‘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

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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 represent 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

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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.

Policies, legislation & practices aimed at supporting TCN women

The legislation presupposes groups entitled to "free access" to employment inside Slovenia (apart from EU citizens and citizens of Switzerland):

- Foreigners with temporary residence permit on account of family reunification with a Slovenian citizen
- Foreigners with permanent residence permit in Slovenia

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- Foreigners with temporary residence permit, that were victims of human trafficking/victim of illegal employment
- Foreigners with approved international protection and the family members, that came to Slovenia through family reunification
- Foreigners that reside in Slovenia on account of temporary (subsidiary) protection
- Foreigners that are seeking asylum (after 9 months have passed from their plea for international protection)

Other third country nationals (TCNs) need permission to work inside Slovenia. Permissions are issued by the Administrative office (Ministry of the Interior), while the Employment service of Slovenia must provide an agreement to every of such documents.

There are numerous laws and books of regulations ordering the foreigner work-force and residency, most substantial being:

1. The law of employment, self-employment and work of foreigners (Zakon o zaposlovanju, samozaposlovanju in delu tujcev, ZZSDT, finalised version dated 30. 6. 2015, Uradni list RS št. 47/15)
2. The foreigner law (Zakon o tujcih, ZTuj-2, Uradni list RS št. 50/11; new changes to step in order in october 2021 and april 2023)
3. The international protection law (Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti, ZMZ-1, finalised version dated 25. 3. 2016, Uradni list RS, št 22/16)

And regulations such as:

1. Book of regulations on residence permit, fingerprinting and
2. Agreement on employment of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens, Sporazum o zaposlovanju državljanov BiH v Slovenijo, in function since 1. 3. 2013

There are two common work permissions, applicable to this report:

1. Unified permission for work or residence – issued for employment, self-employment and work, to prolong employment, for the blue EU card holders, streamed (posted) workers (by employers outreach), internships, seasonal farm work longer than 90 days
2. Work permissions – issued for seasonal farm work shorter than 90 days and any employment of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens, specially regulated – Nr. 2 in the regulations section above)

TCN FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Introduction of the participants

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Focus group was composed of six women, representatives of the migrant community. One of the most disadvantaged groups and also most excluded from the labour market are women with a refugee status/women seeking international protection. This is why we specifically invited women representative of these groups. In the end, most participants (5) were women with refugee status; 1 was accompanying husband who acquired a work visa (she had permanent residence in Slovenia). From the first group, women's countries of origin were: Palestine (1), Iraq (2), Syria (2). From the second, the 1 participant was from an unspecified country (she asked to keep her origin anonymous). All women were Arabic speaking, all of them had basic knowledge of English and Slovenian. 2 of the women had English knowledge at a higher level (B2). Their residence in Slovenia spanned from two to five years and their language knowledge was correlating the length of their stay. As foreigners in Slovenia they only have access to 180 hours of (free) language learning, the women's language knowledge was later dependent on: 1. NGOs and their "informal" language classes, 2. Their own social circles of Slovenian speaking people (that were in most cases very limited), 3. Their work opportunities and language learning process that arrives from working in a Slovenian collective. Only one (refugee status) woman had the latter experience.

Generally, their knowledge of Slovenian language spanned from A1 to B2.

Four women were aged between 35 and 44 years; one woman was aged between 45 and 54 years, one woman was less than 25 years old.

Four were married with children, one was living in Slovenia with her primary family, one was separated/divorced with children.

Three had completed high school, one completed technical qualification, one specified she had more than 10 years of schooling (completed high school and one year of university) and one that she completed only primary school. All relevant schooling was completed in their countries of origin. After arriving in Slovenia, they had no further opportunities to enrol into educational programmes (mostly due to lack of language knowledge).

Three of them never worked; three of them worked before migrating (in the country of origin). None of them worked after the arrival. Some were included in precarious "working arrangements" (either black economy or voluntary work), but none had longer experiences of being included into legal, gainful employment.

Women that responded to this focus-group invitation are not representative of women TCN population Slovenia. The sample is predominantly composed of women with a refugee status, which are a minority inside the TCN community. Most commonly TCN women acquire temporary (3 years) residence or permanent residence (after 5 years) through family membership – after their relative (typically husband or father) has gained unified permission for work and residence. These women come from the following countries (ordered in predominance of arrivals): 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2. Kosovo, 3. Serbia, 4. North Macedonia, 5. Croatia (data from 2019, Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office; Migration changes, Slovenia, 2019 (stat.si).

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The answers provided in the focus group are though inclined to represent one perspective – of TCN residing in Slovenia on grounds of international protection. This is the social group facing:

- harsh migratory paths (though some arrive through family reunification),
- highest degrees of discrimination (due to being "more foreign" than nationals of Western Balkans, f. e.),
- high levels of unemployment and poverty
- precarious living conditions (frequent movement as their status "proceeds")

Focus group findings are therefore affected by this population's specifics. But overall it can be concluded that TCN women face similar problems – as TCN women residing temporarily mostly "accompany" their employed (male) family members; they are facing akin problems – living inside traditional families, being home-bound, reaching Slovenia without employment prospect, having low educational level, etc. The experiences of these women were widely presented by organizations (focus group Nr. 2). Findings are considered valid for all populations of concern: TCN women living in Slovenia either as refugees or as temporary/permanent residence holders.

Experiences of the focus group

Education and further training

All participants indicated they were involved in education prior to their migration. 4 had finished high school, one of whom applied to university and finished one year on the Faculty of Pharmacy (Damascus, Syria) – but studies were interrupted by war and consequently migration. One of the women finished technical qualification and one stopped after finishing primary school. All women had trouble "proving" their educational qualifications – in some cases the papers remained in the country of origin (due to rapid forced migration). Women are therefore not able to present needed documentation to the authorities. And in some cases (2) Slovenian authorities refuse to recognise foreign qualifications as adequate.

Women therefore have a chance to:

1. "Begin" schooling from zero (primary school for adults onward)
2. Prove their finished primary education and enrol into secondary education – 2 women had this chance, but the right could not be consumed due to lack of Slovene proficiency; 1 of 2 indicated she would gladly and easily study in English, but these programmes are not free of charge;
3. Search employment as severely unskilled workers (women indicated that it is nearly impossible finding a job with no proof of primary education).

Women were involved in further education and training in three ways:

1. Primary school for adults

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2. Language classes – Slovene and English; either formal (180 hours of free language study) or informal, organised by NGOs
3. Informal training organised by NGOs – such as knitting class, bakery class, tourist guide training, etc.

No women continued their education on higher levels or took part in training to access the labour market as a part of "integration package". The participants had a general knowledge of their rights (considering education and training), but were very confused as to what is formal and what informal, which trainings are finalised by "fake certificates" (as one woman called them; meaning "diplomas" after some project that carry no real weight with employers) and "real certificates" that are of material use in the labour market.

Employment

Three women were employed previously (in their country of origin) and three women were never employed (2 worked as homemakers and 1 was under 25, so she had no chance to work previous to migration). Of the women that were employed – 2 worked as hairdressers for 14 and 8 years respectively and 1 woman worked in medical advertising for 15 years. In Slovenia none of them found gainful employment. 2 of them were trying – applying for jobs, seeking advice on how to write a CV, how to behave in interviews – but were so far unsuccessful. 4 of them have not tried – never applied for a job. Of these 4, 2 were not interested in employment (1 due to having 6 children and being very busy at home, 1 due to lack of her husband's consent) and 2 believed they could not find it. The latter 2 had a plan to first learn Slovene and then start searching.

All of them stated they faced discrimination – some perceived it as severe and some as minor. Most indicated that discrimination was triple: due to being a woman, being a foreigner (not understanding, not being able to stand for yourself) and due to being a Muslim. They indicated that religious discrimination was a most prevalent issue – especially for women wearing hijab. As they had limited experience with the labour market, they rather connected these statements to other spaces – such as schools, kindergartens, shops, banks and everyday endeavours with the local population. They also argued that a woman with a hijab cannot find a job – she has to "take it off" before even trying. This indicates belief that one has to "choose" between religious belief and aspiring to integrate. Two of the women stopped wearing hijab for these reasons – one stated is still gathering courage to "wear it back"; another was satisfied with this new, "freer" (as she stated) situation. 2 women said they were not judged as women, but as mothers – they especially felt people in Slovenia were opposing their "big families" and a choice to have a lot of children.

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Experiences with NGO organizations and self-organized initiatives

All women had frequent and effective contact with NGOs and migrant organizations. These provided them with

- information (on their rights, children's rights),
- legal help (in their asylum cases and otherwise),
- translations (for example when going to children's school, to the doctor),
- informal trainings (mentioned previously),
- psycho-social support and counselling,
- informal language classes
- support groups (few organizations were mentioned that provide "support circles", where TCN women regularly meet)
- child support – especially organizing instructors for Slovene language and other school subjects
- support in searching housing (calling prospective landlords instead of them, as they have limited language knowledge and discrimination is particularly thick in this area)
- transportation (having small vans and cars for emergency transport – going to hospital, moving house, …)
- ….

These organizations and also civil initiatives (not formalized) cover complex needs of TCN women. Quite commonly the women gain contact through children's need – organizations support children in schools and help them through initial language difficulties. But later they start working with women and supporting families as "units" or continue working with women solely.

Experiences with policies, laws, practices, rights

Focus group participants had low knowledge in legislation and policies supporting their status. During the meeting, they posed some very basic questions, such as: which language level is adequate for certain types of jobs, after how many years they can apply for citizenship, etc. This indicates the limited information on their own status and prospect. TCNs receive language classes and cultural adjustment training, but do not receive basic formal information on the laws "ordering" their stay. This poses a reoccurring need for legal help and support, which is mainly provided through NGOs (and is not easily accessible).

2 of 6 participants were familiar with employees' rights, but none of them were familiar with legal authorities protecting their labour rights or with labour unions.

Skills

Women predominantly stated two needs:

1. Language learning
2. Digital skills

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The first one was mentioned by each participant, all 6 wanted to continue learning Slovenian language. They had a strong and unfading feeling that 180 hours were not enough. They did not feel sufficiently equipped to live in Slovenia. They mentioned it is impossible to fully integrate (either into the labour market or otherwise) without language knowledge. 2 participants "lost hope" to become integrated themselves and were counting on their children, who were much more proficient in both Slovene and English. They were therefore heavily dependent on their – often underage – children. They argued it seems "wrong" to ask young children to read and translate formal documents: court decisions, decisions on their legal status, bank statements, documents arriving on their unemployment benefits, etc. But they rarely had another option than to do so. Children were also accompanying them to the doctor, to the social workers, in some rare cases children translated teacher-parents' meetings (concerning themselves).
Women decidedly expressed their lack of opportunities. As children attend schooling, husbands are more commonly involved in (mostly precarious) employment; women remain home. 3 of them voiced concerns about forgetting all previously learnt Slovene. Covid-19 epidemic and multiple lockdowns in 2020/2021 were also mentioned as a big factor in their "vanishing" language knowledge.
The only additional free language learning (after the initial 180 hours) is accessible through NGOs and their (quite unstable) financing of language teachers. Women strongly suggested – that if a project wants to "make sense" – it has to also include linguistic support. Participants also expressed worry that they'll be unable to attain citizenship due to lack of language knowledge. Most of them (5) knew that refugees are able to apply for citizenship after a 5-year period (of continuous residence in Slovenia) - one of the conditions being A2 level of Slovene language (due to new foreigner law, 2021).

Second one – the need for digital skills was mentioned by 5/6 women. Some voiced it as a general "wish", because they saw it as indispensable for employability. Others had specific ideas: wanting to learn to use Word, Pdf, Excel, Emails, Zoom, internet browsing in English language. One participant stated she lacked knowledge in Microsoft office - ECDL 3.

Other needs were specific to each participant. Two want to obtain a certificate for assistance in hair-dressing. One expressed a wish to enrol into a sweets and confectionery course. Others wanted to gain any skills necessary to "do something" or reach any kind of employability.

Critics of the project approach

3 of 6 women stated that the project "approach" to integration is gravely lacking. They reported being "included" in many short-term (days to weeks) and longer-term (years) programmes with temporary funding. Primarily they had great hopes – aspiring towards gainful employment and some permanent opportunity to join a NGO team. But later discovered that projects are aimed at "accomplishing" pre-stated goals and that they rarely answer surfacing needs of TCNs. They often left "empty handed" (participant 1) and even more excluded – the project gave a momentary feeling of fully part-taking in a society. But following this "momentary inclusions"

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was a feeling of even more dire exclusion. Therefore, participants of the focus group voiced their low trust in project-type work, that usually "takes" – their data, their energy and time and leaves them at the same stop: unemployed, poor and with a temporary residential status. They voiced persuasion that project work must represent actual interests of the "target group" (f.e. TCN women).

Identification of gaps and needs

By TCN women's report it's possible to conclude:

1. All solutions provided must be entangled in already existing work (of NGOs or migrant communities). Any solution that only covers the time-span of a project is insufficient and unsustainable. TCN women have been included in many short-term projects, which left them feeling tired and used. They need programmes that will not give false hopes, correspond to their actual (not formally perceived needs) and that will correspond to already existing efforts.
2. The project must periodically "reflect" on the stated needs and remain in close touch with focus groups.
3. Most needed skills are: language classes (Slovenian and English), basic digital skills (Word, Excel, Zoom, WordPress) and CV writing support.
4. TCN women face discrimination – for being foreigners and for being Muslim women (this was specific to focus groups participants, other TCN women of course belong to diverse religious/non-religious groups). Especially hijab is recognised as a highly "undesirable trait". Therefore, a substantial amount of effort has to be streamed towards employers – to gain understanding and upsides to employing foreigners, overcome prejudices, etc.
5. Shadowing was recognised as a good practice in a focus group – no women have taken part in such activity (nor internship type of work). 2 of them worked voluntarily before. 5/6 had a positive attitude towards shadowing, especially in areas of interest (hairdressing, cafeteria, retirement home). They saw it as an opportunity to present themselves, gain competences, widen their professional circle and have a higher opportunity for future employment.
6. Some women (3) also suggested contacting employers directly, writing reference letters, etc. – these seem to be practices used by organizations (migrant organizations and NGO) with varying levels of success – depending on the local environment.
7. Women have overall shown they do not have sufficient access to the labour market. On the scale from 1 to 5, four women measured it as 1 (the lowest), one woman as 2 and one woman as 0 (so low that a measure in non-existent)
8. Women were more optimistic about their general participation in the host society: three women measured it with a 3, two women with a 3 and one with a 4. This – even though better – still shows general dissatisfaction with the integration process. All women

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stated they are glad to be in Slovenia instead of their country of origin (as most were forced to migrate). But they had higher expectations upon arrival – they were positive about employment and becoming a part of the community. They perceived this process as lengthy and very tiring. In this area some women (2) also expressed the need for psycho-social support from professionals and in peer circles.

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ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Introduction of the participants

Members of four organizations attended the focus group: two stationed in Ljubljana and two in smaller cities in central Slovenia (Škofja Loka and Jesenice). The organizations from Ljubljana (Mozaik Association – Association for children and Slovenian Philanthropy) had worked with TCN women with refugee status, asylum seekers and TCN women with temporary residence due to work/residence visas obtained by family members. Two organizations from Škofja Loka (Association Tri) and Jesenice (Up Association) had wider experiences with the latter, with special focus on newly arrived women from Western Balkan countries. That said, Up Association gained an AMIF project and has worked in asylum home Vič in the years 2018 – 2020. 3 participants were women and 1 was a man. All of them had extended experience working specifically with women and children – offering courses, support, training, advocacy, etc. Advocacy seemed to be an especially important part of their endeavours – on the local level the organizations try to push for changes, so the living situation of migrant women improves slowly. All of them also had contact with local employers which frequently offer employment or training (voluntary) opportunities for newly arrived TCN women. 2 organizations had their own spaces (in Ljubljana and Jesenice), which function as "daily centres" – this is where TCNs meet, attend classes, gather information, and seek support. 1 organization also resided temporarily inside the asylum home (one small office) where asylum seekers could reach out when needing a less formal "form of support" (differing from the institutional practices). 1 organization was temporarily renting spaces from the municipality, they also had to hold language classes inside their offices. And one of the organizations (in Ljubljana) was more field-bound. It has offices, but workers mostly visit TCN women at their homes, offering them support "on the field" – as a form of "family social work".

The first 3 (with available spaces) all held informal language classes, teaching support for children, informal training (such as cooking or knitting), gatherings (movie nights, events) and groups for psychosocial support.

The last one (in the field) offered support inside the families – also teaching the children, solving bureaucratic issues, etc.

All organizations also offered translation and advocacy services.

Experiences of the focus group

Organizations obtain contact with TCN women in various ways:

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1. Women have their own social circle and "bring" the newcomers
2. Centre for social work streams them toward the organization for support and additional language learning
3. Through Employment service
4. Through schools and (rarer) kindergartens – pedagogues are familiar with local NGOs and offer parents the contact
5. Through consultation centres for children – child psychologists present the work of NGOs to parents
6. Leaflets – handing them out in schools yearly (Up association where programmes begin corresponding to the school year – even though later women can still join)

Services are provided in Slovenian, English, Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, Arabic and in all necessary languages – through translators. Usually the conversations are a mixture of "all languages"; following the needs and understating of TCN women participants.

Skills and competences of women are identified "informally" – through collaborative processes. Usually collaboration begins with informal free language classes (financed either as European projects, national projects or municipal projects, 1 organization also gathers resources through donors – local companies). During these language classes women start stating their issues, needs and aspirations – usually this leads to productive relationships. Initial programs (language + some cultural adjustment training) last from 6 months (Up Association) to 1 – 2 years (association Three). Other organizations put no time limits to program attendance (Slovenian Philanthropy, Mozaik). In the first two organizations, inclusion in the initial program later "transforms" into a more collaborative approach – women visit the daily centre twice weekly. They start volunteering for an NGO, start supporting newly arrived women, organize workshops themselves. In the centre they receive information, legal and sometimes material support, advocacy, etc. The last two programmes are "moulded" in a collaborative way from the beginning – as informal meetings, amalgams of language learning, cultural adjustment training, skills acquiring, legal support, … Usually programmes are heavily dependent on:

- Current funding
- Volunteers – that organize some lectures, workshops, programmes, etc.
- Employed personnel which varies in time (due to project and temporary funding)
- Support from municipalities – that vary with "changing" leadership
- "Inflow" of TCNs – immigration is dependent on local employers, who usually seek male workers in the Western Balkans, on international agreements, etc.

Persons employed in the organizations have appropriate levels of education (university degree) in the areas of Humanities, Social Work, Pedagogy, Andragogy and such. They receive compensatory training later and are included in various international programmes to better their work with vulnerable populations (f. e. global Change network "OF/BY/FOR ALL) and build a more inclusive working environment.

Focus group participants explained that TCN women usually either participate for a very short period (few weeks), but if they stay, they tend to remain involved for more than 2 years. They reported that TCN women are a specially "hard population" – harder to reach, harder to support,

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mostly because they are home-bound and quite reluctant (mainly due to traditional values of their families). 1 participant (Slovenian Philanthropy) reported that they only managed to kick off the women's group after the first lockdown (spring 2020). Before their "spaces" were populated by young male migrants and women "spontaneously" removed themselves. But when their offices were empty, they started coming regularly. After half a year they split a group into two (Arabic and Farsi speaking), each containing 10 – 15 participants. They keep these gatherings closed and discourage males from visiting the office during these hours. Two other organisations (Up and Tri) have programmes tailored specifically for women. And Mozaik works in familial places, which are traditionally in the monopoly of women – this organization never had any problems forming good and lasting relationships with women.

All organizations support women in search of gainful employment – with varying degrees of success. One co-speaker (Up) indicated that their success rate was 30% (with a third of all women finding employment), others considered it much lower. A Co-speaker from Tri Association (working predominantly with Albanian women) stated that most do not find employment in two years after arrival. The organisation attempts to "persuade" local employers – such as retirement homes and factories which are in need of workforce – but these remain reluctant. One of the reasons is the status of TCN women – they mainly hold temporary residence. In this case (differing from holders of unified permit for work and residence), the Employment Service of Slovenia must hand out information sheets. Due to this bureaucratic complication, employers remain disinclined. Filantropija offers services, such as co-writing CVs and general support (writing mails, access to computers). As their primary target groups are asylum seekers and refugees, their success rate is quite low. Mozaik did not provide specific information; women are supported when searching for employment, but are not pressured/persuaded to do so. Up Association also developed the practice of "providing TCN volunteers" for local employers. After years of collaboration local companies and institutions acknowledged the "usefulness" of TCN women's workforce and started collaborating with Up Association more thoroughly. Co-speaker still mentioned prevalent discrimination – employers sometimes specifically state their unwillingness to employ covered women.

So mainly organizations work in two ways:

- Supporting TCN women (language learning, CV writing, search for employers, writing mails, short classes on "how to" of interviews, …)
- Working with local employers (through advocacy on account of TCN women, through voluntary work, collaborative projects) – especially Tri and Up association.

All stated that employers would need "systemic encouragement" that would make it easier to employ foreign women. And that working solely to diminish prejudices is not enough.

Their tips on working with TCN women were mostly: staying open and positive, providing a collaborative, inclusive and welcoming environment, not pressuring women out of their traditional roles and their comfort zone – because the effect is counter-productive and ends in women's self-removal from the program.

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They also put focus on the language learning and the lack of women's access – sometimes even to initial free language classes (that is their right), and complete lack of solutions after this "package of classes" is finished. They also agreed that a shadowing scheme could be very suitable and encouraging for women.

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Identification of gaps and needs

Key problems outlined by co-speakers were:

1. Problems on the level of legislation (asylum seekers can't work for first 9 months, no legal grounds for free language classes after the 180 hours, information sheet needed when employing persons with temporary residence, cutting unemployment funds when TCNs do not have sufficient language knowledge, A1, dire conditions for self-employment, temporary statuses)
2. Problems on the level of employers – general reluctance, their narrow experience with TCN women, prejudices (especially towards asylum seekers and women with hijab). Employers have no strategies for recruiting TCN women.
3. Problems on the level of TCN women:

- Low educational levels or inability to provide proof of education (obtained in the country of origin)
- Low knowledge of Slovene and English
- Traditional patriarchal values – women often perceive their role as solely home-makers, their partners are often unsupportive when they express interest to work

Alike TCN women themselves, members of organizations evaluated that women are most commonly discriminated on grounds of religion, second most prevalent is general foreigner discrimination and racism, and lastly comes gender discrimination. Women are often not "suitable", because shift work is required. Young women are seen as potential mothers and employers avoid anticipated maternity leaves. Apart from that employers mostly succumb to wishes of their "customers" – if people could be discontented for being served (for example in a bar or a restaurant) by a woman in a hijab, the employers would rather not employ her. Same goes for public institutions, such as hospitals, schools, kindergartens, retirement homes.

Co-speakers agreed that TCN women and employers need more contact – like formal and informal opportunities to meet, for women to work voluntarily, provide shadowing or an internship. This way employers could diminish their prejudices and TCN women could gain confidence and competences.

Another thing widely recognised was a need for language learning and mentorship (so a TCN woman entering the labour market would have a "support person" either inside or outside her workplace).

Generally co-speakers appraised TCN women's general satisfaction as "medium". Most women are happy to have moved, and find Slovenia more open and easier to live in. But they also feel lonely, disconnected and are very doubtful about their ability to acquire gainful employment and have independent (from public benefits and also their families) resources. Most women find it demeaning to count on taxpayer's money – 3 out of 6 reported feeling ashamed, "like

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the Slovenians already don't like us and then we come here to spend their money" … - "but why wouldn't they give us a job?" (participant 2). Some co-speakers recognised a vicious cycle, where discrimination limits TCNs opportunities, which leads them towards poverty, precarious lives and (often) illegal job market; which in return strengthens marginalization and discrimination.

Conclusion

Process of labour integration is enhanced by:

- Supportive environment (like a daily centre) that women continuously visit
- Informal language classes (Slovene and English)
- Short trainings that develop certain skill sets (one of most mentioned was CV writing and interview preparation, but also beginner digital skill, cooking classes and knitting classes)
- Mentorship – individual or familial, a "key person" that supports family, accompanies them to institutions (schools, employment service, etc.)
- Collaborative workshops that TCN women co-organize
- Advocacy and collaborative relation with local employers

Focus groups were constructive, key themes of TCN women integration were recognised. Most salient points were those discursively "covered" by both parties, organisations and women alike. The downside to these overlapping matters was their systemic nature and though un-solvability on the project level. A lot of problems highlighted arrive from national or even international levels – insufficient laws regulating the foreigner employment, insufficient international agreements (considering labour force and f. e. international protection), the laws to "prevent" foreigners to settle permanently (consecutive temporary residences, inability of asylum seekers to work for 9 months, the information sheet issued for holders of temporary residence that employers are reluctant to use). But there are some issues specific to local contexts and gaps to be filled on the project level. Most mentioned ones were – informal language classes, informal trainings/workshops, creation of inclusive micro-environments where TCN women begin taking responsibilities and gaining competences for work, working with employers to recognise the upsides of foreign employment and skill sets of TCN women. The Engage project steps into this complex amalgam two-sidedly: through the workshops offered to women and through the shadowing scheme, meant to construct connection and reciprocal recognition and both sides – of TCN women and employers. It is also a chance for women to gain specific, work related skills, become more self-reliant and have a chance to cooperate inside a Slovenian collective. For employers it provides a chance to form a more diverse and inclusive work collective and to overcome (possible) prejudices held against third country nationals, asylum-seekers or refugees, Muslim women, etc.

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