

# Gender and migration

By Mattia Giampaolo and Aurora Ianni

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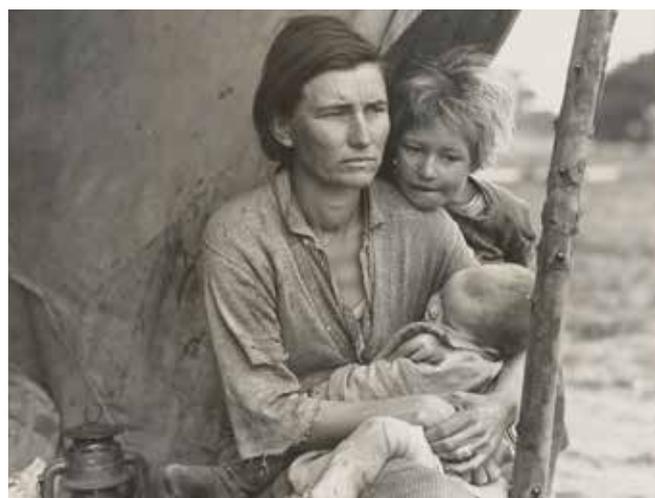
<sup>1</sup>This background document has been realized in the framework of the project, to spread data and information based on a scientific analysis. If you want to know more about this project and be part of its activities, please feel free to contact the leading partner Diaconia in Czech Republic (email: nozinova@diakoniespolu.cz), as well as Focsiv in Italy (email: f.novella@focsiv.it)."

# 1. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK ON GENDER AND MIGRATION

Human mobility is driven by numerous factors: education, work, marriage, persecution, environmental shocks, among others. **Gender**<sup>2</sup> influences migration at all its stages. Although women migrate as much as men, their skills and contributions are not equally recognized. Gender norms and expectations, power relations and unequal rights, violence against women and girls, and women's lack of decision-making power, have specific consequences for female migrants<sup>3</sup>. They may be prevented from working or be confined to 'female jobs' which are often paid or valued less than other jobs. In addition, irregular and young migrants, particularly girls, are at greater risk of violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation.

With the **Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and its **General Recommendation No. 26 (GR26) on women migrant workers**, the International Community recognized the need for providing a strong framework to support the formulation of gender-responsive, right-based migration policies. On the one hand, CEDAW, while defining discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex", requires that States Parties take all appropriate measures, including legislation, for the purpose of guaranteeing women the

exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. On the other hand, GR 26 provides more specific guidance to States Parties (the formulation of a gender-responsive migration policy, an active involvement of women migrant workers in policy formulation, the undertaking of quantitative and qualitative research, data collection and analysis to ensure that policies are gender-responsive) on how to respect and fulfil the human rights of women<sup>4</sup>.



Ph. Migrant agricultural worker's family

Gender and migration are strictly interconnected. The **2030 Agenda**<sup>5</sup>, while calling to **reduce inequality in and among countries** and

<sup>2</sup> According to Article 3c of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention): "Gender shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men". See Institute of Political Studies - Strasbourg Produced for the Gender Equality Division of the Council of Europe, Migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women and girls in Europe, January 2019. <https://rm.coe.int/report-migrant-women-scpo-jan-2019/168092d8cd>

<sup>3</sup> Tam O'Neil, Anjali Fleury and Marta Foresti, 'Women on the move Migration, gender equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', ODI, 2016. See <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10731.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see UN WOMAN, Making gender - responsive migration laws, Policy Brief n.4. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/policy-brief-making-gender-responsive-migration-laws-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5143>.

<sup>5</sup> The Agenda is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 worldwide, ensuring that no one is left behind. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 Global Goals set by the UN General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

“facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration” (**Target 10.7**), put **Gender Equality** among the objectives to achieve Sustainable Development. With **Goal 5**, the United Nations aim to “**achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**”. This is strictly linked to Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda which aims to “**promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**” and, particularly, to its Target 8.8 “Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working

environments for all workers, including migrant workers and particularly female migrants”. In addition, as female migrants are at serious risk of sexual exploitation and abuses, the achievement of gender equality and, particularly, the “**elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private sphere**” (**Target 5.2**), are also connected to Goal 16 “**promote peaceful and inclusive societies**” and, specifically, to its Targets 16.1 “**significantly reduce all forms of violence everywhere**”, 16.2 “**end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children**” and 16.3 “**promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all**”.

Along the same line, the **Global Compact for Migration, adopted in 2018**<sup>6</sup>, presents a great opportunity to ensure that migration governance contributes to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 5. By adopting a gender-responsive approach to the implementation of the Compact, States can ensure that migration laws, policies, regulations and programs promote and protect the human rights of all migrants<sup>7</sup>.



Ph. Global Goals for Sustainable Development



<sup>6</sup> The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the majority of UN Member States (with 152 votes in favour, 12 abstentions - including Italy - and five votes against - Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, Poland and USA) on December 10th, 2018 in Marrakesh, is the first inter-governmentally negotiated (non-binding) agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in order to address the challenges associated with today's migration and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development. See <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

<sup>7</sup> UN WOMEN, Putting the rights of migrant women at the center of the Global Compact on Migration, December 2018. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/12/news-migrant-women-at-the-centre-of-the-global-compact-for-migration>

## 2. WOMEN ON THE MOVE IN NUMBERS

In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide has reached nearly 272 million. About their gender composition, **women were 48 per cent of all international migrants in 2019**.

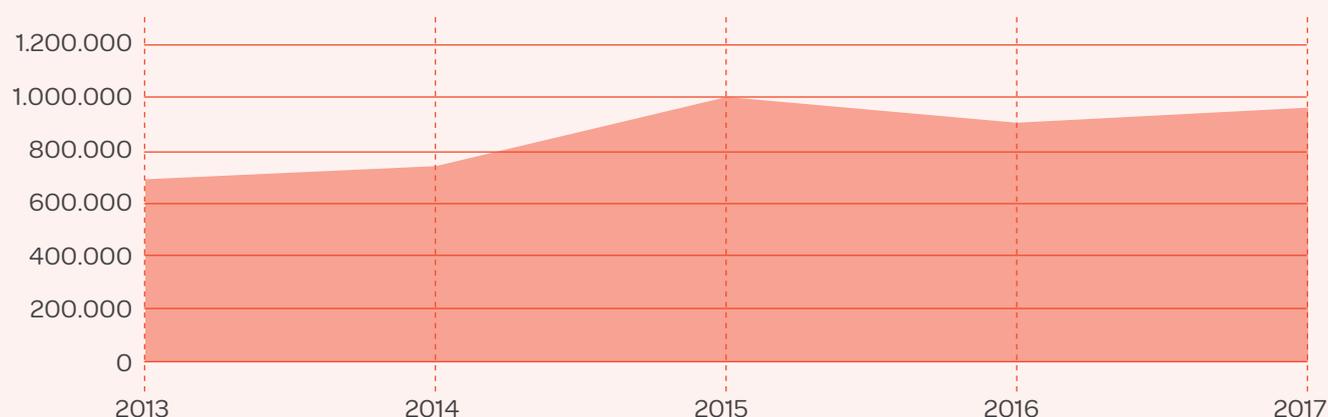
The share of migrant women was the highest in Northern America (52%) and Europe (51%), and the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (47%), as well as Northern Africa and Western Asia (36%)<sup>8</sup>.

According to Eurostat, 2.4 million immigrants entered the EU from non-EU countries<sup>9</sup> in 2017. Regarding their gender distribution, there were slightly more men than women (54%, compared with 46 %).

Female immigration to the EU 28 grew from 2013 to 2015, when it peaked at 1 million. In the following two years, although a slight decrease in incoming women was reported, the number of female immigrants did not go much below 1 million (table 1).

By analysing data on female immigrants who entered some selected EU Member States (see table 2 below) in 2017, we can notice that the highest shares of female migrants were reported in Spain, France, Austria and Belgium (more than 50%). By contrast, the lowest shares of female migrants were recorded in Slovenia, Greece and Italy.

**Table 1.** Female immigrants to the EU 28 from non-EU countries



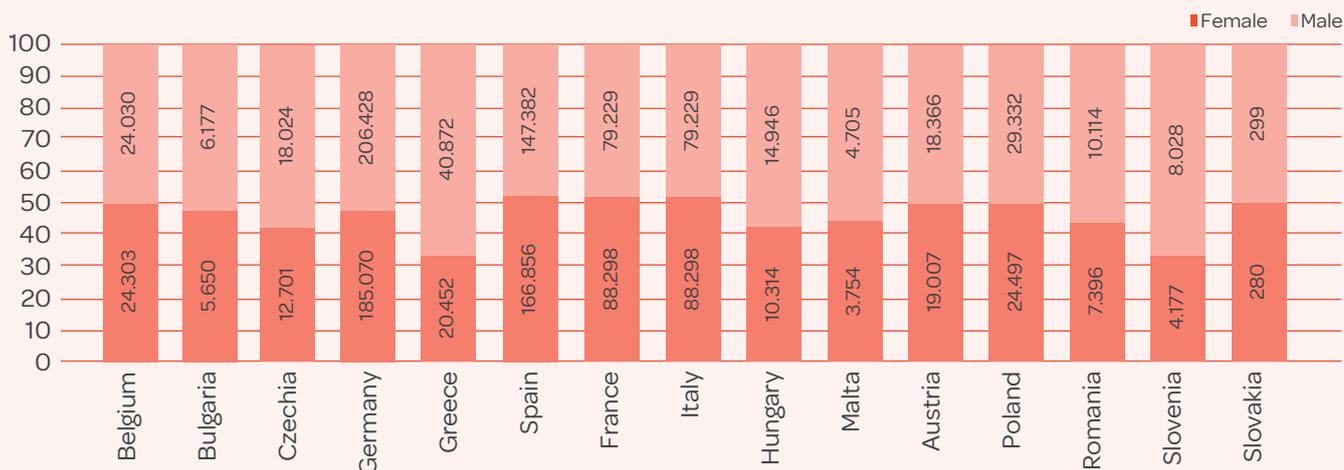
Source: Elaboration on Eurostat dataset [migr\_imm1ctz]<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see UNDESA, The number of international migrants reaches 272 million, continuing an upward trend in all world regions, says UN, September 2019. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrant-stock-2019.html>

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat, Migration and Population Statistics; see [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

<sup>10</sup> Data extracted on January 23, 2020.

**Table 2.** Immigration by sex in 2017 to some selected EU countries - %

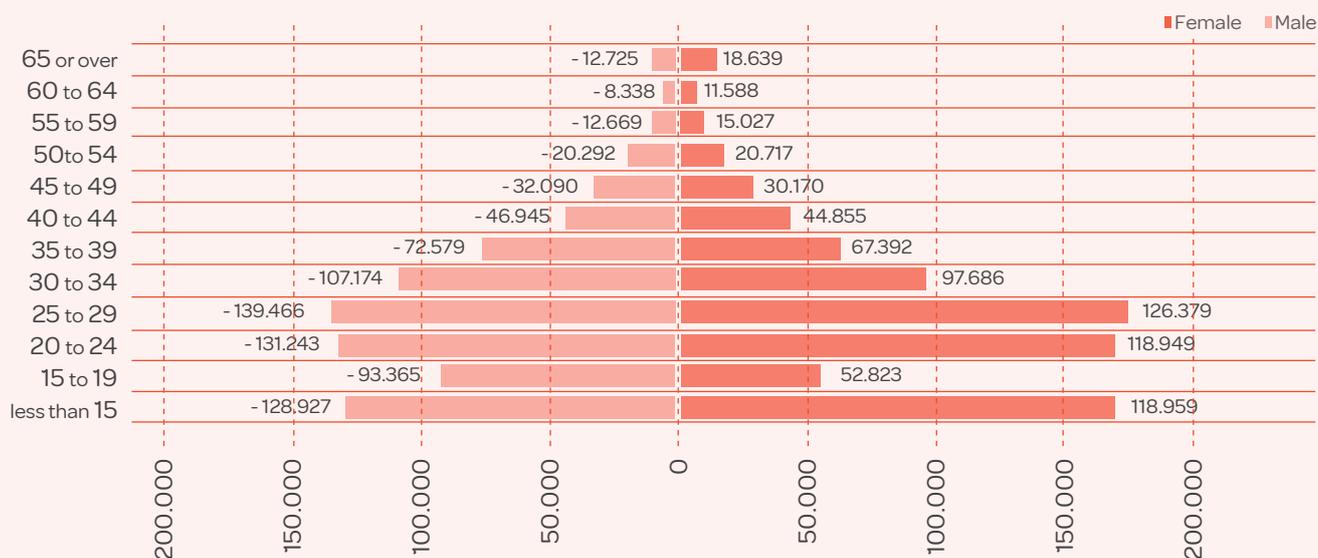


Source: Eurostat dataset [migr\_imm1ctz]

The majority of immigrant women who entered the EU 28 in 2017 were under 29 years of age. The highest numbers are reported from the age groups 20 to 24 and 25 to 29, although the num-

ber of girls under the age of 15 is also substantial.

**Table 3.** Immigration to the EU 28 in 2017 by age group



Source: Elaboration on Eurostat dataset [migr\_imm1ctz]

### 3. CAUSES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN MIGRATION

Women migration represents 46 % of the total in the EU (Eurostat data). Gender is at the core of the debate on migration. According to the UN, most of the women migrate voluntarily for improving the wellbeing of their family and for their empowerment. However, women and girls are, very often, forced to migrate due to conflicts, gender inequality, natural disasters and persecution. Gender inequality is one of those factors that are common in both origin and host countries.

Despite migration might represent a positive change for a woman, migrating to a developed country might represent a second phase of exploitation and inequality. Very often, women migration is a direct response to gender-specific labour demand in destination countries<sup>11</sup>.

The phenomenon of Care Drain is an example of gender-labour demand. According to Michel<sup>12</sup>, Care Drain can be defined as the migration of women from developing countries to perform care work in destination countries, leaving a void of care in their families of origin, as well as leaving behind their children and elders.

These jobs -which include support to aging or elderly population, as well as disabled people- despite the promises made by the destination countries to guarantee higher wages and rights for migrant women, end up being another round of exploitation and abuses.

In 2011, the ILO adopted the Convention on Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189), which specifies a set of basic minimum rights all domestic workers are entitled to, which should be guaranteed by national laws. The project “Promoting the Integration of Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe” aims to expand knowledge about the integration challenges that migrants face in the domestic work sector in their destination countries<sup>13</sup>.

Women involved in human trafficking, according to Polaris data<sup>14</sup>, are about 12.5 million out of 25 million including women, girl, men and boys. IOM has carried out a survey on 120,000 women migrants in 2016, finding that women exploitation in human trafficking accounts for 45% of the total<sup>15</sup>. As for girls, figures showed that about 10% of them are involved in human trafficking, while figures about boys and men have increased from 20% to 50% since 2005 (see graphic next page).

As IOM outlined: The vast majority of victims identified between 2002 and 2016 entered the trafficking process through labour migration, although a large share of identified child victims in 2014–2016 were sold by their families or entered the trafficking process through family or relatives. Victims identified in sectors like mining and construction are almost exclusively men, while victims identified in prostitution and sectors such as hospitality are mostly women<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> For further details, see: [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01\\_DAW.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01_DAW.pdf)

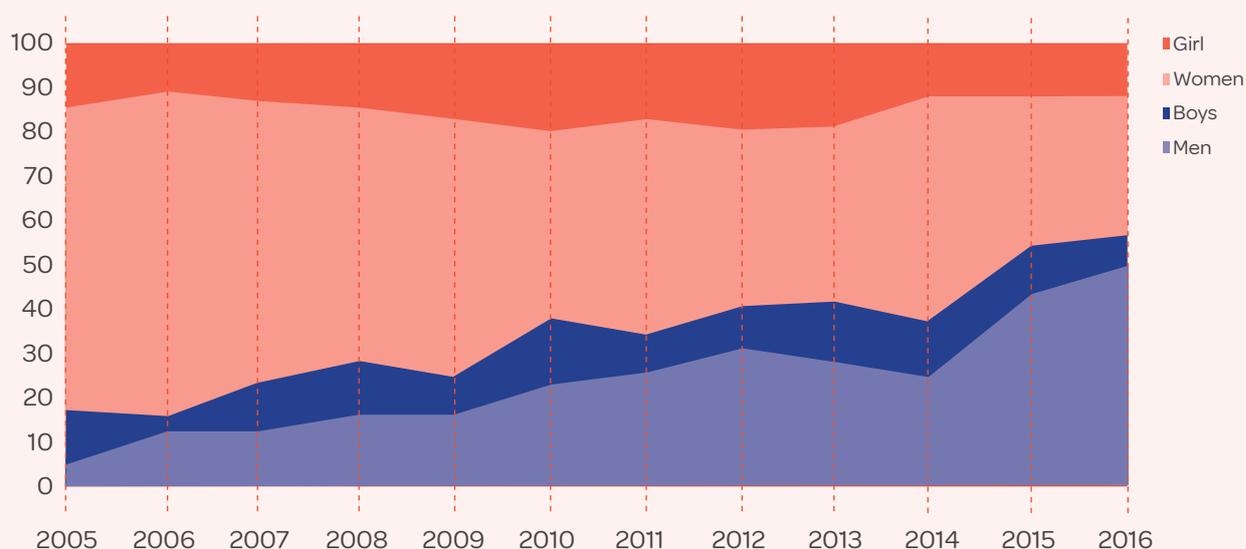
<sup>12</sup> About Care Drain: <https://www.theglobalist.com/beyond-the-global-brain-drain-the-global-care-drain/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/photo-video/migrant-domestic-workers-in-europe-photo-contest/WCMS\\_206224/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/photo-video/migrant-domestic-workers-in-europe-photo-contest/WCMS_206224/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>14</sup> <https://polarisproject.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/human-trafficking>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**Table 4.** Detection rates of trafficked persons by sex, 2005-2016

Source: Elaboration on Eurostat dataset [migr\_imm1ctz]<sup>10</sup>



### TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: THE CASE OF NIGERIA.

Migration linked to sexual exploitation and prostitution is part of the gender inequality issue. The lack of regular status and inequalities within the host country and the country of origin pushes many migrant women into the network of criminal groups, which are responsible for managing trafficking. In the case of Nigeria, trafficking starts in the country of origin with a structured criminal network of smugglers. By exploiting their economic and social conditions, these networks built up a system which creates a dependency relationship between them and women. Indeed, women leave their country with the support of a 'male or female sponsor' who manages their

lives in the host country. This dependency can last more than three years. This period allows the woman to pay off the debts she incurred for her leaving. In addition, many 'former prostitutes may become, once their debts are paid off, part of the organization. This mechanism reinforces the network of women trafficking and makes it hard to be penetrated by host countries' contrast policies.

In this respect, **Goal 5 of the SDGs** refers to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

This, in turn, is directly linked to Goal 16 which requires solutions through respect for and application of the rule of law in all countries, in order to prevent gender-based violence.

<sup>17</sup> For further details, see: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trafficking-women-nigeria-europe>

Most of the trafficked women are directed to Arab and Asian countries, less to Europe (about 12,000 in the 2012-2014 period)<sup>18</sup>.

In Europe, migrant women are concentrated, compared to EU-born migrant women, in low-skilled jobs such as sales, personal and protective services. These jobs, as outlined by Rand Europe in its report<sup>19</sup>, often prevent workers from enjoying their fundamental rights, mobility within the labour market and career advancement possibilities.

In addition, in Europe, the rate of employed women is lower than that of men. Gender inequality within the labour market may also cause a confinement of women at home<sup>20</sup>. This means that, once again, women are at the same starting point they were in their countries of origin.

The main goal across Europe is to implement policies and projects which avoid social exclusion and women labour exploitation. In this direction, the EU aims to achieve a higher level of integration by promoting the implementation of social inclusion policies for women starting from education<sup>21</sup>.

**Table 5.** Employment rates of non EU nationals



Source: Elaboration on Eurostat dataset [migr\_imm1ctz]<sup>10</sup>

<sup>18</sup> About human trafficking in Europe: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20171012STO85932/human-trafficking-nearly-16-000-victims-in-the-eu>

<sup>19</sup> About the report: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=2A77D3B8-90AC-3D46-7F52E-41D1157FE6C>

<sup>20</sup> [https://books.google.it/books?id=1yqtAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=gender+inequality+and+women+confinement+within+homes&source=bl&ots=wfs45NfSN0&sig=ACfU3U39BKL6AaXIAHFiwGsrIPcsDMDLVA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiD-5Ze1gp\\_nAhXc4KYKHyrGcNQQ6AEwDnoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q=gender%20inequality%20and%20women%20confinement%20within%20homes&f=false](https://books.google.it/books?id=1yqtAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=gender+inequality+and+women+confinement+within+homes&source=bl&ots=wfs45NfSN0&sig=ACfU3U39BKL6AaXIAHFiwGsrIPcsDMDLVA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiD-5Ze1gp_nAhXc4KYKHyrGcNQQ6AEwDnoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q=gender%20inequality%20and%20women%20confinement%20within%20homes&f=false)

<sup>21</sup> For European projects on women integration, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/feature/integration-of-migrant-women>

## 4. GOOD PRACTICES FROM EU AND ITALY

As outlined in the EU policy framework, only 7 out of the 28 Member States have policies related to the integration of migrant women. In these past years, the EU funded many projects across Europe in order to develop an effective inclusion of migrant women within the host society. These projects are mainly on education and labour market integration in order to prevent women social exclusion and women labour exploitation.

At the European Level, women integration is based on three main axes: social integration, discrimination and access to rights, and labour market integration<sup>22</sup>. In this respect, social integration consists in developing education projects and trainings in order to inform women on their rights, to teach them the host language and to reinforce their skills to have more job opportunities and build up their social network.



Source: EC

Another type of initiative aims to promote access to rights for migrant women. This may include fighting discrimination and countering exploitation in the labour market, ensuring basic human rights and supporting victims of violence. In Germany, for example, the Kargah Project<sup>23</sup> is an office that gives support to migrant women victims of domestic violence, forced marriage and stalking.



Source: EC

The labour market integration is another phase of migrant women inclusion within host societies. Having a stable and regular income would mean to be independent from any form of labour exploitation and social exclusion. Many of the initiatives undertaken in some EU countries aim to build strong labour skills throughout vocational training, language courses and voluntary activities. In addition, some countries have implemented initiatives for a specific target: the migrant mothers. In Poland, for example, 'I am a mom in Poland' is one of those projects that aim to support migrant mothers to tackle both work and the care of newborns<sup>24</sup>.



Source: EC

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> About the project: [https://www.kargah.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=518&Itemid=774&lang=en](https://www.kargah.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=518&Itemid=774&lang=en)

<sup>24</sup> About the project (in Polish): <https://mamawpolsce.wordpress.com/publikacje/>

As for Italy, the project 'Turin, my city'<sup>25</sup> is one of the best practices in the country. Launched in 2000, it focuses on immigrant women living in the city who came from Maghreb countries –the Maghreb community in the Piedmont region is the biggest in Italy-. The project aims to improve the lives of these women by offering a place where they can learn the Italian language and navigate local life and society.

In order to improve and guarantee safe migration for women, the international cooperation plays an important role, including both Europe and Member States, with local governments and partners.

Since 2015, the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) has financed the Better Migration Management Programme (BMM) in order to manage migration and to prevent human trafficking and violence within and from the Horn of Africa<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, members of FOCSIV (Celim Milano and CVM) are implementing the Securing Women Migration Cycle project, that is another example on how the international cooperation can act within the gender and migration framework. The project is financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and it aims to guarantee and strengthen the protection network for 1,500 Ethiopian women: migrant domestic workers subjected to abuses and discriminations in Lebanon during the process of return to and reintegration in the country of origin<sup>27</sup>.



### GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE BMM

**(I)** Supporting national authorities to develop, enact and eventually implement policies, laws, institutional frameworks and procedures for better migration and border management, including the fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, in accordance with the relevant international conventions and standards, and promoting harmonization and exchange of best practices in these areas.

**(II)** Strengthening the capacity of all institutions and agencies responsible for migration and border management (such as front-line officials, law enforcement officers, or judicial bodies) notably by training and giving technical assistance, improving procedures for investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, improving data collection and promoting information sharing, supplying government offices and border management posts with essential tools and equipment, and possibly with infrastructure developments, promoting improved coordination among the institutions and agencies involved.

**(III)** Identifying, assisting and providing protection for victims of trafficking in human beings and vulnerable smuggled migrants, especially women and children and other vulnerable groups.

**(IV)** Raising awareness of the dangers of irregular migration and the benefits of alternative options.

<sup>25</sup> To read more: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/turin-my-city-language-and-active-citizenship-courses>

<sup>26</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/horn-africa/regional/better-migration-management-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/horn-africa/regional/better-migration-management-programme_en)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.cespi.it/it/ricerche/securing-women-migration-cycle-programma-di-assistenza-protezione-e-rimpatrio-donne>

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