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

Ce.F.A.S.
Centro di Formazione ed Alta Specializzazione

ITALY

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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 the 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

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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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Policies, legislation & practices aimed at supporting TCN women

- *Identify policies, legislation & practices in place in your country*
  The work integration of foreigners takes place within the framework of multi-level governance where a central role is played at local level by the regions and municipalities and is part of the more general context of support to the work offered to Italian citizens.
  At national level, the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policies established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies promotes and takes care of initiatives related to active policies and the involvement of the relevant services in the activities of integration and reintegration of foreign workers. In addition, many projects offer initiatives in the fields of counselling, information and career guidance, vocational training, knowledge of the Italian language, support for young migrants and the development of entrepreneurship.

- *Are the support systems / policies in place contingent on the residency status? How do they differ?*
  People with refugee status, with a valid residence permit, have easier access to the labour market and services offered to Italian citizens. People who are waiting for a residence permit or a decision by the Territorial Commission don't have the possibility of easy access to various services (ex. identity code, bank account, registration at the employment centre, signing of a rental contract).

- *Which requirements do TCN women have to fulfill to enter the labour market in terms of language skills, education and legal status?*
  In terms of language skills, is required knowledge of the Italian language at A2 level, as well as additional training, specific training for the job and a regular residence permit.

- *Which practices at the public sector can be seen as supporting measures for TCN women's skills development (for instance language courses, further education, skills auditing)?*
  The most common practices are language courses, verification of skills (through a help in the compilation of the CV) and training offered by specialized centres.

- *Which kind of support is offered for increasing TCNs (women and men) participation in the local labour market (training, internships, networking etc)?*
  The participation of TCNs in the local labour market is increased through work inclusion projects that connect the demands of entrepreneurs with the skills of TCNs, as well as specific training programs.

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- *Do Job Shadowing Schemes exist for migrant women?*
  No, currently it doesn't exist.

- *Are any specific support services offered to TCN women in your country (childcare services, counseling etc)?*
  TCN women who regularly reside in the Italian territory also have free access at the services offered to Italian women (nursery, medical advice, professional advice, etc.).

- *Concerning TCN women participation in the community and interaction with locals, are any specific programmes offered in your country?*
  TCN women are accompanied in processes of integration and interaction with the involvement of the local population through the organization of local events and communities also thanks to local or migrants' associations.

- *Give examples of successful practices of previous and current projects.*
  Some examples of successful practices are projects aimed at job inclusion (such as some FAMI projects), International Migrant Day (during which migrants can easier meet the host population, play live music and typical songs, show their own culture, handcraft and they can participate in open debates about social inclusion). All over Italy, social Organizations organize national festivals dedicated to migrants with exhibitions, debates and training activities dealing with the same topic. These kinds of social initiatives and public events help migrants' women in the integration process, besides the accommodation projects.
- *If applicable: what percentage of TCN women obtain these support systems?*
  According to the latest annual SIPROIMI report (2019), the percentage of TCN women in hosting and inclusion projects obtaining support systems is 19.5%.

TCN focus group findings

Introduction of the participants

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- *General information on the participating women (age, family status, country of origin, language skills, education & employment etc.)*
  TCN women participating in the focus group come from Nigeria and Armenia, are between 24 and 44 years old, are married with children, single with children and divorced, the languages spoken are English, Italian (prevailing languages) and Russian.
  The level of school education varies from primary/middle school to high school. All women participating in the focus group are currently unemployed and guests in hosting government projects.

- *If applicable, relate to statistics / numbers on the situation of TCN women in your country in general*
  According to the most recent research of ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics), updated to Jan 2020, the census population in Italy registered a number of 59.641.488 people, of which 2.235.000 TCN women had a valid residence permit in Italy. The majority of TCN women population have an age of 0-17 years old, followed by over 60 years old women. The situation of TCN women in the labour sector is, generally, characterises by three variables: absence (inactivity, underground economy, fragmentation of career paths), discrimination and precarious conditions (low salaries, temporary jobs) and Job segregation. In the past few decades the need for domestic help in the labour market has increased. The TCN women entered in this type of employment and started to work providing care to elder people, to children when both parents are working and arranging the domestique work. This type of work continues to be an easy and famous option among TCN women nowadays, which creates problems when we need to gather statistics on the employment or unemployment rate of TCN women since this type of work is not legally registered. Even though TCN women employed in this type of work do not have access to Social Security, since they are not registered as employed, however they can profit from benefits from the State economical supports by declaring unemployment.

Experiences of the focus group

- *Experiences with specific training / programmes aimed towards TCN women*
  TCN women interviewed, have all followed and implemented a path of training and integration through specific programs also made available by the host project. The main training courses concern the linguistic field and professional training, such as dressmaking, cooking and intercultural mediation courses.

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- *challenges towards labour market and social inclusion*
  Within the hosting project of the women interviewed, there are work integration initiatives that provide easier access to the labour market through internship programs in agreement with local companies.

- *Familiarity of the focus group with policies, laws & practices already in place.*
  The women interviewed are not fully aware of the policies or laws that protect the workers of the host country.

- *Access to specialized training, information, aid & support*
  As mentioned, all the women interviewed took part in a linguistic and professional training supported by a team of operators and experts in the educational and legal field.

- *Difficulties faced in becoming employed (including discrimination & prejudices)*
  The work experience described is very limited, but none of them has encountered particular prejudice or discrimination in the hosting country.

- *Experience in or knowledge self-organizing initiatives, unions and labour rights*
  Not everyone knows trade unions or workers' rights, but they know some of the services offered.

- *What kind of skills training do you think will help you find a job?*
  For the TCN women interviewed it's extremely important to speak the language of the host country, in addition to knowledge of digital skills, the use of email and social media.

Identification of gaps and needs

- *Analysis of the gaps & needs identified in the focus group*
  Some of the main problems identified in the focus group concern the knowledge of workers' rights and obligations, the existence of trade unions and their function, the difficulty of moving, the lack of knowledge of digital skills.

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- *What are the problems that TCN women are facing when entering the local labour market?*
  The problems they faced are various in order to enter the labour market, we can sintetize them in three main aspects:

- lack of knowledge dealing with digital basic work systems (email, google applications, writing programs etc.),
- low language skills and low level of English of entrepreneurs, tutor and staff members;
- lack of public transport in non-ordinary working hours,such as in the early morning or in the evening. In the province of Lecce, where our organization is based, working people use mostly private transport because the public ones cannot ensure the service all day long.

- *Which skills do you think are most necessary to develop further?*
  There is a general focus on being punctual, attentive and precise at the workplace, and maximum focus on goals achievement.

- *Identification of challenges, barriers & gaps*
  The most common barriers and gaps concern a correct knowledge of the Italian language, the use of pc and softwares, the ability to work in a team, the motivation and the self-initiative.

- *Level of satisfaction with the support/practices on offer*
  There is a high level of satisfaction for the support received especially within the hosting projects of which they have made or are part of..

- *If applicable: possible solutions, the importance/experiences of self-organizing*
  Participation in intermediate organizational structures would allow migrants to move from the individual to the collective sphere, in which they would develop a sense of belonging and carry out a process of socialization and social interaction. Among the practices of citizenship that can be observed at local level, there are some indirect forms of political participation, such as participation in events, movements, city committees, associations and informal groups, through which migrants can express their opinions and try to influence, for example, local political life. For migrants, a crucial role is played by migrants' associations, as autonomous forms of self-organization. For migrant women, however, the question of participation, self-organization and associations in Italy is few developed, if we compare it with the rest of Europe. The reasons can be found in the structural elements of Italian society, such as the national political situation, the difficult labour market conditions, economic and social security systems. The associative practices of migrant women can assume political importance simply because they are oriented to the public sphere, representing an alternative to exclusion, a participatory democratic instrument, a sign of recognition of their presence. In this sense, the different practices of citizenship for migrant women consist in the possibility of acting and realizing oneself on

the basis of one's own worldview and ethical convictions. In essence, in the possibility of acting the freedom of women in the plurality and difference of meanings that it assumes according to the generations, the cultures of origin, the socio-cultural conditions, the experiences made in the course of life.
Together with the associative experiences, the hosting projects for social inclusion and vocational training are accompanied, providing migrant women with basic skills, such as learning the Italian language.

Organization focus group findings

Introduction of the participants

- *Type of organization, experiences in working with TCN women*
  Social Cooperative, host TCN woman, family refugees and asylum seekers.

- *Location (region, capital / city / town / rural)*
  Copertino (LE), Apulia Region, South of Italy.

- *What services and programmes are offered? In which ways?*
  Integration and accommodation services, mental and psychological support (with specialist support), health services, translation services, language classes, education, training, family/domestic violence support, parent education, legal and financial. All services are offered from a high specialized team.

Experiences of the focus group

- *How are TCN women informed about the services? In which languages are they provided?*
  TCN women are informed about government and hosting services associations. The most used languages are English, French, Arab, Pakistani and others.

- *How are TCN womens' needs and skills identified? Are training tailored towards them?*
  Employment process, needs assessment, self-report. Training is absolutely tailored to the TCN women's skills. After offering specific training course the organization identified skills through the evaluation, verification and convalidation of competences and through the development of competences.

- *How are employees trained in terms of gender and cultural sensitivity? Are there specific measurements in place against cultural or gender discrimination?*
  The employees are all trained in specific fields, such as linguistic-cultural mediation or interpreting, they have collaborations with legal, health and training

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professionals. All collaborate at integration and respect of various cultures and gender equality both among the guests' presence in the hosting projects and with the citizenship of the hosting country.

- *How long after their arrival do TCN women generally participate in the programmes? How many months do they participate?*
  TCN women participate in the training programs from the beginning, the duration of the programs is 1 year on average but during their staying in the hosting project they are involved in various training and integration courses.

- *How are TCNs supported in gaining access to the labour market ?*
  Women are supported through specific work integration programmes that provide for the creation of individualized professional training until collaboration with local entrepreneurs.

- *What positive impact does the training have on TCN women?*
  Training has a very positive impact. TCN women are helped to develop their skills or to improve them, starting with learning of italian language and then moving on to specific areas of work that help women to emancipate and integrate themselves, to know better the context around them, the institutions and the opportunities. Some of them, finally well integrated, decide to undertake a personal and professional training dealing with socio-cultural and linguistic mediation.

- *Any other advice/tips in working with TCN women*
  For those who work in the world of hospitality or cultural and linguistic mediation, it is very important to have a training on the processes of migration of the various cultures, and a good English language base, be empathetic and ready to listen the people, to be prepared to face problems and find solutions, to be able to interface with public institutions and to face an integration process also for the local population.

Identification of gaps and needs

- *What are the key problems in providing services for TCNs?*
  The main problems are related to cooperation between public and private institutions and linguistic and communication barriers.

- *Level of implementation of policies regarding gender equality in the workplace*
  In general, the level of implementation of policies regarding gender equality in the workplaces is very low, and should be implemented

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- *Which services would help TCN women enter the labour market but are not available in the region?*
  In the Region where the organization is based (Apulia Region, South of Italy) there are no particular disadvantages regarding the offered services. TCN women have the opportunity to learn the language and to be trained professionally thanks to the hosting projects and the professional training (including private institute), always considering the TCN women with a regular residency permit.

- *Why do many companies not have any strategies for recruiting TCN women?*
  As mentioned and repeated above, the main problem is the language. Often in the companies of the territory both the employees and the entrepreneurs have much difficulty to speak in English (language much diffused among the TCN women accommodated)

- *What kind of skills/knowledge do employers need in order to support TCN women employment?*
  Main skills identified:
- communication skills
- language skills
- social and intercultural skills

- *Are most TCN women generally satisfied with their lives in the host country (in terms of education, employment etc)?*
  According to the experience with TCN women's presence in the hosting projects, the satisfaction has a medium level , it decreases especially at the exit from the projects, because women have to face problems due to cultural barriers or discrimination in different situations in their everyday lives.

Conclusion

- *Which experiences were useful or facilitated the process of labour integration?*
  In the hosting projects, there are professionals who help TCN women (and migrants in general) for the elaboration of a CV, giving information about main employment public and private centersor about the kind of services offered to citizens (including foreigners) by Institutions (i.e. Municipalities, Region, District, Government) who have the rights of any worker. In addition, thanks to the collaboration between hosting projects, social cooperative and local companies, work placement paths are promoted and help TCN migrants to fully enter the labour market.

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- *What should change in order to make the labor market more accessible?*
  It could be very useful for employers to be wary of migrant women, workers' rights should be better protected (reduction of exploitation) and furthermore it should be a greater connection between demand and supply of labour, involving employment centres and vocational training centres.

- *Is the target group familiar with existing rights and policies?*
  No, it isn't.

- *the role of civil societies*
  The role of civil society is very important especially for the facilitation of the migrants' integration processes in the hosting country, but also for professional training and knowledge of the rights and duties that every citizen has.

- *existing gaps*
  The main gaps are related to communication, mostly about English language for entrepreneurs and citizenship in general, the basic knowledge of the Italian language for migrants and the lack of proper information of the citizens of the hosting country about the migration processes.

- *problematic and positive practices*
  The main obstacles can be overcome through
- teamwork of professionals and social workers
- communication skills development
- socio-cultural and linguistic mediation
- human approach
- spreading information about migration phenomenon
- social awareness of hosting communities.

- *lessons learned, possibilities*
  The lesson learned is that everyone has their own history, and a path to be faced, whether personal or professional development. There is the need to improve the paths of integration and acceptance by the host population, the connection with the world of work and policies supporting women's professional empowerment. .

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