

THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL WOMEN

**Overview of Eurodiaconia
membership services and
best practices**

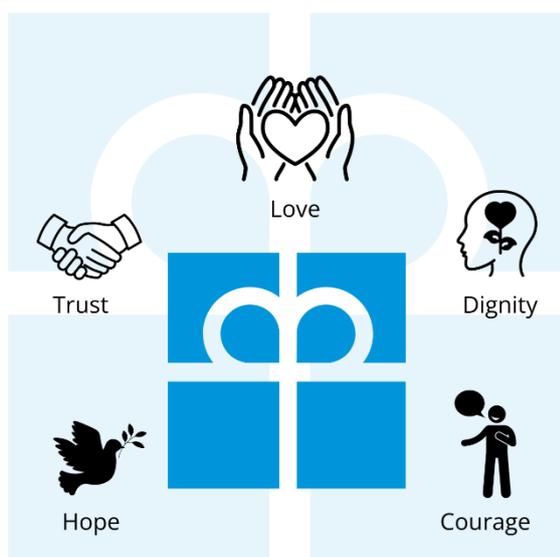
Eurodiaconia  *Connecting faith
and social justice
through action*

2024

EURODIACONIA

Eurodiaconia is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

ORGANISATION VALUES



MISSION AND VISION

Inspired by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where social injustice is eradicated and each person is valued, included, and empowered to realize their fullest potential, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organisations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Eurodiaconia members for the provided input through surveys, interviews, and best practice sharing on their firsthand experience working on social inclusion, access to employment and labor market integration of migrants, including refugees. In total, 21 Eurodiaconia members provided information on their projects and national background.

1. Apostoli - Greece
2. Armée du Salut (the Salvation Army in France) - France
3. Asociación Nueva Vida - Spain
4. Diaconía España - Spain
5. Diaconia Valdese - Servizi Inclusione CSD - Italy
6. Diakonie ČCE – Czech Republic
7. Diakonie de la Tour - Austria
8. Diakonie Flüchtlingsdienst - Austria
9. Diakonie Sozialdienst Thüringen gGmbH - Germany
10. Diakonisches Altenhilfezentrum gGmbH - Germany
11. Diakonisches Werk Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald - Migrationsberatung für Erwachsene - Germany
12. Diakonisches Werk im Landkreis Lörrach - Nadia Murad Zentrum Lörrach - Germany
13. EHONS (Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation) - Serbia
14. FEP (Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante) - France
15. Fundația Filantropia Timișoara - Romania
16. Haraldsplass Diakonale Stiftelse - Siljuslatten Sykehjem - Norway
17. Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V. - Germany
18. LELB Diakonija (Diakonizentrum der v.-Luth. Kirche Lettlands) – Latvia
19. Living Hope – Odessa - Ukraine
20. Magyarországi Református Egyház Ungarn (Diaconia of the Reformed Church in Hungary) – Hungary
21. ODL (Oulu Diakonissalaitos, Oulu Deaconess Institute) – Finland

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INTRODUCTION: KEY CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT

Eurodiaconia is a European network of Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services across Europe and advocating for social justice. We represent 59 organisations in 33 countries, and over 30 000 health and social services providers. Eurodiaconia network is actively involved in all the aspects of the reception and integration of refugees and migrants, from immediate emergency aid to long-term integration, including access to social services, education, housing and supporting labour market integration and social inclusion. Addressing the multifaceted challenges that third country national women (TCN)¹ face when seeking employment is a priority for our members.

From a global perspective, there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of migrant women worldwide. Women constitute approximately half of the migrant population. In 2020, men comprised 52.2% of the world's migrants, while women made up 47.9%.² In Europe, migrant women slightly outnumber migrant men, representing a 51.6% of 86.7 million of migrants.³ Significantly, since February 2022, most of the refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine were women and girls.⁴

Why focus on the need for holistic and intersectional social and labour market integration?

TCN women are one of the most excluded groups when it comes to accessing the labour market.⁵ Indeed, they often face a 'double disadvantage' due to their status as women combined with their migrant or refugee status. In general, TCN women have lower employment participation rates than native women. In over two thirds of OECD and EU countries, TCN women have larger gaps with respect to employment rates of native-born women. This disparity increases if compared to the gap between migrant men and their native-born counterparts.⁶ Thus, they encounter greater difficulties to secure quality employment, access



¹ The term 'TCN woman' in this paper broadly refers to women born in non-EU countries who are currently residing in a EU Member State. This can include family migrants, women who migrate for economic reasons, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, or refugees. When necessary due to different circumstances and applicable legal framework, a reference to their administrative status will be made. This document refers to the generalised experiences that may be shared by diverse TCN women, however, it is important to recognise the heterogeneity of the group and their individual migration journeys.

² McAuliffe, M. and A. Triandafyllidou (eds.), *World Migration Report 2022*, International Organisation for Migration, Geneva, 2021, p. 28 <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>

³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migrant Stock*, 2020, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

⁴ UNHCR, *Global Trends. Forced displacement in 2022, 2023*, p. 17 <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>

⁵ European Institution for Gender Equality, *Gender and Migration*, 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-and-migration>

⁶ Liebig, T. and K. Tronstad, 'Triple Disadvantage?: A first overview of the integration of refugee women', OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No.216, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018 p. 8, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/triple-disadvantage_3f3a9612-en#page1

training, language courses and integration services.⁷ Moreover, within the group of TCNs, refugee women are confronted with additional challenges to integration often related to forced displacement, including poor health, trauma, and lack of official documentation concerning education and work experience.⁸

These inequalities in access to employment are rooted in unfavourable labour market conditions and barriers that are reinforced by multiple and interlinked obstacles –e.g. gender roles and family obligations, lack of childcare and conciliation, or their administrative status—increasing their vulnerability to social exclusion, poverty, and labour exploitation. This underscores the importance of holistic integration programmes and policies that follow an intersectional approach. Such approach should take into account the multiple dimensions of inequality and discrimination, encompassing not only gender, but also factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, migration status, age, sexuality, religion, and/or disabilities, among others.



Eurodiaconia membership's commitment to integration and social inclusion

In response to this background, Eurodiaconia membership is dedicated to providing comprehensive labour and social integration services. In September 2023, Eurodiaconia Migration Network gathered in Paris to discuss integration challenges from a gendered perspective, as well as how to improve labor integration services to effectively reach out and respond to specific needs. The present overview has been developed based on our members' input and best practice sharing. The purpose of this overview is to map the activities and showcase good practice examples that Eurodiaconia membership is implementing to tackle integration challenges with a focus on access to employment of women. Finally, it intends to complement and be read together with [Eurodiaconia's Guidelines for the Integration of Migrant Women](#). We trust that organizations can draw inspiration from this compilation, either to design new projects or for the further development of ongoing services.

⁷ European Institution for Gender Equality, *Gender and Migration*, 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-and-migration>

⁸ Ibid.

MAIN OBSTACLES FOR LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

INTERNAL LEVEL OBSTACLES

Language barriers: All consulted Eurodiaconia members pointed out the lack of knowledge of the local language as one of the major obstacles to access the job market. The acquisition of language skills is a key component for integration. Indeed, the language barrier might push TCNs into social isolation, as well as to be less aware about the availability of services and their rights. Particularly, our members have raised concerns about the burdensome language requirements not only to obtain job permits, but also to access training, even with sufficient foreign qualifications. From their experience, Diakonisches Altenhilfezentrum gGmbH (member of Diakonie Deutschland), who employs long-term care workers, considers that enabling part-time work while studying German (or the national language of the concerning member state) would be more effective to integrate TCN women. Thus, enabling them to access the labour market as soon as possible to prevent them from falling out of the integration systems and to avoid demotivation and deskilling.

Family obligations and gender roles: Women have historically received the role of caretakers of the family, particularly if they have children and/or dependent family members, which adds another level of complexity for seeking and maintaining employment. Indeed, family obligations can potentially hinder women's opportunities to participate in the integration services our members provide due to a lack of time or shift on career priorities. Migrant women have higher fertility rates than native-born women and, on average, are particularly likely to be pregnant in their first years after arrival. In this sense, having children has a higher employment penalty for TCN women, and it increases with the size of the family.⁹ These factors impact their chances of accessing employment, as the first months after arrival are key for accessing integration services. For instance, our members working with Ukrainian refugee women have particularly perceived the influence of family composition and obligations on the labour market integration. The lack of family support and the challenges refugee children experience (post-traumatic stress, integration in a new education system, etc.) intensified the care burden of the mothers. The former made it difficult for these women to balance family care and work obligations, as well as to participate actively in integration services.

Likewise, in many countries of origin, gender inequality is higher than in countries of destination and negative perceptions of female employment may continue to exist within migrant communities. As our members observe, conflicts might arise within the family and TCN women might lack a supportive network to succeed on their integration. For instance, Diaconia Valdese has experienced the effects of gender dynamics in their work, and therefore, conducted awareness-raising intervention with families. Particularly, in cases where women were better skilled than their husbands to access jobs offers,



⁹ Liebig, T. and K. Tronstad (2018), p. 28. op. cit. note 6

which lead to conflicts within the family concerning gender roles in the labour market.

Educational level: Generally, women have higher education attainments than men, which is also reflected on the higher share of tertiary education among women born outside the EU than among men.¹⁰ For non-EU citizens, the education attainment gap when compared to native-born is 6.1% lower among men, while the female gap amounts to 5.8%.¹¹ However, TCNs use to be overrepresented at both sides of the educational spectrum. Hence, they are both more likely to be highly educated, as well as low-educated when compared to native-born.¹² In this sense, overqualification is a considerable issue among highly educated women. The European Commission estimates that around a 20% of TCN women are overqualified for their current position.¹³ Indeed, the migration gap is considerable, as 40.7% of migrant women are prone to be overqualified in contrast to 21.1% of EU-born women.¹⁴ Moreover, migrant women who have arrived under family reunification schemes face the lowest levels of career satisfaction. As a consequence, there is a decline on the overall social and economic well-being, as well as career development and successful integration and inclusion.

Lack of self-recognition of skills: The identification of their own skills and abilities is essential when it comes to evaluating which integration services are more adequate for their profiles, and therefore, for starting a successful integration process. Our members highlight that the recognition and understanding of own skills is key for ensuring that TCN women seeking employment find positions aligned to their skills and capacities. In addition, even if TCN women have valuable informal skills for the European market, they often underestimate the possession of these skills when compared to men. There relies the relevance of coaching and mentorship programmes on the first stages of labour integration services.



Motivation and expectations: The personal experience and migratory journey of each women significantly shape their expectations concerning the labour market. These experiences are diverse and influenced by various factors, such as personal story, psychological well-being, cultural background, socio-economic status in the country of origin, administrative situation, previous job

¹⁰ European Website on Integration, *Integration of Migrant Women*, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/feature/integration-of-migrant-women>

¹¹ Eurostat, *Migrant integration statistics - education* (last accessed December 2023) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_education&oldid=566722

¹² Kamn, E., Levionnois, C., *et al.*, 'How to strengthen the integration of migrant women?', OECD, Migration Policy Debates, No. 25, 2020, p. 4, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-policy-debates-25.pdf>

¹³ European Commission, Action Plan on integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758, https://homeaffairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/en?file=202011/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2_021-2027.pdf

¹⁴ Orav, A., 'Migrant women and the EU labour market. Overcoming double discrimination', European Parliament Research Service, 2023, p. 6, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747905/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747905_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747905/EPRS_BRI(2023)747905_EN.pdf)

placement or the level of formal education. Eurodiaconia members recognise the frustration and loss of motivation that TCNs experience when they cannot secure employment for a prolonged time. Similarly, in the long-term, working in a different sector for which they were trained, or accepting positions for which they are overqualified can derive into deskilling. Indeed, unmatched expectations and unemployment can be a source of demotivation, deskilling and potentially, can also lead to social isolation. Eurodiaconia members working with Ukrainian refugees also highlighted a lack of motivation to learn at the beginning of the war due to uncertainty and return expectations. Overall, it is essential to give access to social and labour integration services as soon as possible, independently of the administrative status, as motivation and willingness to learn are highest during the initial stages.

EXTERNAL LEVEL OBSTACLES

Unfavourable labour market conditions: TCNs often have difficulties accessing the labour market or have no choice but to accept jobs for which they are overqualified.¹⁵ This is particularly the case for women, who have the highest difficulty entering the labour market. In contrast to native-born women, migrant women not only face high levels of unemployment, but are also confined to low-skilled and precarious employment, for instance, centred around domestic services.¹⁶ As our members highlight, these occupations are usually sustained by precarious and low-waged contracts with limited access to labour rights and social protection, as well as higher risks of exploitation. The situation was exacerbated with the COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crises, which deeply affected traditionally gendered occupations, such as the cleaning sector, care sector, or the hospitality.¹⁷ The high concentration of TCN women in these sectors, as well as in small companies and part-time or temporary jobs, explains the average raise of unemployment rates due to the pandemic.¹⁸

Lack of affordable and accessible childcare: All consulted members highlighted family obligations as one of the major internal challenges for the access to employment of TCN women. Precisely, they raised concerns about the lack of accessibility to childcare services and financial assistance for mothers in their respective countries. For instance, in Germany, as pointed out by Diakonisches Werk Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald and Migrationsberatung für Erwachsene, (member of Diakonie Deutschland) there is a breach of service accessibility between urban and non-urban areas. When TCNs are relocated in non-urban or rural areas, the lack of infrastructure and services is intensified, further isolating TCN women from the job market. Similarly, Nueva Vida, also



¹⁵ Eurodiaconia, 'Towards an effective integration of third-country nationals', 2017, p. 4. <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Policy-Paper-TCN-Integration-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁶ McAuliffe, M. and A. Triandafyllidou (eds.) (2021), p. 98, op. cit. note. 2

¹⁷ International Labour Organisation, World Employment and Social Outlook, 2020, p. 964, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

referred to the disconnection of rural areas in Spain and the lack of access to essential services, transportation, and childcare.

Recognition of skills and foreign qualifications: The rising labour market participation of women has been generally attributed to the increasing rates of educational attainment.¹⁹ Depending on the hosting state, the administrative, legal and economic barriers for the recognition of foreign diplomas can not only hinder access to employment, but also secludes women into low-skilled jobs for which they are overqualified. Hence, given the link between the participation in the workforce and education, the recognition of foreign qualifications for TCNs women is as equally important as ensuring accessibility to continue their education and/or access training and upskilling programmes. The non-recognition of diplomas and official competencies, limited formal information channels about employment opportunities, and inadequate support frameworks for recently arrived skilled migrants are factors that may provoke deskilling.²⁰

Legal barriers to employment: The administrative situation of the TCN has a strong impact on their employability, as residence and work permits vary depending on their status as a regularly residing migrant, undocumented migrant, asylum seeker or refugee. Concretely, the reduced employment rates among women refugees is also influenced by legal obstacles, particularly in the case of women admitted through family reunification schemes who are legally restricted to access the labour market, in some cases, for up to a year. This extended waiting period presents a significant hurdle to their integration prospects, resulting in skill loss and rendering women to depend on the income of the spouses/sponsor or family members.

Moreover, Eurodiaconia members mention a lack of knowledge of labour rights and accessible services. This makes TCN women highly dependent on the employer and may have little or no knowledge on how to look for protection when they fall into a situation of exploitation. On the other hand, our members point that employers with less knowledge concerning migration and asylum legislation are often more reluctant or unsure about hiring TCN, even when dealing with labour shortages.

¹⁹ Grubanov-Boskovic, S., Tintori, G., and Biagi F., 'Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status', 2020, p. 4,

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121425>

²⁰ Ibid.



Intersectionality of the obstacles: The labour market obstacles faced by TCN women are multifaceted and intersectional. It is essential to carefully understand that women on the move are a highly diverse group, and therefore, a gendered approach should not fail to also observe the heterogeneity of their experiences. The concept of intersectionality underscores the cumulative impact of migration or refugee status combined with factors such as ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic factors, or disability, among others— which add several layers of complexity to labour market accessibility. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, the main gender inequality effects interlinked to the status as a migrant or a refugee are a lower participation in the labour market, as well as deskilling and a higher presence in informal economy and genderised sectors.

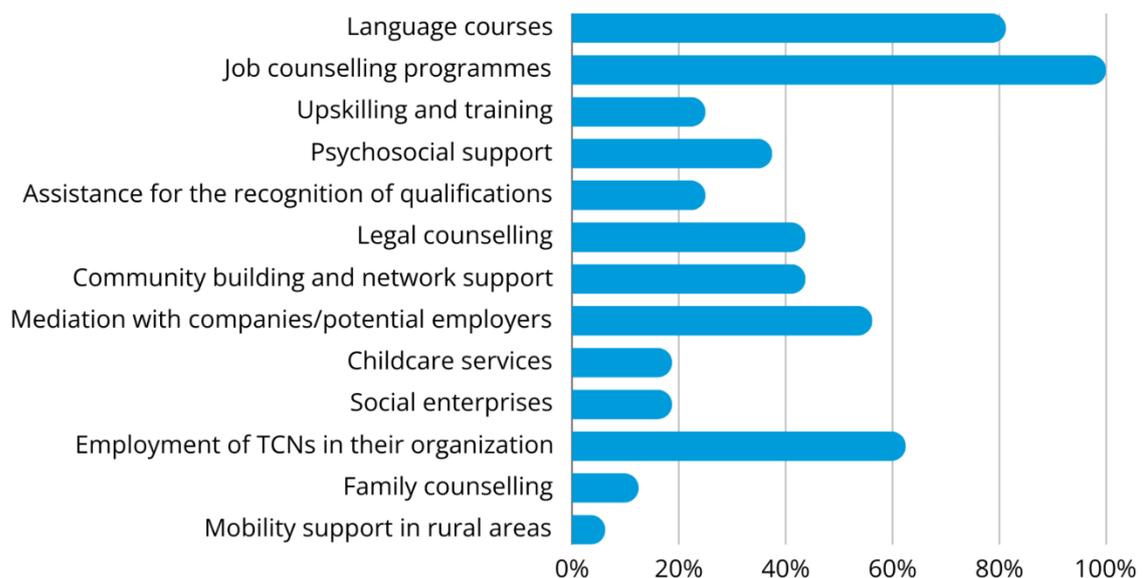
Eurodiaconia members experience that extended racism and xenophobia in hosting countries reinforces stigma and stereotypes about the role of TCN women in the European labour market, highlighting the complex interplay of the factors that shape their employment prospects. The former significantly influences the opportunities to not only enter the labour market, but also to secure sustainable employment. For instance, TCN women are often concentrated in the domestic and care sector, perpetuating perceptions about their lack of skills or employability in other fields by the hosting society and employers.

ADDRESSING THE OBSTACLES: OVERVIEW FROM EURODIACONIA

MEMBERSHIP

Eurodiaconia members are committed to facilitating access to sustainable employment for TCN women through holistic integration projects and social services. These projects are designed to address the identified multifaceted challenges. Our members have a long-term experience in providing labour market integration services for TCNs, and they are working towards incorporating a gendered and intersectional approach to more effectively target the needs of women.

Figure 1. What are Eurodiaconia members doing to facilitate the access to employment of TCN women ?²¹



Recognising the language barrier as a central obstacle to integration and employability, all our consulted members provide **language courses**, ensuring that they are flexible and adapted to the

²¹ The data has been gathered from a questionnaire, personal interviews conducted to 11 member organisations, as well as from the input received in the Migration Network Meeting that took place in September 2023 (Paris, France): Apostoli (Greece), Asociación Nueva Vida (Spain), Diaconia España (Spain), Diaconia Valdese (Italy), Diakonie ČCE (Czech Republic), Diakonie Flüchtlingsdienst (Austria), Diakonie Sozialdienst Thüringen gGmbH Diakonisches (Germany), Altenhilfezentrum gGmbH (Germany), Diakonisches Werk Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald (Young migrants, Germany), Diakonisches Werk Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Migrationsberatung für Erwachsene (Adult migrants, Germany), Diakonisches Werk im Landkreis Lörrach - Nadia Murad Zentrum Lörrach (Germany), EHONS (Serbia), FEP (France), Haraldsplass Diakonale Stiftelse - Siljuslatten Sykehjem (Norway), Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V. (Germany), Diaconia of the Reformed Church in Hungary (Hungary), LELB Diakonija (Latvia), Living Hope - Odessa (Ukraine / Germany), ODL (Finland).

specific needs of TCN women. For instance, by organising afternoon or evening language courses, or also following a family inclusive approach by offering mother-children activities or facilitating access to childcare.



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Moreover, Eurodiaconia members provide **job counselling** that not only focuses on developing the participants' individual professional profile, but also encompasses discussion on effective job-seeking strategies and insights into the labour market structure of the correspondent country.

In several Italian regions, DIACONIA VALDESE's job placement service (Servizi Inclusione),²² has a multi-professional team working to provide comprehensive employment support to newcomers. Their approach encompasses a range of measures aimed at easing integration into the labour market. First, they begin to evaluate and refine each participant's CV, as well as their expectations. Secondly, they conduct a thorough assessment of the participant's motivations and skills to reinforce their strengths and aspirations, which is a key step in guiding them through job-seeking. By adopting this approach, they do not only empower participants, but also equip them to effectively adapt to different opportunities. Finally, they closely monitor job vacancies across diverse sectors, connecting participants with companies to maximise their chances to successfully access the Italian labour market.

Notably, our members also extend their efforts to include **upskilling and vocational training initiatives**, designed to increase the employability and the acquisition of transferable skills for TCN women (see the best practices below). In Austria, under the RoMEO project, DIAKONIE DE LA TOUR (member of Diakonie Österreich) provides workshops to young TCN women and girls to increase their interest and future career prospects in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)

²² [Servizi Inclusione, Diaconia Valdese](#)

In addition, some of our members also work towards the **recognition of foreign qualifications** of migrants and refugees by accompanying and counselling TCNs through the administrative process. However, they pointed out the high cost and length of the procedure, which reduces the opportunities to obtain this recognition.

Additionally, following a multistakeholder approach, Eurodiaconia members assist in **the creation of professional networks** with public and private entities, educational institutions and job placement services. They actively work to facilitate accessing sustainable employment opportunities, or to arrange strategic internships, fostering skills development and thereby increasing the opportunities for potential job offers.

Under the project “Camino hacia el empleo” (Path to employment) DIACONIA ESPAÑA²³ collaborates and intermediates with more than 200 enterprises at national level, including awareness raising actions on gender equality. The cooperation with both public and private sector institutions for the provision of employment helps to develop new professional networks, synergies and opportunities for migrants to access a new job.

In 2022, **353** people were assisted, **134** people secured a job, **116** pre-employment workshops were held and **203** companies were contacted.



²³ [Diaconía España: Camino hacia el empleo](#)

Moreover, our members' efforts extend beyond the initial job placement in a company. They play a crucial role to **mediate with companies**. The former involves educating employers on TCN's rights, interculturality, solve communication problems and overall, fostering an inclusive work environment. This facilitates a smoother transition and supportive labour integration process.

DIACONIA VALDESE's job placement service (Servizi Inclusione) also serves as a bridge between TCNs and companies. They conduct a follow-up during the first months by addressing both sides' concerns and facilitating effective intercultural communication. Once beneficiaries consider they have gained sufficient autonomy, secure employment, and obtained the necessary documentation to work in Italy, their follow-up mechanism concludes.

In Germany, DIAKONISCHES WERK BREISGAU-HOCHSCHWARZWALD (member of Diakonie Deutschland)²⁴, implemented the figure of the "work buddy" as part of their labor integration services. The role of the buddy was to assist the TCN during the initial stages of employment. Nevertheless, they pointed out that some German companies were reluctant to introduce this supportive figure.

Following a comprehensive strategy for social and labour market integration, our members prioritise not only **legal counselling** (regularization, asylum applications, recognition of qualifications, among others), but also **psychological support and personal development activities**.



²⁴ [Diakonisches Werk Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald](#)

Recognising the pivotal role of social networks to foster a better social integration and inclusion, Eurodiaconia members have a wide experience in organizing **community building activities** promoting the creation of a strong relationship between TCN women and local communities.

In Austria, DIAKONIE DE LA TOUR (member of Diakonie Österreich) launched the project "IDA: Ich und Du", which facilitates early-childhood support groups for mothers coming from marginalised or poverty backgrounds. In fact, a high percentage of the participants are TCN women. The project started during the pandemic as an opportunity for young mothers to share their perceived obstacles concerning childcare with other women, facilitating the creation of women self-support networks.²⁵

In the Czech Republic, DIAKONIE ČCE, organises craft workshops and sport activities, providing opportunities for locals and TCNs in Prague to get to know each other and form connections. Similarly, THE REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY, not only organises social theatre sessions, but also promotes volunteering activities within their services, facilitating social encounters and empowering TCN women by helping other women or persons in vulnerable situations. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, DIAKONIJA LATVIA²⁶ initiated culinary workshops and Ukrainian days, not only fostering intercultural exchanges, but also forming meaningful connections between Ukrainian women, children, and the local community.

These initiatives, even though not focused on labour market integration, play a vital role in creating welcoming spaces and facilitating the inclusion of TCN women in the local community. In fact, they contribute to increasing motivation and self-development through community building, emphasizing that labour and social inclusion must go hand in hand for a comprehensive integration.

Moreover, some members have stepped up by facilitating **childcare services** or establishing partnerships with existing childcare facilities within their regions. Such as LIVING HOPE-ODESSA²⁷ in Germany and Ukraine, DIAKONIE DE LA TOUR in Austria, or the FEP in France.²⁸ The latter provides assistance to facilitate the access to daycare for children under 3 years old in order to allow their mothers to participate in integration services. Similarly, to ensure flexibility and a family-inclusive approach, migrant mothers can attend with their children the language courses organised by DIACONIA VALDESE. Overall, Eurodiaconia membership's work has been directed to address the main obstacles hindering the integration and access to employment for TCN women.

As social services providers, our members are committed to equip TCN women with the necessary tools for empowerment, achieve autonomy, overcome integration and employment barriers, and embrace social participation in the hosting society. It is crucial to highlight that labour integration should not be understood in isolation, but in conjunction with comprehensive social inclusion programmes for long-term and sustainable results.

²⁵ See: [Presentation IDA video](#) (DE)

²⁶ [Diakonija Latvija](#)

²⁷ [Living Hope - Odessa](#)

²⁸ [FEP \(Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante\)](#)

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM EURODIACONIA MEMBERSHIP

Eurodiaconia members are running labor market integration projects that address the challenges faced by TCN women in accessing employment in Europe. These projects have identified the specific vulnerabilities that TCN women experience at the intersection of gender, migration and/or refugee status. By offering personalized employment and legal counselling, language courses, vocational training, social enterprises, networking initiatives, as well as psychological support, they have adopted a comprehensive approach for the labor and social integration of TCN women, promoting equality of opportunities and embracing diversity.

ASOCIACIÓN NUEVA VIDA, SPAIN - NUEVA VIDA TEXTIL

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE²⁹

Project: In 2021, Nueva Vida founded a social enterprise of textile production and vocational training programme to facilitate the integration of individuals at risk of labour market exclusion.

Structure: Nueva Vida Textil provides a comprehensive 420-hour vocational training and upskilling programme, equipping participants with the necessary skills for being employed in textile production. This project serves as a pathway to labour market integration, fostering partnerships with local businesses in the Autonomous Region of Cantabria (Spain), or within their social enterprise. Participants have the opportunity to work under their sustainable brand “Berris”, which employs women trained through Nueva Vida Textil. Moreover, the project supports the regularisation of the administrative status of undocumented TCN women in collaboration with their legal team.

Target group: The project is designed to assist individuals at risk of social and labour market exclusion. However, it has particularly prioritized women from their programme for women victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, often involved in prostitution. Most beneficiaries are women with a migration background, including undocumented migrant women.

Main objectives: Nueva Vida Textil aims to provide practical tools for the development of an autonomous and independent life in Spain, for which both the social inclusion and labour integration are paramount. Nueva Vida focuses on empowering and equipping women on vulnerable situations to facilitate self-sufficiency and navigate the labour market.

²⁹ [Asociación Nueva Vida: Nueva Vida Textil](#)
See [presentation video](#) (ES)



Main outcomes

Nueva Vida has successfully trained 18 women and 4 men who were facing social exclusion, with 90% being migrant women, refugees or asylum seekers. Among them, 77% were mothers with dependent children. To date, this initiative has opened the doors of the Spanish labour market to 11 women who are still employed.

© Nueva Vida Textil

As a social economy project, Nueva Vida Textil provides quality and fair employment opportunities, while fostering inclusivity and the active engagement of women in situation of vulnerability. By putting individual needs first and upholding women's labor rights, they showcase a best practice in an industry characterized by precariousness and substandard conditions.

OULU DEACONESS INSTITUTE (ODL), FINLAND - MAPPI PROJECT

INTEGRATED LABOR AND SOCIAL INCLUSION³⁰

Project description: The MAPPI Project, implemented by ODL from 2019 to 2020, worked with TCN women in the region of Oulu, Finland. The project was divided in three main vectors: 1) Support for employment and job skills, 2) Support for family life and motherhood, and 3) Support for health and welfare.

Structure: ODL provided job coaching sessions tailored to TCN women with the aim of facilitating their access to the labour market while considering social inclusion. Participants attended both group and individual sessions to assess their skills, expectations, as well as group language evaluation and courses to reach the necessary level to work in Finland. The project also included the opportunity to join a practical training in different companies for three weeks, while receiving social support from the MAPPI Project. Following this, ODL conducted a final evaluation of the two phases with the participants, planning future educational or employment projects together.

MAPPI provided parenting support, which was specifically tailored to the background, cultural heritage and personal preferences of the women participating on the project. On this counselling space, TCN mothers could participate on discussions about Finnish parenting, the development of strategies to balance work and family life, as well as the structures of the Finnish day-care system and how to maximise its benefits.

The project actively encouraged the interaction of the beneficiaries with local residents, facilitating cultural exchange. One of the interaction spaces was the participation on sport activities, as proven to improve the overall physical and mental well-being of the participants.

Main objectives: The MAPPI Project aimed to empower TCN women through holistic services designed to promote education, skills development and enhance employment prospects. In long-term perspective, it sought to reduce intergenerational unemployment and exclusion of TCN in Finland. The core goal was not limited to accessing employment, but to the creation of meaningful human connections between local and new residents, facilitating a comprehensive integration.

Target group: Asylum seekers and migrant mothers from 15 to 49 years old, with a particular focus on TCN women who were neither employed nor engaged in any form of education or training. TCN women who had been part of previous inclusion services on OULU were also redirected to MAPPI.

Challenges: The initial narrowness of the target group was a significant obstacle given the location in a relatively small region in Finland, making challenging to find suitable profiles. The unforeseen impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in diverse sectors also added additional challenges regarding access to employment and the organisation of group sessions.

³⁰ [Oulu Deaconess Institute](#)



Main outcomes

The MAPPI Project assisted 86 TCN women in Oulu, strengthening their ability to enter the Finnish labour market and to improve their quality of life. 10 women were supported in 3 groups: 2 started studying in vocational training centres, 2 began to study Finnish language, 1 started secondary school, 2 started a traineeship, and 2 successfully secured employment. The project boosted participants' self-confidence, particularly, TCN mothers. In addition, it helped to strengthen family-based integration programmes in North Ostrobothnia.

ODL developed the manual '[Maailmalta MAPPI Hankkeeseen](#)' (FI) as a first-hand resource for organizations working with TCN women and families in Finland.

DIAKONIE ČCE, CZECH REPUBLIC – DOMA PROJECT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING³¹

The project: The DOMA Project is dedicated to facilitating the integration of TCNs in Czech society. This initiative aspires to provide professional support and strengthen social links between locals and newcomers to prevent social and labor exclusion. In principle, the project was not gender oriented, however, the influx of Ukrainian refugees increased the percentage of women accessing their services.³²

Structure: As part of their labor market inclusion objectives, the project has created an open conversation club, which serves as a safe space for TCN women to express their feelings, mutual support, build networks, and engage in leisure activities, while facilitating language exchanges. Grassroot initiatives, such as workshops, tutoring, and sports are highly encouraged. Likewise, they also offer small Czech courses that are accessible online.

In order to enhance TCNs job seeking skills, Diakonie ČCE provides individual coaching for skills assessment, as well as workshops on how to navigate the Czech labour market. Moreover, they create connections between TCNs and employers by establishing partnerships. Currently, they collaborate with IKEA on the provision of trainings, and they have also employed participants in Diakonie’s migration and social services. Finally, participants are encouraged to continue engaging in the open conversation club and community events, not only to maintain their professional and social network, but also to empower other women. They highlighted the value of creating social interaction spaces with local communities, also involving diaspora communities, and other TCN women who have secure employment in the country.

Main objectives: From Diakonie ČCE, they acknowledge that newcomers are in the process of rediscovering their “new-self”, particularly, when they are navigating through drastic changes in their roles and future prospects in an unknown country. Therefore, they highlight the relevance of encouraging the expression of emotions and fostering peer support within the new community.

Challenges and lessons learned: Some Eastern European countries, such as the Czech Republic, had historically experienced less migration flows than other European countries. Therefore, our members pointed out xenophobic societal attitudes, as well as negative stereotypes linked to migrants and refugees as challenges to implement their project. However, DOMA also intends to address this by providing gathering spaces and fostering intercultural dialogue.

Funding: The project is mainly funded through project-specific funding extending until mid-2024. It is currently supported by organizations such as DKH (Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe), UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), LWF (Lutheran World Federation), and the Prague municipality in collaboration with UNICEF. Looking ahead, they are actively looking for additional support by applying through the ESF+ to secure sustainable funding beyond the initial project timeline.

³¹ [Diakonie ČCE: DOMA Project](#)

³² 95% of the participants in DOMA are women.



Main outcomes

During 2022, 4 Ukrainian refugee women have successfully secured full-time employment. The project has engaged with over 20 external workers with a migrant background, including psychologists, arts and crafts instructors, music teachers, drama coaches and yoga instructors. Two of the participants became assistants in Diakonie ČCE school for children with special necessities. The majority of participants are currently under the language and skills development program while employed in low-skilled positions until they gain sufficient language skills.

According to the feedback provided by the beneficiaries, the project has successfully created a welcoming and a safe environment for both newcomers and locals, fostering intercultural social connections and broadening the horizons of those involved.

DOMA has also challenged the notion that social services within Diaconal organizations represent the bottom line of the labor market in the Czech Republic. Their services have offered valuable opportunities for employment and personal growth.

DIAKONIE DE LA TOUR, AUSTRIA – FEMME ! & FEMME.PLUS EMPOWERMENT, EMPLOYMENT, AND ROLE MODEL³³

The project: ‘femme! empower, employ, emulate me’ is a labour market integration project implemented in the rural area of Carinthia (Austria) by Diakonie de La Tour from 2022-2023 (13 months), and extended to 2024 (24 months) under femme.plus. “femme” stands for female empowerment, employment and the positive effect that role models can have on social and labour inclusion of TCNs. The project focuses on two main challenges for the integration of refugee and migrant women in the Austrian labour market, namely, language barriers and childcare obligations. Therefore, it is organised in three main areas: language courses, vocational training and childcare support.

Main objectives: ‘femme!’ and ‘femme.plus’ aim to enable refugees and migrants to establish themselves in Carinthia as soon as possible by ensuring the stability and sustainability of their labour and social integration. Through this project, participants gain the tools to improve their level of German, enhance their vocational skills, and increase their access to further educational opportunities or sustainable employment in Austria.

Target group: Originally, ‘femme’ was created to meet the needs of displaced Ukrainians who had access to the Austrian labour market under the framework of the Temporary Protection Directive, and had childcare obligations. Given the particular context of the war in Ukraine, most of the beneficiaries were Ukrainian mothers. Even though childcare obligations are mainly assumed by women, they also provided their services to four men who needed childcare support to participate in their labour market integration services. In 2024, under “femme.plus”, the services have been extended to all refugees and migrants in order to increase their economic participation, particularly, after the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Structure: femme! and femme.plus provide German courses and targeted employment support. Vocational training opportunities are offered to equip beneficiaries with practical skills, including training programs tailored to the needs of the labour market. In addition, the project provides contacts to facilitate the entry into the Austrian labour market and build up sustainable employment relationships.

However, integration goes beyond securing a job placement or acquiring language skills, it requires from proper support adapted to individual requirements in the social, cultural and economic realm. Therefore, Diakonie de La Tour has adopted a multidimensional approach to provide comprehensive support in all aspects of life influencing integration. Holistic socio-educational support and individual counselling is offered in several languages for effective communication and the creation of a supportive environment. For instance, they provide targeted free counselling concerning asylum law, social welfare law, tenancy law; or assistance to communicate with Austrian authorities, among others.

³³ [Diakonie de La Tour](#)

Finally, the project also encompasses childcare support to ensure equal opportunities and the participation of parents. Childcare services are provided during the courses, which also ensures the well-being of the children and contributes to the success of the programme. The childcare service is available until the age of 6 and for those who are already enrolled in school, the timetable has been aligned with the school schedules in Carinthia.

Funding: femme! and femme.plus have been co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Federal Chancellery (BKA) and the State of Carinthia.



Main outcomes: femme!

By the end of the project, femme! supported the social and labour inclusion of 56 participants.

- 15 entered the labour market after 10 months.
- 15 were transferred to advanced courses in further education.
- 11 have not yet entered the labour market due to lack of childcare in advance courses.

femme.plus

By March 2024, they have finished 3 German courses with a total of 23 participants (87% were women).

While the provision of childcare services during Diakonie de La Tour integration programmes are vital for ensuring equal opportunities, they are not able to address the broader structural deficiencies of public childcare services. They point out that once TCN women seek to pursue vocational training beyond their programmes, they face the lack of accessible and affordable family life conciliation measures in Austria.

L'ARMÉE DU SALUT, FRANCE – TERRE DE FEMMES

VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN ECOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION³⁴

The project: In December 2019, L'Armée du Salut started the labour integration project "Terre de Femmes" in partnership with the training organisation ADAGE and the network Les Bâtiuses. This project is under the umbrella of the "Palais de la Femme", a social establishment with several accommodation arrangements for the prevention of social exclusion and integration of women and children from diverse backgrounds, including migrant and refugee women. As part of their labour market integration services, "Terre de Femmes" has been developed as an activation and vocational training programme³⁵ facilitating the development of a professional career in the sector of raw and ecological materials in Ile-de-France.

Target group: The project is opened to 24 women, mostly refugees or migrants with residence permits authorising them to work in France and who have been schooled at their country of origin, but lack the necessary qualifications and/or skills to access employment. The focus on raw materials is also grounded on the fact that in several African countries, women are running the construction of dwellings.

Main objective: It aims at upskilling TCN women through theoretical and technical training in ecological construction, which will ultimately allow them to obtain a European professional certification under the ECVET. Finally, to develop a professional project, with the possibility to work in the ecological coating and paints field as artisans or decorators, or moving to the building sector. The overarching goal is the empowerment of the women by gaining autonomy and self-confidence.

Structure: The project is composed by two cycles.

1. Remobilising cycle: During the first cycle, general and technical trainings are provided. The general training allows to acquire basic knowledge in wall painting and develop transferable socio-professional skills (e.g. CV and motivation letter drafting, communication, teamwork, autonomy and self-confidence). French and communication courses are also provided. The technical training facilitates to become skilled in ecological coating and paints. It is offered in modules with a certification for each level. This format allows learning progression and avoid losing all the progress in case of interruption. The training cycle culminates with the refurbishment of a room in the "Palais de la Femme" or one of Armée du Salut's institutional partners. This serves to showcase the professional skills obtained upon the completion of the training.
2. Pre-qualifying cycle: After the completion of the first cycle, participants have the option to leave to another professional endeavour or continue the training in the second cycle. At this stage, they can continue with their training in ecological construction, and prepare to

³⁴ [Armée du Salut \(the Salvation Army in France\)](#)

See [presentation video](#) (FR)

³⁵ Integration workshops ("Ateliers et chantiers d'insertion, ACI)

obtain an official certification under the ECVET Earth Building Training Standard. The training is paid under a fixed-term integration contract of 26 hours per week.

Funding: “Terre de femmes” is part of the so-called Workshops and Integration Projects in France (ACI), offering support for professional activation to unemployed people experiencing particular social and professional difficulties. The employees participating receive remuneration at least equal to the minimum wage. The ACI is approved by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Economic Inclusion of the State who allocates State aid.



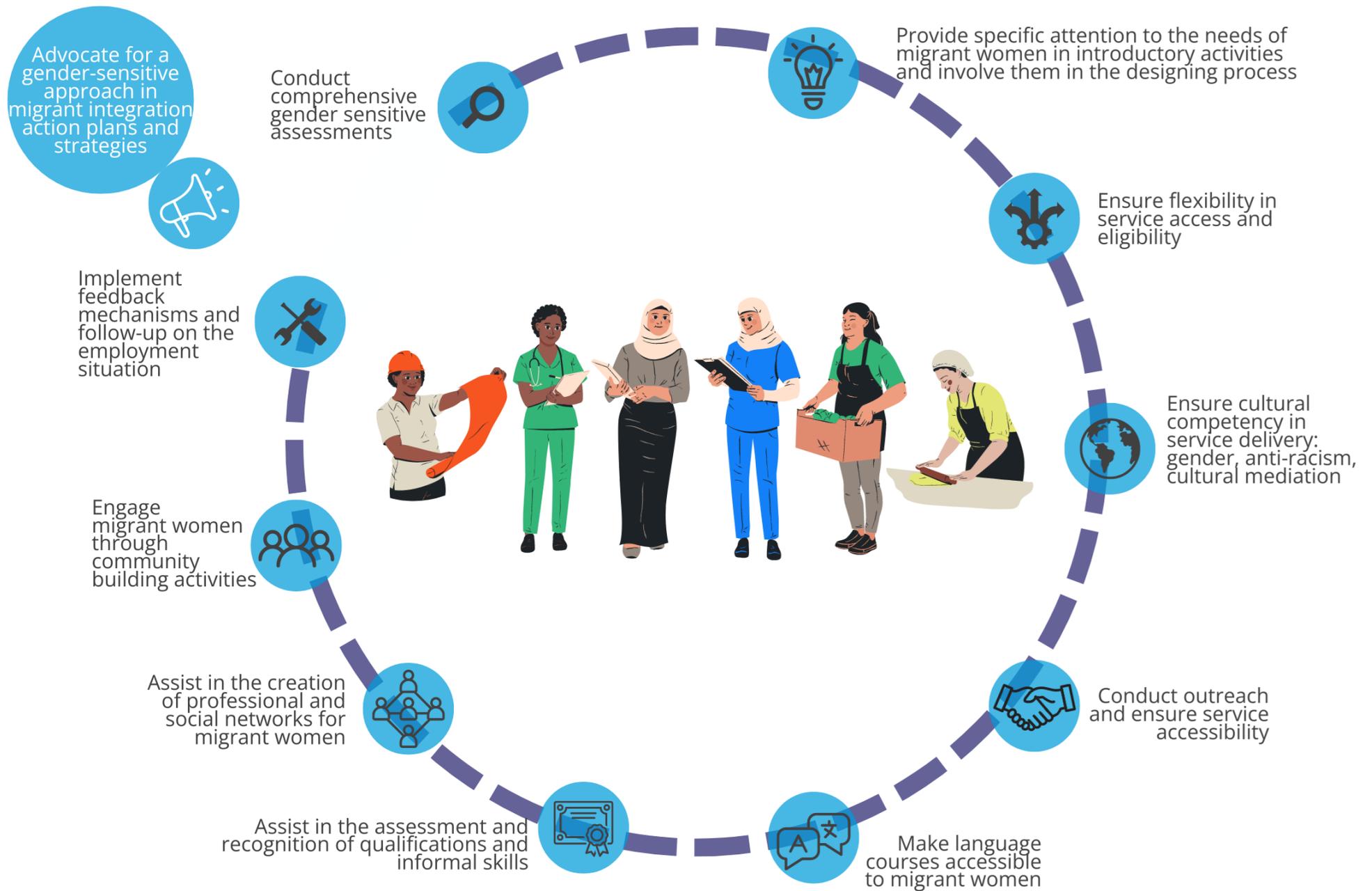
© Palais de la Femme/ L'Armée du Salut

Main outcomes

During 2021, 80% of the women continued their training in the second cycle, with a 100% of them successfully receiving the ECVET certificate.

“Terre de Femmes” responds to the growing demand on the construction sector for sustainable painting and plastering services, training TCN women to access emerging employment opportunities in the region of Ile-de-France.

EURODIACONIA'S GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN



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2024

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Funded by the European Commission under the ESF+ programme 2022 – 2025.
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