for Integration is mandatory:

- newcomers with a residence permit that is valid for over three months. This also includes family migrants with a nationality from outside of the EU and recognized refugees
- persons who register in Belgium with the Belgian nationality for the first time

These persons will be asked to register with the Agency within three months after their registration in Belgium. They will then sign a contract in which they engage themselves to complete level 1.2 of Dutch and to pass the exam in social orientation (and being present for at least 80% of the classes). A large part of TCN women in Flanders are family migrants and hence the integration track is mandatory for them.

In 2021, the Flemish government announced that it will tighten up the integration track. In order to obtain an integration certificate, newcomers must pass standardized tests for Dutch language and social orientation courses. Persons integrating who do not work must register with the VDAB. Those who have not worked enough after two years must take an additional language test. Participants will have to pay for each course and test. All of these new measures will be extra thresholds for those participating in this integration track, especially for TCN women, who often don't have the financial means to pay for the courses or who don't have the flexibility to attend the courses frequently. Moreover, acquiring the

certificate will depend on a standardized test in level of Dutch and social orientation, instead of an integrated track that encompasses level of language, general skills or experience and knowledge over time.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

There are several organizations aimed at the social integration of newcomers in Flanders. Most of these organizations also receive support from the government. These initiatives mainly work with volunteers to set up a buddy system, where a local helps a newcomer in learning the language informally or enlarging their personal network. Many socio-cultural organisations such as Avansa, Vluchtelingenwerk, … offer buddy or coaching systems. At a local level, some communities work with a buddy system for integration. In the near future, the Flemish minister for equal opportunities and integration wants to add this aspect of integration to the Flemish policy. The responsibility of organizing such a system will lie with the local governments.

LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

Various initiatives in both the public and the private sector aim at integrating newcomers in the labor market. Most of these initiatives start from a mentoring procedure, where a professional guides and counsels a newcomer during an internship. These initiatives prove to be very successful, because they can offer a positive first experience in the labor market or a job. However, most of these initiatives are aimed at higher educated newcomers who already obtained a higher education degree in their country of origin. They often are not gender sensitive. In the private sector, there are also initiatives that are aimed at companies and organizations in supporting them to be more inclusive. This goes from offering training and counselling to networking between companies and the target group. Inclusive in their view is everyone from a vulnerable group who has less access to the labor market. They are not aimed specifically at low-educated TCN women.

4. Best practices

Flanders has a very encouraging policy for social entrepreneurship, where there is a focus on engaging vulnerable groups in the labor market. Hence, there are many good examples of social enterprises where low-educated TCN women are given the opportunity to have their first positive experience with the labor market and to gain experience in certain job skills.

5. Needs and gaps

Despite all efforts to make policy and legislation as inclusive as possible, we can still identify several needs and gaps for low-educated TCN women and their access to the Flemish labor market.

- Flemish policy and legislation takes into account the needs of various vulnerable groups, such as persons with a migrant background, refugees and newcomers, women, and low-educated persons. However, there doesn't seem to be a clear policy directed at the specific target group of low-educated TCN women where an integrated approach is needed in order to address the multiple thresholds they experience in entering the labor market.
- The current policy of activating unemployed persons, directed by VDAB, is primarily aimed at activating those who are available for the labor market. This policy is quite repressive and doesn't leave much room for flexibility. The majority of low-educated TCN women however are inactive and not available for the labor market, because they choose to be housewives. The

current employment policy does not take into account their situation or needs, and doesn't offer the flexibility that these women need. It does seem that the VDAB realizes that there is a huge potential in this group of women, who make up a large part of those inactive in the labor market. They founded a steering committee with the task of looking at the specific thresholds and leverages to activate these women. This is an important step in the right direction.

- Many of the existing initiatives aimed at integration or mentoring are often not gender sensitive or aimed at higher educated newcomers. Moreover, they are not outreaching enough in order to involve TCN women successfully. This specific target group will not always actively look for opportunities to integrate or be employed. Often they are not aware of such initiatives.
- The policy for recognizing formerly acquired competences is not sufficient to formally recognize the competences of women who often acquired skills informally through care work.
- Support services for TCN women often are not accessible enough, or they are not aware of the various possibilities for child care or financial support as a working parent. 61% of low-educated TCN women do not use afterschool care.[2] Better access to these support services, with more flexibility and financial support could help in empowering these women.

[2] Advies commissie

TCN focus group findings

Introduction of the participants

Two of the women participating in the focus group had very similar profiles: they were both in their early thirties and born in Morocco. They came to Belgium as a family migrant to marry a Belgian Moroccan. They had two children and then got divorced. One of the women needed to seek refuge in a women's refuge for a while. Both women did not have a degree in secondary education. At the moment, they were taking a course in Dutch: they were very aware of the need to be fluent in Dutch in order to find a job. However, the care of their children clearly impeded their track and possibilities for education. At the moment of the focus group, they were also burdened with the home schooling of their children due to the Covid restrictions in the Flemish schools. None of the women previously had a job, neither in Morocco nor in Belgium.

A third woman participating came from Togo, Africa. She obtained here degree in secondary education in Togo and started higher education, but did not finish her studies. Together with her husband she came to Belgium 8 years ago, looking for better work opportunities. Here they had four children. They now live in a town and her husband works and provides for the family. In September, she will start taking courses in Dutch again, because she wants to improve here Dutch so that she can integrate better. She indicates that it is very hard for her to make friends, which she believes is because she is black and because she doesn't speak Dutch very well. In her experience, people always react a bit weary when she addressed them, and this makes it very hard for her to meet new people.

Experiences of the focus group

The women all finished their integration track, which means they completed 1.2 level of Dutch and passed their social orientation exam. One of the women was currently taking courses in Dutch in level 3.2 and was aiming to reach the highest possible level of Dutch. At the same time she was also taking a course in digital competences. These courses were offered by the Ligo centre. The two divorced women received support by the OCMW. This means they received financial support in housing, a living wage and personal counselling. Their personal counsellor helps them in organizing the family life, for example in finding child care or identifying the social services they need or can rely on. The women were very aware of the need for a good level of Dutch, as well as digital competences in order to find a job. None of the women ever took part in a support programme to find employment.

Identification of gaps and needs

The two Moroccan women have never applied for a job before. Because they were married, they relied on their husband to support them. After the divorce however, they were occupied with the care for their children, without any qualifications or degrees. Now they first needed to make up for this gap, and try to combine the care for the children with education. This was already a very difficult combination for them, and it didn't leave any room for a job or even applying for a job. Moreover, these women were determined to get their education and skills straight before trying to enter the job market. More specifically, they felt they needed skills in Dutch – speaking and writing – and digital skills on all levels: Office, browsing the internet, looking for and applying for a job online, …

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For the women participating in the target group, the main problem for entering the labor market is the care for the children. In their case, the children were very young and needed a lot of support and attention. They needed to be taken from school at specific hours and could not be left alone when at home. They did not rely on child care, even though the OCMW can support them financially for child care.

Organization focus group findings

Introduction of the participants

The organizations participating in the focus group were all in the public sector. The first organization is Ligo, the centre for education for low-educated persons. They are a Flemish organization who have centres divided into regions, so that there is a centre available in each region. The centre participating in the focus group was located in a rural region. They offer various services, such as Dutch courses, basic digital competences, administration skills and ways or organising the personal life.

The second organisation is CVO De Verdieping, the centre for adult education. They are located in a town with a large migrant community. They offer Dutch courses at a higher level than Ligo. They also offer courses in job seeking skills, or professional education such as office management or graphic design.

The third organisation is Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, or the Agency for Integration described in the section above. The Agency offers support on four levels:

- assessment of skills and reference to an education institution based on the assessment
- a course and a test in *social orientation*.
- personal counselling and job counselling
- social integration through participation in the community (new)

They also offer legal support and translation services.

The fourth organisation is vzw Reset, a social enterprise that employs people from vulnerable groups or who don't have easy access to the labour market. People who are counselled or activated by the VDAB to get (back) on the labour market, can apply for an internship or a job here.

Experiences of the focus group

Ligo offers various services tailored to TCN women: economic independence, social integration, support in employment, arranging family life, safety of the family, resilience and general wellbeing. Some of their social integration courses are specifically targeted at (TCN) women. These women are informed about the services of Ligo by governmental organisations such as the Red Cross, Fedasil or OCMW. Skills of the women participating in the courses are assessed beforehand in an intake interview. During the courses, their skills are assessed through observation during class or activities, and through a portfolio with tasks and assignments. All courses are in Dutch. Their employees pay attention to gender and cultural sensitivity in all possible ways: gender neutral communication, empowering women, taking into account personal and family situations, cooperating with other services, … Moreover, they receive extra support in dealing with trauma and information about refugees' experience. In terms of labour market integration, the organisation offers support in all aspects of job seeking. Because they mainly work with low-educated or even illiterate people, their target group needs support at all levels of job seeking skills. They believe that the main thresholds for TCN women in entering the labour market are: lack of skills and digital skills, and discrimination based on ethnicity. In their experience, companies or organisations

employing these women are not flexible enough when it comes to knowledge of the Dutch language: employers expect too much from their language skills. Moreover, they often lack an open-minded attitude towards these women. They believe companies and employers should get the change to meet these women and to know them better. In their experience, TCN women are required to have A1 level of language and no specific degree in order to enter the labour market.

CVO de Verdieping is less focused on social integration and more on professional education and a higher level of Dutch. Their courses are more general and not as much tailored to the needs of women or TCN women. Employees or trainers of the CVO do not receive extra support in dealing with the specific situation of the target group. The services they do offer to TCN women are mainly directed at acquiring general skills or job seeking skills, which will also encourage their empowerment. In doing so, they also cooperate with other services in order to offer an integrated approach. However, they do not pay special attention to a gender or cultural sensitive approach, nor do they specifically take into account these women's specific situation. They mostly work with TCN women in function of Dutch courses, but some of the women also take a job counselling track here. The time that these women spend with the organisation varies and can go from one year (if they reach level A2 in a short time) to six years, depending on the level they want to acquire and how fast they go through the track. A job counselling track can take up to one or two years. During such a track, but also during some of the Dutch courses, the organisation offers support in job seeking skills such as writing a resume, finding job vacancies, doing a job interview, etc. According to the CVO, companies are not very aware of the problems TCN women face when entering the job market. They would need more knowledge about the specific situation of these women and the limits they experience because of the care for children they often have. In internship with a company would help both the company and the women to get to know each other better and to understand each other. As advice in working with the target group, they suggest to always take into account the important role their family plays in their lives.

The Agency for Integration is one of the most important organisations for newcomers to Belgium. Because the track is mandatory for those registering for the first time in the Belgian National Register, all women in the focus group have experience with at least some of the services offered by the Agency. According to the employees participating in the focus group, the services are also adapted to the specific situation of women in the target group. They support the women in finding schools and/or child care services for their children, and they offer the flexibility these women need in order to take part in the social orientation classes. They will always look for a possibility where the women are able to attend the classes as frequently as possible. This is necessary, because one of the conditions to receive the certificate is to attend at least 80% of the classes. Moreover, the women receive personal and job counselling with a one-on-one counsellor who can address their specific needs and questions. Because the agency works with such a diverse target group, their employees are trained and experienced in both gender and cultural diversity. They frequently organise internal sessions for new but also experienced employees in order to support them in culture and gender sensitive communication, dealing with trauma or improving awareness on diversity. The target group is informed about their services by the government: everyone who has the obligation to take the track with the Agency, receives a letter from the government with all the information in their native language. The course in social orientation is also offered in their native language, however, this can sometimes mean that the newcomer needs to commute to another region because the course is not available in their language in their own region. For women who often are less flexible or have less possibilities for transport, this might pose an extra difficulty. However, according to the Agency, they always offer support in looking for alternatives or the best possible solution. Everyone who starts the track with the Agency, needs to take an intake interview as well as a test in order to assess their general skills and language skills. Based on the assessment, participants are then referred either to Ligo, for Dutch classes aimed at illiterate or low-educated

people, or a CVO, for a basic or fast-track course in Dutch. Newcomers who sign an integration contract with the Agency, are required to get a certificate for level A2. Participants in the integration track are assessed on their skills during the social orientation classes and during the personal counselling, through written and oral assessment, as well as permanent evaluation. At the end – if they are considered to meet the requirements – they receive a certificate. The time TCN Women make use of the Agency's services can go from 6 months to 3 years, depending on how quickly they find a social orientation class in their native language and how easily they go through the entire track. Employers from the Agency participating in the focus group believe that the main barriers for organisations or companies in employing TCN women are a lack of knowledge about the specific situation of these women, and the right network to find and reach these women. In the near future, social participation and integration through networking, volunteering or an internship will be an important new aspect of the integration track. They believe that this will be a very useful asset for the integration of TCN women and newcomers in general.

VZW Reset is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. They employ vulnerable groups and TCN women who have difficulties accessing the regular labour market. The women can follow an internship here and are counselled personally in order to prepare them for the labour market. They can also be employed permanently here. VZW Reset forms a strong network with other organisations in the community, such as the local OCMW, who involves the target group and informs them about the VZW's possibilities and services, as well as other organisations who come into contact with the target group. The VZW employs people who have a strong background in counselling and supporting people from the target group. These people already have the necessary knowledge and expertise in gender and culture sensitivity that is necessary to guide the target group. Next to that, the VZW has a culture and gender sensitive approach engrained in its mission and vision. The main focus of the organisation is to prepare the target group for the regular labour market and to support them in obtaining financial independence. Internships can last from 6 months to a year.

Identification of gaps and needs

The organisations participating in the focus group mostly had a specific approach for providing services to TCN women. Ligo and Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering are both government organisations directed at the integration of vulnerable groups. This means inclusion and gender equality are at the hear of their organisation. VZW Reset is not a government organisation but a non-profit social enterprise, also aimed at the integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market. CVO De Verdieping is an exception here, as they are a for-profit private organisation. They offer courses which involve TCN women, however they core vision and mission are not aimed at the integration of these vulnerable groups. This is also the only organisation that indicated that they don't offer any extra support to their employees in a gender or culture sensitive approach. In general, it seems that social enterprises or government organisations apply an approach that is gender and culture sensitive and which takes into account the specific situation of vulnerable groups and TCN women. When asked about what they believe are the key problems for organisations in providing services for TCN women, participants indicate they believe there is a lack of knowledge about the target group, and that organisations don't offer enough flexibility in terms or language knowledge or private life. Moreover, organisations and TCN women often don't know each other and don't share a network. They are most of the time not aware of the need to apply specific services or strategies to involve or employ TCN women.

In Flanders, policies for gender equality are applied in most organisations and enterprises. Discrimination based on gender is an offense and can be reported with Unia, the national hotline for cases of discrimination. However, gender equality policies in the workplace often don't take into

account the situation for women with a migrant background, who often face discrimination based on their gender as well as their ethnicity or religion. The hijab is a clear example of this: many organisations don't allow the wearing of a hijab in the workplace. This is a restriction that specifically targets women with a migrant background, and which is not considered to be discrimination by the Flemish government. Hence, gender equality policies clearly lack a dimension that also takes into account the axis of religion and ethnicity.

In general, most TCN women are satisfied with the services they are provided. They have enough possibilities for education, integration, financial support, child care, … However, they feel it is difficult to integrate socially. Often they don't have a social network to rely on.

Conclusion

All services provided by the government to TCN women, such as the integration track, the social integration and education courses by Ligo, financial or child care support by OCMW, … are useful for the integration process for TCN women. Some of these services are gender sensitive, others – such as the support by OCMW which is only available for those actively looking for a job – are not. In order for the labour market to become more accessible for TCN women, the services offered by the government should take into account all axes of the target group: gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity or religion. Organisations or companies employing these women should broaden their network in order to reach these women and to get to know them better. They should provide enough flexibility and open-mindedness about the situation of these women. They would surely profit from more awareness and knowledge about this target group.

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