FACES OF MIGRATION

Povod

Zavod za kulturo in razvoj mednarodnih odnosov v kulturi
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Migration and integration from a gender perspective in Slovenia

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is essential for accelerating the sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030. Gender mainstreaming aims to integrate gender equality perspectives in all the stages and levels of policies, programs, and projects. Migrant women are less included in the labor market in the EU comparing to migrant men and native women. They are also more likely to be overqualified for their jobs[1]. Therefore, in this case study we aim to analyze the existing measures for social and labor integration in Slovenia from the lens of gender equality. This is in order to come up with further conclusions on how to assure gender equality in the discourse of migration and integration for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

2 METHODS

The Povod Institute conducted a national survey between November 2020 and January 2021 of 23 women who are migrants or refugees in Slovenia. We interviewed 9 women with refugee or immigrant status in Slovenia. Five of them come from Iraq and hold refugee status. Two come from Syria, one of them came through the family reunification program and one holds refugee status. One woman comes from Serbia, and she moved to Slovenia because her husband works there. One woman is from Jordan and she lives and works in Slovenia. Eight out of the 9 women are of Muslim faith. The questions in the survey were formed to measure the indicators of integration from the perspective of gender equality. This includes employability and participation in educational and social programs.
The questions in the interviews were formed to explore the sense of belonging, and to explore labor and social integration from the perspective of gender and gender equality. We also previewed secondary and primary resources on gender mainstreaming and sustainable development in Slovenia. We analyzed national integration measures from the perspective of gender. Gender mainstreaming is not only about women, yet in this case study we analyze the measures of integration from the perspective of people who identify themselves as women.

3 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SLOVENIA

In the 1990s, Slovenia officially recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming. The Women's Policy Office was established in 1992. It was recognition that gender equality needed its own governmental body. The office was renamed the Office for Equal Opportunities in 2001 and later discontinued in 2011. It was replaced later on by the Equal Opportunities Division of the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.
Gender mainstreaming was addressed in the Equal Opportunities between Women and Men Act in 2002, where each ministry had the obligation of nominating coordinators for gender equality. This introduced gender mainstreaming into all policy areas. In 2005, the first national program on gender equality was introduced, and gender mainstreaming became a horizontal strategy to be implemented in all policy areas. A new national program for the years 2015 to 2020 took place to apply a dual approach of special measurements and gender mainstreaming to be applied in all policies and programs to achieve gender equality[2]. Slovenia emphasizes gender equality as an integral element in all the goals of Agenda 2030. By 2019, Slovenia ranked 11th in the EU gender equality index, scoring 0.9 points higher than the EU average[3].

Women from ethnic minorities and immigrant women are included in the Slovenian resolution for gender mainstreaming. Women are at higher risk of poverty than men are and the resolution for social inclusion emphasizes employability, social entrepreneurship, and social innovation to support women, including immigrant

1 European Website on Migration, Integration of migrant women, 2018
2 European Institute for Gender Equality, Slovenia, 2019
3 Sustainable Development UN, Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Slovenia 2020, page 38

women[4]. Social inclusion is one of the 8 indicators in the resolution. The rest of the indicators are: Economic independence; Reconciliation of professional and private or family life; Knowledge society without gender stereotypes; Health; Balanced representation of women and men; Violence against women; Gender equality in foreign policy and international development cooperation.
In this case study we pay special attention to the indicator of social inclusion because it is interconnected with other areas, particularly labor and social policy. This will cover employability, education, and social inclusion as part of the main indicators for the integration between migrants and hosting countries.

4 REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN SLOVENIA

On 1 April 2020 foreigners represented 7.6% of the total population of Slovenia. 33.4% of foreign nationals were women[5]. In 2018, 80% of foreign national immigrants were from the former Yugoslavia, 21.2% of them were women. On 1 January 2019 there were 539 beneficiaries of international protection in Slovenia; among those who hold refugee status, 150 were women[6]. Out of all asylum applications in the year 2019, 5.5% of applicants were women[7]. According to Eurostat, in 2019 the primary reason for issuing a first residence permit to men in 25 EU member states, including Slovenia, was for employment-related reasons (27.8% of the total), while the corresponding share for women was lower and accounted for 13.1%. By contrast, 16.9% of all permits issued were accounted for by women who were granted residence permits for family-related reasons; this share was higher than the corresponding proportion recorded among men (11.5%)[8].

Different NGOs and human rights groups identify how referring to refugees as numbers is dehumanizing them and making them perceived as an outsider threat. This is so relevant for the Slovenian case, where migration was used for securitization in the political discourse and used in evoking "the notion of risk"[9]. This was also prevailed in our conducted interviews with four women who of Muslim faith and refugees in Slovenia. Four of them experienced direct xenophobic encounters provoked by Islamophobia. One of them described an encounter where she was dismissed from a job interview before it even started because she was wearing a headscarf. In different EU countries religious neutrality is practiced with the principle of secularity[10]. Yet, in this particular case, the interviewer told the interviewee to return to her country, as she does not fit into Slovenia. Thus, we argue that in some cases hostility toward Muslim women in the private employment sector is connected to xenophobia rather than religious neutrality and secularism.

Women who are migrants and residents of Slovenia and who responded to our national survey come from the following countries: Georgia, Serbia, Croatia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, USA, Poland, Moldova, and Iran. 23 women responded to our survey, 34.8% of whom indicated that they are unemployed. When surveyed further about their perceived reasons for not finding a job in Slovenia, 12 respondents mentioned the language as the main barrier. One respondent emphasized discrimination due to religious belief and more particularly regarding her choice to wear a headscarf. One respondent emphasized discrimination due to age, as she is 50 years old. It is important to note that in the resolution on the national program for equal opportunities in Slovenia, it is mentioned that the gender gap is the largest between elder women and men, where elder women are at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly single women over 65 years old[11].

4 MDDSZ, Resolution on the national program for equal opportunities for women and men,2016, page 25, 45
5 Razpotnik, On 1 April 2020, the population of Slovenia was 2,097,195, or 1,300 more than three months earlier, 2020
6 Maja Ladič et al., National Mechanism for the Evaluation of Integration SLOVENIA, Report for 2019 [NIEM National Report 2020], Peace Institute, 2020, page 4
7 Asylum in Europe, Statistics Slovenia, 2020
8 Eurostat, Residence permits - statistics on first permits issued during the year, 2020
9 Vezovnik, Securitizing Migration in Slovenia: A Discourse Analysis of the Slovenian Refugee Situation, 2017, page 48
10 Chopin, and Germaine, A comparative analysis of non-discrimination law in Europe 2019, page 126
11 MDDSZ, Resolution on the national program for equal opportunities for women and men,2016, page 45

Two respondents to our survey referred to the system of acquaintances and being foreigners as main factors for being excluded from the labor market, while one respondent indicated corruption as a risk factor for exclusion. One participant emphasized being a foreigner and the preference of locals over foreigners as a hindering factor of her inclusion in the labor market.

5 GENDER MAINSTREAMING OF INTEGRATION MEASURES IN SLOVENIA

In 2019, migrant women were more likely to gain a resident permit due to family reasons in the EU comparing to men[12]. In 2019, in Slovenia the percentage of male asylum seekers was much higher than female asylum seekers. The Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants in Slovenia is responsible only for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. Meanwhile the highest percentage of migrants in Slovenia are labor migrants, primarily from former Yugoslav republics. In 2018, 80% of third country nationals in Slovenia were from former Yugoslavia, of whom 21.2% were women; 73.6% of these women were inactive job seekers[13].

There is the initial program of integration that is dedicated to all third country nationals in Slovenia regardless of their legal status, it provides courses on Slovene language and civic education. The program is free of charge and covered by the Ministry of the Interior and the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)[14]. Yet, the number of hours in these courses is limited according to the type of residence permit. For example, people who come through family reunification programs have fewer accessible hours than people who have status of international protection. When this measure is analyzed from a gender perspective, we find that immigrant men from former Yugoslavia have much higher employment rate than immigrant women from the same ethnicity. Therefore, immigrant men have more access to socialization and the creation of social networks through their work. The lack of a public body to support the social integration of third country nationals regardless of their legal status will therefore affect immigrant women more than men.

Women who come through family reunification programs and women who are not beneficiaries of international protection have less support in learning the language and gaining civic education than people who are beneficiaries of international protection. In our interview with a woman from Syria who arrived to Slovenia through a family reunification program, our interviewee addressed that the language courses offered to her were not sufficient and that she did not have access to courses provided to refugees, even though she comes from Syria and the father of her children holds refugee status in Slovenia. Another woman who comes from Algeria and resident of Slovenia addressed in a focus group conducted by Povod in July, 2020[15], that as an immigrant woman who does not hold refugee status in Slovenia, she does not have access to programs conducted specially for refugees and holders of international protection in Slovenia. She addressed two issues: 1) The limited number of programs offered for the integration between migrants and the Slovenian society and 2) Limited access to these programs based on the type of residence permit, where she could not become a beneficiary of some programs because she is a resident of Slovenia but not a holder of refugee status or a beneficiary of international protection.

Gender mainstreaming is meant to assist in uncovering invisible inequalities. In our survey, 17.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement "I believe I have faced more issues finding an occupation in Slovenia than foreign men", and 39.1% of respondents somewhat disagreed. In an interview with a woman from Syria, 28 years old, who holds a refugee status and a mother of three children, we asked her whether her gender influences her opportunities for social and labor integration, and her initial answer was no. Yet, when asked further about her participation in educational programs and the labor market, she emphasized that she has limited time because

12 Eurostat, First residence permits issued, by reason and by sex, EU-27, 2019
13 Keuc, Migrants and Refugees in Slovenia 2020, page 25
14 MNZ, National Program AMIF, 2015
15 Povod, Recommendations for asylum policies and integration programs, 2020

she is responsible for the household chores and for the three children, and that the father of her children is also a holder of refugee status in Slovenia. She emphasized that due to cultural norms she has to take care of the children and the household chores because she is a woman. She continued further that due to her gender role as a woman she is automatically responsible for household chores, and this in some cases limited her participation in certain programs; it also limits her free time for socializing where she could learn and practice Slovene language. She addressed her wish to enter the labor market, yet she is not able due to her household responsibilities. Therefore, the Covid19 restrictions that included closing schools mostly affect women who are fully responsible for childcare due to cultural norms and gender roles. The interviewee said further that after her children reach a certain age, she will pursue her professional wish to become a hair dresser. Yet, she also addressed that she faces administrative and language barriers. It is not possible for her to gain official recognition for her previous work as a hair dresser in Syria. She is required to gain official educational certifications in Slovenia to practice the profession. Therefore, the structural differences in the labor market between her country of origin and Slovenia cause extra challenges. The standardization of the labor market in Slovenia is a challenge for different migrant groups in finding a job.

In another interview with a 45-year-old woman from Syria who came to Slovenia through family reunification, when asked if her gender influences her labor and social integration comparing to migrant men, her initial answer was maybe to a certain extent. When asked further about her experience with labor and social integration in Slovenia, she emphasized that she had worked as a waiter, which she had to quit due to social stigma. She referred to it as a social stigma specifically against women who work in restaurants or bars or certain fields of creative expression like dancing or performing arts. We investigated further about this social stigma in published literature, and we found that it is often referred to as "shame culture" in various Arab societies. According to a research paper published by the General Arab Women's Union (2015), social norms and cultural harmful patterns affect women's equal participation in the labor market[16]. Yet, it is important to highlight that four of our female interviewees of Arabic ethnicity and Muslim faith, and who live in Slovenia, addressed that they do not feel burdened as women by their faith or their cultural backgrounds when they want to choose their careers or jobs. They also emphasized that spreading stereotypes against migrant women as oppressed and submissive reinforces discrimination and xenophobia against them. This is also addressed by the European Institute for Gender Equality in its document titled "Sectoral Brief: Gender and Migration", where it is mentioned that "*Negative media representation of migrant women's oppression can fuel racism and xenophobia and reinforce stereotypes that stigmatize them.*"[17]

The interviewee, a 45-year-old woman from Syria who came to Slovenia through a family reunification program, also addressed that educational programs offered by NGOs are not sustainable. She undertook a course on becoming a tourist guide, which was offered by a local NGO. Yet, the program was limited temporally and there was no follow-up after it.

Four Iraqi women in our interviews indicated that they do not think that there are enough or sufficiently strong measurements to support the integration between refugees in general and Slovenian society. They emphasized that there are no specific institutions that are responsible for supporting the labor integration of specifically refugee women. They addressed that they feel excluded and discriminated due to their choice in wearing a headscarf. It is important to note that 10 out of 23 women who responded to our survey do not think that there is legal support for the integration of migrant women in Slovenia, and one woman thinks that there is legal support but not enough of it. 11 women believe that there is enough support, and one woman thinks that things have started to improve slowly "as more people started to talk about these topics and they are no longer taboo topics".

16 General Arab Women's Union, A working paper on societal culture and its impact On the status of women between discrimination and privilege, 2015, pages 1-30

17 European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE, Sectoral Brief : Gender and Migration, 2020, page 3

A 23-year-old Iraqi woman indicated that cultural differences are an obstacle for integration between refugees and Slovenian society. Refugees shall not be required to assimilate in their host society, where integration is assumed as a one-way process, making it more assimilation rather than integration. She also indicated that she took part in some programs dedicated for women, but attendance was of Arab women only. She emphasized that in the integration programs there is insufficient presence of Slovene people. She thinks that the creation of Slovene and Arab women networks will be an assist for integration between both societies. It is important to note that integration is one of the main pillars in the Slovenian strategy on migration 2015-2020, and it is highlighted as a two-way process, yet empirical evidence and NGOs reports indicate that the integration models and programs should be more directed to both migrants and the hosting society in Slovenia[18].

Language courses are an essential part of integration measures in Slovenia. A 23-year-old female Iraqi interviewee said that she undertook a course of 300 hours as a refugee in Slovenia. Yet, each class was a repetition of basics and it was not sufficient to reach the level of communication in Slovene. She indicated that the courses are not designed in a diverse way to comply with the different backgrounds and levels of education of refugee women. In her case, she highlighted that the courses were repeating basics because some women were illiterate and they needed this repetition. But for her and other three women such repetition was unnecessary. They felt that the courses were repeating basics that they already knew and they did not reach the level of communication. Therefore, they finished the courses of 300 hours without knowing how to communicate in Slovene.
65.2% of women who responded to our survey do not believe that they face more problems in pursuing their education in the host country comparing to migrant men. In our further interviews we asked three women, one from Syria and two from Iraq, whether they perceive gender or gender stereotypes as burdens to their job or education choices. The woman from Syria addressed that being a woman and a migrant imposes certain burdens. The opportunities offered to her are perceived as covering domains that are dominated by females and suitable to people with language barriers. She feels burdened to choose learning about cooking or sewing or cleaning as she is a woman and she has language barriers. Therefore, she feels that she has limited choices when it comes to employment. The two women from Iraq addressed that most of the work offers that are presented to migrant women by the employment office are connected to cleaning services. They feel that these suggestions for work are based on gender and ethnicity rather than individual profiles or skills. Measures to invest on skills that are defined as female-dominant fields might seem practical, but it limits women into a certain niche and it limits one's opportunities through gender stereotyping and limitations. Gender-sensitive analysis proved that jobs like domestic and care work are not "just another form of work", and to consider it so means we are gender-blind. "Gender regimes" and deep social constructions identify this work as womanly, where it is characterized by female dependency on the employer, with high emotional and personalized relationships[19].

In our interview with two women from Iraq, 23 years old, they said that they had to change their field of study to a more female dominant field. There were three Arab students in one class, one male and two females. They were advised that it is not good for all of them to stay in the same class, because "they might close themselves off and speak only in Arabic". The two women were advised to change their field of study from business to kindergarten pedagogy. The justification for this advice was that entrepreneurial waters are more appropriate for males, while kindergartens are more convenient for women. This caused one of them to drop out from the course because she could not see herself in the domain of kindergartens, a domain that was identified as more female-dominant.

18 Keuc, Migrants and Refugees in Slovenia 2020, page 28
19 Lutz, ed, Migration and Domestic Work, 2016

6 WOMEN TO WOMEN NETWORKS

Women's networks are highlighted as an important agent for women's inclusion, as well as for supporting personal and professional development. In 9 interviews we asked migrant women whether they perceived women's networks as supportive or essential for their sense of belonging and for integration between them and the local society. All the interviewees emphasized that women's networks respond to some of their needs and they are essential for them as migrant women and Slovenian residents. Some of the interviewees stated that networks should be intercultural and unite both Slovene and migrant women.

The interviewees included a 35-year-old refugee woman from Iraq and a 34-year-old immigrant woman from Jordan. Both women are part of the Women on Women, WoW, group in Slovenia. The Women on Women group in Slovenia, was established after receiving financial support from the program of Creative Europe. The program's activities take place in four European countries and are locally organized by local NGOs. In Slovenia it is coordinated by the organization of the City of Women. The group consists of 5 foreign women living in Slovenia. The main aim of its activities is to represent the contribution of women in various fields in arts and culture, while supporting integration between migrant women and the local society. This is accomplished by channeling the voices of interculturalism and gender equality against racism, xenophobia, gender injustice, and inequality[20]. Therefore, the program is intersectional and it takes into consideration the different aspects of inequalities that migrant women may face. It also provides an important and essential step in combating xenophobia and raising public awareness. As we mentioned earlier xenophobia and discrimination are serious issues that hinder the bilateral dynamics of integration. As addressed by the two women, the good point in the WoW program is that they are engaged in it not only as participants but also as performance artists. This is a good incentive as it is a form of recognition. They may use this recognition in developing their CV. They also emphasized that women-led networks are inclusive and empowering.

In an interview with a female Iraqi refugee, 35 years old and living in Slovenia, she stated that women's gatherings are social activities that form a big part of her culture and various other Arab and Muslim cultures; she misses these social activities in Slovenia and therefore finds women's gatherings and networks as important for a sense of social belonging. She also addressed that these networks should join Slovene and migrant women, and not only migrant women. Migrants' social capital has been researched as valuable assistance for the social and labor integration of migrants.

Women from Arab ethnicities or of Muslim faith are not a homogeneous group. According to some interpretations of Islamic teachings, this is due to "makruh", which means undesirable for women to speak to male strangers if it is not necessary, this may impose discomfort on some women. Yet, an interviewed Muslim woman from Syria mentioned some incidents where she felt stereotyped because of her faith and ethnicity. In one occasion she was asked if it is acceptable for a man to accompany her to the store. This is one of the examples where she felt limited by stereotypes based on her ethnicity. Yet, at the same time she addressed that some Muslim women, who attend similar programs with her, do not feel comfortable at social gatherings with male strangers who are not "mahram",

20 City of Women, WoW group

which means part of their family members, like father, uncle, husband, or son. She also perceives women's networks as inclusive and important for empowerment through women-to-women support. Regarding the point of stereotypes, it is important to note that research suggests that presenting migrant women as submissive and oppressed fuels xenophobia and hate speech.

"No-Border Craft" is a self-organized initiative led by women who are activists, refugees, and asylum seekers in Slovenia. They are fighting against racism, sexism, and closed borders by organizing direct action and offering each other mutual support. No-Border Craft has built a firm social network between migrant women and local residents in Slovenia. They created an environment for active participation in local cultural and social events, and are looking for opportunities for an alternative economy by offering their hand-crafted products[21]. The activism of this group is intersectional, and it is a safe place for anyone who wants to challenge and change the existing sexist, white supremacist, and patriarchal system. An interview with a member in this network who is an Iraqi refugee revealed that, while they do not sell or make enough products for a sustainable financial income, this network is nonetheless indispensable for creating engaging and creative places for women; further, were they to expand their production, it might become enough for a sustainable financial income.

The "No-Border Craft" group holds regular bazars and all its sold products go as contributions to support refugee and asylum seeker women. Asylum seekers in Slovenia receive only 18 euros monthly, accommodation and food are provided in the asylum centers. Asylum seekers can obtain a permit to work only after spending 9 months in Slovenia without receiving a negative decision, and if the delay is not caused by the applicant. Some programs are restricted for beneficiaries of international protection, but the informal network of No-Border Craft is open for all women regardless of their documents or legal status.

On one hand, informal groups might have limitations in terms of financial sustainability, but with their autonomy as self-organized groups they create open and diverse environments for women who are in vulnerable situations due to a lack of work permit and social rights because of their legal documents. The fact that this group is self-initiated and self-organized makes it more socially sustainable as a social network that is not aligned with a timeline that has a starting and ending date. However, this does not mean that structured and funded programs do not achieve their goals of creating sustainable social networks.

7 CONCLUSION

Immigrant women who are third country nationals have a smaller share in the labor market than immigrant men, wherefore they have fewer chances for social inclusion and social integration through the labor market. Slovenia emphasizes the importance of gender equality for the achievement of Agenda 2030. From the review of the national resolution on gender mainstreaming and the national assessments of integration in Slovenia, we found that gender mainstreaming is mentioned at a policy level that includes a reference to the social inclusion of immigrant women and women from ethnic minorities, yet in practice gender mainstreaming is not fully applied in the national measurements for integration. There are programs run by local NGOs and dedicated to the support of immigrant women; these programs are either voluntary or funded by EU or ministerial fund. There is a need for gender mainstreaming to be implemented not only in programs but also in the design, evaluation, and further development of this field. Further, the programs run by local NGOs are limited in scope, time, and sustainability. This can be associated with the limited scope of offered funding to support programs run by local NGOs to support the integration of migrant women and Slovene society.

21 City of Women, No-border craft, 2020

The government office responsible for the support and integration of migrants in Slovenia provides support only to asylum seekers or the beneficiaries of international protection. Therefore, there is no public institution to support women who come through family reunification programs nor support to immigrant women who are not beneficiaries of international protection. Meanwhile, recent statistics show that women are more likely to come through family reunification programs than men are. The initial integration program provides languages course and civic education with limited hours depending on the type of residency. Immigrant women often face barriers for socializing and creating social networks. We find measures precisely affect immigrant and TCN women, who have a much higher rate of unemployment than immigrant and TCN men. Therefore, they have fewer chances for social inclusion through labor market, and they need more support for social inclusion regardless of their legal status. Cultural norms and gender roles impose burdens on women in general, including migrant women as well. The Knowledge Society without stereotypes is one of the priorities of the Slovenian national program for equal opportunities between women and men 2015-2020. Cultures are diverse, though gender-based discrimination is a universal issue, and not only associated to a certain group or culture. Therefore, educational programs to combat gender inequalities should be compatible with the needs and realities in each culture and society, including subsocieties. Promoting stereotypes against migrant women as submissive and oppressed fuels discrimination and xenophobia against them. Therefor gender sensitivity learning and intercultural learning should be addressed in integration programs and should be directed to both hosting societies and migrant populations.

8 OUTCOMES OF INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY

In this case study we analyzed the measurements for social and labor integration in Slovenia from the lens of gender equality. This was by interviewing 9 women who are either refugees or immigrants in Slovenia. Five of these women are from Iraq and hold refugee status. Two women are from Syria; one came to Slovenia through a family reunification program and one holds refugee status. One woman comes from Serbia and she moved to Slovenia to join her husband, who is also from Serbia and works in Slovenia. One woman is from Jordan; she lives and works in Slovenia. Eight out of 9 women come from an Arabic ethnicity and are of Muslim faith. In addition to the interviews, we analyzed the outcomes of a national survey that was filled by 23 women who are either immigrants or refugees in Slovenia, as detailed in the methods section.

The outcomes have their limitations, because immigrant women are a heterogeneous group and these findings cannot be generalized to all of them. Yet, these conclusive findings are essential for further research and show the importance of implementing gender mainstreaming of the national integration measures in practice.
There are various factors that variously affect the social and labor integration of immigrant women. The issues aroused are systematic, cultural, social, and gender-based. Prejudices against foreigners, along with discrimination and xenophobia, are major issues that lead to limited social networks, exclusion from the labor market, limited access to social rights, and even limited knowledge about existing social rights. Muslim women wearing headscarves are often subjected to discrimination. Immigrant women form a heterogonous group, and language courses and civic education courses fail to recognize this diversity. There is an approach to creating individual plans for integration, yet this approach needs more measures to be fully implemented, especially when it comes to language education. Immigrant women who are not beneficiaries of international protection do not have access to these plans nor to the services provided by the government office for the support and integration of migrants; there is an initial integration program for TCNs, yet the courses offered by this program are limited in hours and scope based on the type of residency. Meanwhile TCN women in Slovenia have a smaller share of the labor market than TCN men, and therefore have fewer chances for social inclusion through the labor market. The inclusion of immigrant women from TCNs in the integration programs with the beneficiaries of international protection might assist in creating a solid diaspora community, which is an important agency for immigrant women. Limited social networks with the host society also adversely affects the social and labor integration of immigrant women. The system of acquaintances and connections create a system of inequalities that affect in particular immigrant women.

Immigrant women face gender stereotyping and limitations due to language; when getting oriented into a potential vocational training or job opportunity, their choices are offered based on their gender and their limited capacity of speaking the local language. There are measures that aim to find jobs for immigrant women in what is known as female-dominant fields, but this approach limits the individual capacities. One interviewee from Syria referred to social stigma in her culture against women who work as waiters or in performing arts, like dancing or acting as a hindering factor for labor integration. We researched the phenomena further and found some published research on it referred to as "shame culture". While four interviewees from Iraq shared that they do not feel burdened as women to choose jobs based on their culture or faith, they addressed further that stereotypes against migrant women as passive or oppressed reenforce xenophobia and discrimination against them. In further research we found similar findings published by the European Institute for Gender Equality, that media presentation of migrant women as passive and oppressed fuels xenophobia.

Cultural norms and gender roles associate household chores with women; this is an extra burden yet the interviewed women do not consider it as a barrier when kindergarten or facilities for childcare are provided. Women who wear headscarves believed that they were declined in some interviews explicitly because of their religious beliefs, which was followed by xenophobic narratives such as "go back to your country". The Employment Relationship Act prohibits discrimination based on religion and/or beliefs, yet there are many cases where people who are subjected to such discrimination do not report it. Ageism was also present in the responses to the survey. Regulations for integration have improved in Slovenia in the recent years. There are two institutions that provide exams for recognition for the beneficiaries of international protection in cases where they cannot provide documents. Yet, the findings from the interviews show that the recognition of education and skills remain an issue for the beneficiaries of international protection, primarily due to language barriers, lack of information that these measures exist, and unfamiliarity with the system and its measures.

In Slovenia, permits to practice certain crafts are required, and various conditions apply to gain such permits. This is an unfamiliar system for several immigrant women, who cannot get recognition for their previous work without enrolling in a new educational program, where language and administrative requirements arise as a barrier. With the restrictions of Covid19 and the closure of the schools, immigrant women have more household responsibilities that affect their participation in online learning. Some interviewees highlighted the need for more ICT education, especially for immigrant women who are illiterate.

In conclusion, and based on the findings from the interviews and the national survey, we identify the need for an institutional body to implement gender mainstreaming in national measures for integration and to represent the needs of female, immigrant, third country nationals. We identify this need for policy designs, development, and implementation of programs and evaluation. We identify women-to-women networks as essential for supporting the social integration of immigrant women, we identify the need for more diverse measures regarding the amount of time and scope of content in Slovene language courses, and we identify the need for more public awareness about legislation protecting immigrants from discrimination, especially in regard to discrimination against women from Muslim faith. Immigrant communities are diverse and we identify the need for tailor-made educational programs to combat gender-based discrimination against women in each community. Further, this case study confirms previous research that shows how stereotypes against migrant women fuel xenophobia and hate speech. Finally, our interviews showed that gender inequalities predominated among the interviewees. Some of the responders did not think that immigrant women face more or different kind of obstacles for social and labor integration. Yet, during the interviews one of them referred to gender roles in household chores and another referred to the stigmatization of women based on their chosen career as hindering factors for their social and labor integration. Some mentioned hostility against employing women, which they felt that was based on their gender and their religious choice. Therefore, we identify the need for education on gender sensitivity in the integration programs as a dually dynamic process between immigrants and the host society.

NOTES

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