



Comparative report on qualitative research in six European countries

LLP- Grundtvig Multilateral Project FORWARD

**FORWARD. Competence portfolio and pedagogical tools to identify, recognize, validate
and improve the competences acquired by migrant women in formal, non-formal and
informal learning contexts**



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Written by: Women's Issues Information Centre, Dr. Giedre Purvneckiene

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to all the migrant women interviewed and the professionals who participated in the focus groups, and the colleagues who wrote country reports. We appreciate their time and commitment towards fostering the integration and inclusion of migrant women and fighting against all forms of discrimination against them.

September 2012



This project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme from the European Commission. This publication is based on the six country reports (Austria, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Spain), and reflects the views of authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. INTERVIEWS WITH MIGRANT WOMEN	3
2.1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS	3
2.2. MIGRATION PROCESS	4
2.3. FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD	5
2.4. EDUCATION.....	7
2.5. COMPUTER SKILLS	8
2.6. LANGUAGE SKILLS	9
2.7. WORK EXPERIENCE (PAID AND UNPAID WORK)	10
<i>Unpaid work: care work and volunteering</i>	11
2.8. SETTLEMENT, LIFE AND CULTURE IN HOST COUNTRIES	12
2.9. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MIGRANT WOMEN	14
2.10. COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT.....	15
<i>a) Diagnostic competences</i>	15
<i>b) Relational competences</i>	17
<i>c) Facing competences</i>	18
2.11. COMPETENCES TO INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY.....	19
3. FOCUS GROUPS WITH PROFESSIONALS	20
3.1. PROFILE AND SITUATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN ACCORDING TO PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS.....	20
<i>Settlement and integration process</i>	21
3.2. COMPETENCES OF MIGRANT WOMEN	22
3.3. EMPLOYABILITY. CONCLUSION	24
4. GLOBAL SWOT	25

1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the qualitative research conducted was to reveal formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences by migrant women to help increase their employability and social inclusion. The research tool applied was a semi-structured qualitative interview.

Additionally, the knowledge and experience of the professionals, who worked directly with the migration process and facilitate services for migrant women, were gathered using focus groups methodology.

2. INTERVIEWS WITH MIGRANT WOMEN

Six countries participated in the project, in total 90 women were interviewed. All interviewees were migrants of working age. In Italy 16 interviews were done, in Spain – 14, in each of the remaining countries 15 women shared their experience. All interviews were face-to-face and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes.

As diverse as possible women were selected in order to address different regions of origin, type of migration project, adaptation period in the host country or educational background. The interviews were conducted mainly in the language of the host country, except in Lithuania, where the majority of interviews were conducted in Russian; and in Finland, where the majority of interviews were conducted in English.

2.1. Socio-demographic information of respondents

The migrant women interviewed in the six European countries came from very different regions of the world. Interviews were conducted with women originally coming from Africa, Middle East, South and North Americas, Caucasus, Central Asia, South East Asia and different countries in Europe. The duration of stay in host countries varied from a couple of months to 35 years, while the average age of respondents was 37,5 years. The dominant religion among women interviewed was Muslim.

The majority of women interviewed possessed the citizenship of the country of origin and only several had the citizenship of the host country. Though it is difficult to assess the educational

background and present occupation, it seems that currently women were mostly employed in jobs below their qualifications.

2.2. Migration process

Reasons for Migration

Interviews with migrant women in all six countries showed three main reasons for migration:

1. Family reunion or “love migrants”;
2. Migrants for economical or other personal reasons;
3. Migrants from war or political prosecution regions, looking for safety or escaping from problems.

It should be however noted that women seldom expressed a single reason to migrate. In cases of family reunion or “love migrations” from case to case in Spain, Finland or Lithuania there are economic or political reasons behind firstly expressed explanations. For this reason, it is not clear if migration due to the family reunion and because of marriage should really be attributed to a single category. The country reports do not provide enough evidence. However some results suggest that family reunion projects may be motivated not only by the will to bring a family together, but also by other reasons (such as an economic project). Similarly, deciding to marry a foreigner might be in some cases a way to find safety – political or economic.

The personal decisions to migrate might also have different backgrounds. Sometimes “love” migrants deny economic reasons and even claim they had no intention to leave the country of origin. Some women look for better opportunities even if they have a stable work at home. In some other cases an early migration experience seems to influence later family behaviour – as in the case in Spain, when one interviewee described two episodes of her life – first migration with parents, then return to the country of origin and migrating back to Spain after marriage.

The history of migration in families might also support the decision to join the family members abroad. Some women gave evidence on family members living in different countries.

Sometimes the migration patterns illustrate the specific relations between the countries or geopolitical situation. In the cases of Spain and Italy – there were women from North Africa, which you can hardly find in Romania or Lithuania.

Finally, a significant number of women that migrated due to political reasons was found in the research, especially in Lithuania, Austria, Italy and Finland. The main reasons behind the migration were the existence of a war or political persecution in the countries of origin.

Countries of transit

It seems that most often the decisions to migrate come together with the decision on a desired country of destination. Only a few women indicated their experience in other countries before settling in the country of contemporary residence. And specifically in Lithuania women indicated histories of deportation, showing that Lithuania is considered to be a transit country in the migration process.

On the other hand, the interviews with women who in their stories referred to transit countries in their migration experience, revealed an “adaptation” to the migration process.

Role in decision to migrate

Interviews in all the countries showed that women usually have a role in the decision to migrate. This role differs from completely independent decisions or even hidden ones (as in the case of Italy), to supporting initial ideas of the husband. The rare cases of following parents to foreign countries as children just show that originally in migrating families there were also agreements on decisions to migrate.

2.3. Family and household

Family in the host countries

The interviews in almost all countries revealed the same patterns – most often interviewees lived with their husbands and children in rented or owned apartments. The exception is Romania, where the majority of interviewed women lived in dormitory, as they came to the country for study purposes. In Lithuania six women indicated living in Refugees Reception Centre or in Foreigners Registration Centre. In Spain, a high diversity of households was found, with six women living alone (with or without children) or sharing a flat.

Sometimes respondents said living with extended families – including brothers or sisters, or other relatives. In a few cases in Finland women indicated living with relatives of their husbands. Some families were scattered in different countries. Sometimes this made emotional ties with other family members less strong, but also many women said that living apart from their relatives had a high emotional impact on their lives. This distance sometimes increased IT competences as it became a means to communicate with the family in the country of origin.

Family in the countries of origin

The majority of interviewees had relatives in the countries of origin – most often parents, brothers and sisters. Some women left behind their children.

Sometimes the situation of families in the countries of origin influenced the decisions to migrate. In this sense, there were cases where divorce or deteriorating relationships influenced the migration. Another important factor was the supportive attitude of those remaining in the country of origin towards migrant women. Only several women indicated that they went to another country despite the negative attitude of relatives.

Ties with family members remaining in the countries of origin constituted an important part of the life of women migrants. The biggest emotional effect hits at the beginning of emigration and diminishes with the settlement and integration.

Financial assistance

The financial assistance from and towards countries origin is quite diverse in all the countries where research was conducted. In Finland no one claimed receiving or sending financial assistance, while in Spain some women even claimed that their relatives managed buying houses in their countries because of their financial support. However, most of the women agreed that financial assistance had stopped during the financial crisis.

It seems that financial assistance more often is directed from parents to children than vice versa. The migrants who left their children for care in the countries of origin provided them with steady financial support, while there was a lesser amount of those who supported their parents.

In two countries – Lithuania and Romania – some interviewees admitted receiving financial assistance from their families in the country of origin. This financial assistance, though in a different direction, falls into the category of parents supporting children. The financial assistance from the countries of origin was received mainly because of the migrant status – either women were involved in the studies at university, or they did not have the permission to work.

2.4. Education

The educational level of respondents was diverse, but generally high. Four women reported having no educational background – one in Austria, who had not been allowed to pursue primary education in the country of origin, and three in Finland, who reported absence of compulsory education systems in the countries of origin. All the other interviewees had been enrolled into compulsory education systems in the countries of origin, thus obtaining secondary education or being close to formalising levels. The main reasons for not obtaining secondary level education certificates in the countries of origin were political instability or war, which forced women leave the countries without formal graduating.

Women reported facing difficulties validating their certificates in almost all of the countries. Only in one case in Italy a woman had started a validation process. Other women either chose to obtain new competences by enrolling into vocational training or tried obtaining new certificates in the host countries. Interviews with women revealed that some of them from the very beginning of their migration project did not believe in the possibility of validating certificates – they left diplomas in the countries of origin and had no intention to integrate them in their work and educational project. In most cases the reason provided for not validating certificates was the understanding of validation procedures as time consuming, complex and expensive. In one case in Spain an interviewee was especially critical about the procedures of validation of migrants' qualifications and related them to having to constantly prove that they are competent in a new context where nothing is taken for granted (on the contrary, for migrant women what is taken for granted is that they have zero competences).

The difficulty of validation procedures in the host countries and labour market requirements make women migrants use formal or non-formal education programs to increase their

competitiveness. Interviews demonstrated that the formal education programs are used by the minority of migrant women but in all countries, except Lithuania, there was at least one woman involved into a formal program. The majority reported being enrolled into non-formal programs. Romania was an exception in this sense since the majority of interviewees reported studying at the university.

Generally speaking, educational and labour programs in the host countries are very important for migrant women – by using them they gain new competences and have more possibilities to find an occupation. The most often used form is non-formal education and language courses. In some countries migrant women reported also attending English courses and that could be attributed to the perceiving future migration projects. The majority of interviewees had been enrolled into vocational training courses, which was closely linked to having access to the labour market, rather than to capacity-building and personal development. Vocational training was considered the most short and effective way for women to achieve their job placement objectives.

However, this enrolment into education usually leaves most of the women employed in highly feminised sectors of society. By obtaining more possibilities of finding a job after vocational training courses, women face relatively low working conditions and, most importantly, their upward mobility is very limited.

On the other hand, the majority of women expressed their desire or plans to be enrolled into future education activities. The only exception was Lithuania, where only one woman had clear plans for her future education and some expressed a rather vague desire to learn languages.

The prospects of future training might be related to a good experience from former courses or an understanding of the situation in the labour market, where a certificate may be needed for getting a job (even to get a laundry or ironing job).

2.5. Computer skills

Almost all the respondents had a generally good skill level of computer literacy. The differences among the host countries might be noticed mainly in possessing a personal computer. In Finland all of the respondents had one and in Lithuania three women did not use the computer at all. The experience on ITC in some cases comes together with formal

education in the countries of origin and is supported by the need to communicate with family members. For many women computer knowledge is necessary at work and therefore has to be supported by non-formal training.

2.6. Language skills

First language

Every woman interviewed possessed a good command of native language. However knowing a native language helps little in acquiring other competences in the host countries. In this regard the exception case is Spain, where migrants from Latin America can use their mother tongue throughout all phases of the migration process. The knowledge of the Russian language helps in Lithuania, where almost every person over 30 years has a good command of this language. The native language is mainly used for communication with the family, home country community or migrant population.

Another exception is bilingual education. Some women indicated that in their childhood they were educated not only in their mother tongue, but also in other languages – such as English, French, Russian, Czech or Slovak and Turkish. Knowing several languages from childhood helps gaining necessary skills in the host countries.

The languages of host countries and other languages

Almost all the women had competences in speaking the language of the host country. The level of proficiency is often related to the duration of stay in the host country and also with the environment requirements. Some women married to a husband from the host country informed that they use the host country language at home, while some indicated that the working environment sometimes is not helpful in improving language competences – either at work everybody uses a third language (as in the case of Lithuania) or there is no necessity to use the language at all (as in the case of an unskilled worker in Spain).

However, it should be recognised that a majority of women understood the necessity of good knowledge of the host country language and were active in increasing their skills. Some indicated that poor knowledge of the language of the host country leads to poorer usability of

other competences – such as computer skills or customer support. Thus knowing the host country language adds value for employability.

Learning the language of the host country also depends on the linguistic group migrants belong to and the specific mother tongue-root, their general education, and particularly language education, acquired in their country of origin before emigrating. Children play a very important role, as women tend to help them with homework and consequently children become informal teachers of the host country language.

Another aspect of language knowledge is the fact that migrant women on average declared knowing three to four different languages, which is more than the average host country citizens know. The most widely known and used language is English. The migrants from former Soviet Republics in general have a very good command of Russian.

The knowledge of different languages could give migrants a relative advantage in the labour market, and some of them, as in the case of Italy, use that advantage. However, the labour market also may underestimate the employability of African and Asian women competent in otherwise highly valued languages in the labour market (such as English), discriminating against them and favouring the language skills of European and North American nationals.

Another interesting aspect was noticed in Austria, where the research report says the language competences of the migrant women are much less focused on English compared to the Austria's education system. The explanation lays in the adaptability and usability of language – those who are to integrate into society develop primarily necessary tools and the knowledge of third languages might be considered as supplementary, but not necessary. However, women recognize that in some economy sectors (such as tourism or catering) the good knowledge of English language might be an advantage and increase employability.

2.7. Work experience (paid and unpaid work)

The work experience of interviewees in the countries of research is somehow diverse. While in Italy almost all the respondents were employed, in Austria and Spain only one third of women were, and in Finland, Romania and Lithuania only a few interviewees had a job. It does not imply, however, that they have no previous work experience in their home countries, since most of them do.

The case of Italy explicitly demonstrates that originally gained experience through formal education and previous occupations become non very useful when migrating to another country. The situation could be solved in three different ways – by learning the language of the host country and validating certificates (as a woman in Italy tries to do), by transforming competences through the third language (as women in Italy and Spain managed), or by having distinct competences (as described in one case from Italy).

The majority of interviews however show the distance between the jobs performed in the country of origin and after the migration. It consequently results in downgrading personal aspirations, because of the short-term tasks – to get any kind of job quickly or make any necessary steps to proceed with migration documents.

Independently of the country where interviews had taken place, women expressed their desire to find in the future an occupation according to their competences. However the labour markets in host countries are systematically oriented towards occupational segregation in terms of gender and ethnicity. Most of the women interviewed had paid work in social or care sectors, which appear to be the single solution for the migrant woman, especially if her ethnicity is highly visible in the host country.

If we look at the basic requirements to get a job in all six countries, the crucial thing is good command of the language of the host country. Concerning the second requirement it is possible to name two necessities – cultural awareness and a valid certificate. It seems that in some countries (Finland) the former is more important and in some (Austria), the latter.

In some cases women revealed their belief that good appearance and patience could also be beneficial in job interviews. The relevance of personal and social competences for employability will be later discussed in this report and was also stressed by professionals in the focus groups.

Unpaid work: care work and volunteering

Ethnicity or region of origin have no influence on how much family work women migrants do. Almost all interviewed women carried out a significant amount of unpaid housework, caring for themselves, their children and even non-family members they lived with. The differences might be distinguished in perceptions of this work – while some women regard it as natural,

and even do not put efforts in search for a paid job, others emphasise the possibility using competences as ironing or cleaning outside the family. Some women even expressed their understanding that family work is not solely a woman business. Some revealed a belief that in the countries of origin they would never receive any help from their husbands, which is the case in host country.

It seems that migrant women not so often engage into voluntary work. Some of them participate in civil work; support other migrants by talking to refugees, translating for an NGO, working as a political representative, contributing to different projects for their countries of origin, work in a school for disabled children, work as coordinator in a students' organisation or participate in the community through the church network. There was little evidence of voluntary work from interviews in Italy or Finland, and in Lithuania only one woman expressed her wish to perform voluntary music lessons, but she faced a non-supportive environment.

2.8. Settlement, life and culture in host countries

There are several primary difficulties indicated by women when settling in host countries. In Italy, Austria, Romania and Finland the main concern for the new migrants is language. In Lithuania migrant women are primarily concerned with the procedures and conditions of getting the status of migrant. In this country, asylum seekers have to live initially in a Foreigners Registration Centre and after getting it – in a Refugee Reception Centre. During that time migrants are not allowed to work and receive very small pocket money. In Spain most of the interviewed women primarily described loneliness, missing the family they left in their country of origin, and a lack of social network as main causes of difficulties.

Only a few women in the research indicated that they had no problems when arriving to the host country. Usually those are “love” migrants or women coming to already established social networks.

Social networks in host countries (such as church communities) might be helpful as described by several interviewees in Spain; these might provide feelings of safety (as in cases of the networks related to the countries of origin) or might as well be an obstacle in adapting culturally, as showed by interviews in Spain, where group interests may limit the opportunities of migrant women.

It might also be concluded that social networks of women or informal consultations by earlier migrants play a very important role. In several countries there were problems with difficult bureaucracy procedures, which become even more complicated without knowing the local language.

It seems that cultural differences are more emphasised only in the cases from Finland. In the other countries interviewees did not emphasise cultural differences as having a sound impact on their daily life. Almost all women in those countries expressed the willingness to adapt and learn more about the respective cultures. In Finland a few interviewees thought that not knowing Finnish culture, people's mentality, general cultural norms and behaviour can become a big obstacle in finding a job. Some indicated their families' traditions and habits were different from the Finnish equivalent and that caused some difficulties. Two women said that their families have some racist experiences. Racism experiences were reported in two cases in Austria.

The issue of culturally diverse families was touched in several interviews of the project. However, it is difficult to conclude which case provides more opportunities to integrate. In some cases the husbands of migrant women helped them with integration into society, while in others they used the cultural difference to prevent women from entering into new social networks.

This issue is closely related to the awareness of laws and migrant rights in host countries. In Spain, knowledge of one's rights was non-existent or scarce among all women interviewed. Many said right away that they were not aware at all of their rights, or only partially knew about their legal situation and the social benefits they were entitled to have, even if they had been informed by public or private services. Some recognised how this increased their possibilities to be discriminated and also mentioned that even if sometimes they had been aware of their rights they did not stand up for them. In Lithuania, those interviewees who underwent asylum seeking procedures were well informed about all rights (asylum seekers and residents). By contrast, women who currently lived in Foreigners Registration Centre complained that they did not get any information about their rights. In Finland, women were not completely familiar with their rights. The respondents had knowledge of common law and some concepts of civil law. Women had some knowledge of the immigration law because of their own immigration process.

The lack of knowledge of migrant rights or basic laws in the host countries increases their possibilities to become objects of discrimination and reduces the possibilities to use competences in the labour market or social sphere. However, despite formal legal commitment in some countries, established social structures in the host countries might be reluctant to increase migrant women's awareness of their rights.

2.9. Discrimination against migrant women

The interviews revealed that host societies in Europe still express negative attitudes toward migrants and thus migrant women often face acts of discrimination. During interviews only several women in each country, except Spain, openly admitted that they had faced work-related acts of discrimination. In Spain most women described a variety of experiences of discrimination; however, others insisted that they had never felt discriminated. In Spain the factors of discrimination appeared to be places of origin, ethnicity, gender, and religious beliefs. One woman in Lithuania told that she had faced sexual harassment, while trying to get a job; a woman in Italy told she constantly faced a negative attitude, as there are sexual stereotypes towards South-Americans in terms of regarding them as women of easy virtue.

The most commonly spread type of perceived discrimination, when comparing interviews, was discrimination by religion, when women wearing scarves were more often rejected for a job or felt negative attitudes from career or education guiding professionals.

In some cases migrant women did not recognise the discrimination. They negated it, but told stories indicating insulting behaviour against them. Or they revealed discrimination as a very subtle and concealed act.

Those women who claimed that they felt discrimination at work usually gave evidence of longer working hours, more tasks assigned or even no specifically written contract (Finland).

Interviews, however, did not show explicit discrimination on a gender basis, rather most of the cases described points to discrimination on ethnicity or places of origin. This does not mean that gender discrimination does not affect migrant women, but rather suggests that migrant women may have more difficulties to identify specifically gender-based discrimination forms and have a clearer perception of discrimination due to ethnicity and origin. However, the scope of the research does not allow for further generalisations.

2.10. Competence development

The migration process, which is led by adaptation in a new environment, influences individuals in a broad spectrum of aspects. Most women interviewed described their migration experience as a transforming one, and claimed that they gained more than lost. It seems that what was most valued were changes in personal values, behaviour and self-esteem, while instrumental changes, in terms of languages learnt or knowledge acquired, came in line with relative success in social or occupational spheres.

Certainly, it is difficult to generalise on the competences acquired by women through the migration process or through work experience.

There are possibilities for using different approaches for classifying the competences. The country research report from Italy (People) provides with a distinction among emotional, social and Meta competences, whereas the Spanish one (SURT) focuses on the so-called transversal competences¹.

On the basis of the **Surt competence-based model**,² in the following lines we will analyse if there are similarities in the women experiences and competences gained in all the countries surveyed. Transversal competences are constituted by diagnostic, relational and facing competences:

a) Diagnostic competences

Diagnostic competences include increasing self-knowledge, the ability to analyse and synthesise information, and a development of the learning to learn and motivation for work

¹ The theoretical proposal of the Italian report and the research results on migrant women's competences has shaped the decisions in the elaboration of the final classification of competences in the Forward project.

² A description of this model of competences can be found in the website of the project. This model was one of the sources of information to create the final classification of competences of the Forward project, which is also based on the results of this research.

competences. Interviewees in all countries showed diagnostic competences among women migrants.

In the report from Spain we can find half of the respondents providing evidence (at least this many are quoted) on developing diagnostic competences, while in Austria one third of the interviewed women mentioned a growth of self-consciousness, emphasising the importance of developing patience, personal strength, persistency, and orientation. The Italy report states that personal competences in one or another degree were mentioned by all participants, while most of the interviewees from Finland mentioned changes of their identity, and growth of self-conscious and personal values as a result of migration process. In Lithuania, the situation is somehow different, as only one woman is reported to think that her competences might be used for a paid job. In Romania several women were proud of their diagnostic competences.

In order to make a visualisation of the comparison among countries a table is attached below:

Diagnostic competences	Mentioned in countries	Examples
INCREASING SELF-KNOWLEDGE	All countries	the ability to endure difficult situations (Spain); growth of self-consciousness (Austria); knowledge about personal strengths and weaknesses (Italy); belief in one's abilities (Lithuania); confidence in oneself (Romania); changes of personal values (Finland).
ABILITY TO ANALYSE AND SYNTHESISE INFORMATION	All countries, except Lithuania	analyses of job opportunities (Spain); experience of de-skilling or downgrading (Austria); the ability to feel at ease when facing new approaches and information (Italy); coping with difficult situations (Romania); understanding of doing things differently (Finland).
LEARNING TO LEARN	Spain, Austria, Italy, Finland	expanding old or incorporating new knowledge (Spain); gain of personal strategies (Austria);

		the readiness to take chances (Italy); motivation to learn new things (Finland).
MOTIVATION TO WORK	All countries	committing to work by providing added value (Spain); possibility to apply competences (Romania); bringing happiness to family (Finland); maintaining standards of honesty (Italy).

As it is clear from the table above, one could find different evidence of the same competences throughout different countries. The possible conclusion here is that if migrants think of integrating into the host country society, they are forced to adapt. The need to adapt develops diagnostic competences, as well as relational or facing competences. The interviews in Lithuania, which revealed less information on competences gained, might show the situation of migrants in a transit country – they are less motivated to find a job, learn languages or participate in social networking. This could be proved also by indirect information from the interviews in other countries – women who reported earlier migration experiences rarely attribute positive effects to that experience.

b) Relational competences

Relational competences, understood mainly as communication skills and team work, were mentioned in the reports from all six countries. Even more – there was evidence of a majority of interviewees pointing at the increased relational competences. In Italy, those competences were analysed as social competences, while in Austria or Finland as competences gained from work.

In any case, relational competences are very much influenced by the migration process, as migrants are forced to meet new people (officials, work colleagues, new social networks, etc.) and develop communication skills. Getting familiar with a new culture in various spheres of social life, meeting people with different cultural background and developing tolerance to things done differently in a new environment are all the circumstances influencing the development of relational competences.

c) Facing competences

The interviews conducted in Spain show several facing competences developed: autonomy, initiative and decision making, adaptability, the competence of stress and emotions management, problem solving, mediation, and negotiation competences. Almost every woman interviewed had provided evidence of gaining facing competences after arriving to Spain.

The same might be said about the migrant women in other countries. The exception again is Lithuania, where the majority of women did not speak of facing competences. And this again could be particularly attributed to separation from society and restrictions on working possibilities.

In other countries, where women had the possibility to fully participate in social life, the facing competences were mentioned also frequently. In Finland women described receiving personal resources, such as skills, capabilities, attitudes, cooperation, autonomy, problem solving, negotiation skills, decision-making skills, planning and organising work. In Italy the ability to negotiate and resolve disagreements or the ability to foster and nourish useful relationships, among other competences, were mentioned.

In Austria some interviews revealed such learning outcomes as the finding that there is a necessity to conform to the environment and learn a diplomatic way of communication. The acquaintance to the different organisational cultures was also mentioned. In Romania women mentioned the importance of being responsible, punctual and patient or the ability to be more sociable.

Overall, it was especially facing competences that women most often showed having developed through the process of migration.

In the case of Spain there were other than the above mentioned competences revealed – perseverance in pursuing objectives, resilience, responsibility and creativity. Reports suggest that a deeper look into interviews conducted in other countries might reveal more evidence of these competences.

Almost all the competences described above are important not only for migrant women, but also for the citizens of host countries. Probably the perception of competences differs as also differ values attributed to them. In this regard I would like to cite the paragraph from the

Italian report: “one feature that distinguishes migrant women from Italian women is the different experiences they lived and the meaning they give to these experiences: Italian women feel victim of a social landslide process which makes them perceive their jobs – that were traditionally carried out by women with lower levels of education or qualifications – as a weakening of their self-image and social identity. On the contrary, migrant women emphasise the economic aspect of their jobs and set it in a *bottom up* strategy to maximise the potential for growth for themselves, their families and their children”.

2.11. Competences to increase employability

Throughout interviews in every country several issues are mentioned with relation to the competences that are valuable for the improvement of migrant women’s employability and social inclusion. The first mentioned competence is good command of the host country’s language. Without the knowledge of the host country language there are extremely reduced possibilities to find a job, to become a member of local social networks, to validate competence certificates, to proceed with any documentation needed or to get familiarised with cultural differences. Specifically in Finland women emphasise the importance of language skills, which does not reduce the necessity to know the language in the other countries.

The second challenge that migrant women face is that any completed education (diploma) is important to find work. Therefore the problems with certificate validation become among the most important ones for the migrant women. The validation difficulties lead to an average underemployed migrant woman, that is, they are employed in jobs that require less skills or training than the ones acquired in their country of origin or during their migration process.

The third challenge is that technical competences acquired in the host country require adaptation to the specific needs and customs in the country of origin. This implies transferring the acquired knowledge and skills, and developing them in the context of the host country.

Last but not least, a competence which women mentioned as very important in many countries is acquaintance with the cultural specificities of the host countries.

Those are some of the main competence-related obstacles preventing migrant women to integrate into host societies, and therefore support policies directed to those problems would

be most effective. From what was found out with the research, it is possible to conclude that language courses with issuing of appropriate certificates would hit the bull's eye.

3. FOCUS GROUPS WITH PROFESSIONALS

The second part of research activities was focus groups with professionals who are involved into labour counselling or training of migrant women. Focus groups were conducted in all six countries, with the participation of a total of 62 professionals, and the results of the discussions complemented the information directly obtained from interviews with migrant women. The information provided in the following chapter is not statistically accurate when addressed in the context of each country – professionals who participated in group discussions shared personal beliefs and experience, but not the official data. However, the tendencies are generally clear, may be compared and serve as a basis for analysis. Moreover, the insight of professionals is especially valuable because the official data on migration sometimes do not give a complete picture of the phenomenon.

3.1. Profile and situation of migrant women according to professionals' views

Country	Main directions of migration	Reasons
Austria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sub-Saharan and North East Africa; 2. Former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria 3. Pakistan, Chechnya 	Marriage, moving of family members to Austria; better job opportunities or a higher payment; civil war; economic crisis in Europe.
Finland	60 countries throughout the world – including former Soviet Union countries	political/legal refugees; better job opportunities; studies; love (marriage) migrants.
Italy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eastern Europe; 2. South America 	Work opportunities; personal growth; economic reasons.

Lithuania	former Soviet Union countries – including Belarus, Ukraine, Russia	Studies; better job opportunities; legal issues.
Romania	1. Moldova; 2. China; 3. Turkey	studies; obtaining citizenship; opening business.
Spain	1. South and Central America; 2. Africa; 3. Europe; 4. Asia.	Better job opportunities; improving economic situation;

As the table above clearly shows, the reasons for migration are almost the same throughout all Europe. Better job opportunities and the desire to improve the personal or family economic situation move women from around the world.

Sometimes, as in cases of Lithuania and Romania, countries are not only the host countries for migrants, but also places of origin sending migrants to Finland, Austria or Spain.

Geographical distances and cultural relations seem to somehow condition migration projects.

Settlement and integration process

The professionals in all the countries pointed out quite similar difficulties which migrant women face when settling in host countries. In all the focus groups the lack of knowledge of the language of host country was underlined. The lack of language knowledge is a systematic problem. It influences other important aspects of the integration process – understanding of laws, acquaintance with rights, employability, social inclusion, and avoiding discrimination.

Professionals in focus groups conducted in Italy noticed that there are mainly two categories of women migrants – those who migrate alone, having goals of improving the economic situation (in the case of Italy – mainly women from South America and Europe), and those who come to reunite with their husbands (in the case of Italy – Arab or Maghreb countries). If women play an active role in the migration process, they usually overcome settlement problems quicker and easier. If women play a more passive role in the migration process, the language barrier is

a huge obstacle to them, along with the fact that the context receiving them tends to render them invisible.

In a similar sense, the professionals in Finland pointed out that there exists a structural inequality in marriages between two cultures, which is emphasised if the woman is a foreigner. The spouse who is without language proficiency may become isolated at home. Then the contacts with outside society are taken place through the husband and on his terms.

The professionals in all the countries mentioned another three problems that migrant women are facing upon arrival to host countries. Those problems are validation of certificates, non familiarity with laws and procedures regulating the status of migrants, and xenophobia in host countries.

But this is only one side of the complex situation of migration and integration. The other side is often related to migration policies and support programmes for migrant women in host countries. In some cases (for example, in Lithuania) there is even no migration policy that would be relevant to the present situation. In Romania professionals claim a lack of inefficiency in coordinating work of the responsible institutions. In Spain professionals mentioned the fact that integration is solely linked to employment and thus the social inclusion of migrants is neither guaranteed nor facilitated by legislation and policies. But the general understanding of the systematic discrepancy between the aims of policies and their applicability is noted by professionals in Austria. First, there is a need for an alternative perspective on migrant women, who are often perceived as a "load" lacking any competences and qualifications. Second, there is a necessity to adapt a differentiated discourse instead of generalizations: migrant women are individuals, and each migration process and experience is different.

Certainly, there is no possibility to address each individual case by adapting laws, but at least support policies and programs might become individually-oriented, emphasising not only integration into the labour market, but also into social networks.

3.2. Competences of migrant women

The professionals distinguish two main spheres where migrant women acquire competences – formal and non-formal learning contexts. Formal learning is usually acquired in the countries of

origin and migrants face difficulties in applying those competences in the host country. This is related to difficult, time consuming and expensive procedures for the validation of certificates. As a result, migrant women choose to “employ” their non-formally acquired competences and enter the labour market as caregivers, housekeepers, baby sitters, or home care workers. Others, as the experience in Austria shows, sometimes are afraid being employed under their qualification and thereby lose their status.

In any case, there is a problem of host societies and migration policies, which do not regard migrant women with relation to their life and experience prior to their arrival. As the Spanish report indicates, it seems that host countries are permanently neither considering nor valuing previous life experience, education and labour backgrounds of the migrant women.

It is obvious that the migratory process is a challenging and complex experience that leads to developing new competences. The question is - which competences do women develop and are these competences as key as formal learning to entering the labour market or integrating into society?

Let us look at the opinions of professionals in different countries:

In Italy professionals talked about the courage and initiative of migrant women, which led to developing competences such as adaptability, learning to learn, handling emotionally difficult situations, or IT competences.

In Austria professionals distinguished the multilingual abilities of migrant women, their ability to handle money, decision making and reflection, courage, organisational and management skills, ability to assert oneself, adaptability, patience, flexibility, resilience and autonomy.

In Lithuania non-formal competences acquired at home and ability to socialise were emphasised.

In Spain professionals underlined the importance of transversal competences such as organisation, initiative, problems’ solving and management of emotions and stress, adaptability, learning to learn and interpretation of the situations and the context.

Though professionals in Finland claimed that informal competences are hard to recognise, they admitted migrant women have lots of competences acquired in everyday life: house holding tasks, childcare, situations where ability to solve problems in a new home country is needed.

In Romania professionals agreed that migrant women develop capacities to adapt to different cultural environments, handle difficult situations, abilities to engage in responsible tasks, they are courageous and learn how to take decisions for themselves and their families.

This short overview proves that professionals involved in the work with migrant women recognise the importance of non-formally acquired competences and indicate almost the same competences mentioned by women as those developed during the migration process. Those competences could and should be addressed in developing support programmes. However, the reality in all the countries where research was conducted shows that competences have to be recognised formally.

First of all, this means validation of certificates, proficiency in the host country language and the recognition of informally acquired competences.

3.3. Employability. Conclusion

The dual name for this final chapter is chosen on purpose. Interviews with migrant women in the six countries showed that the migration process allows for the development of competences acquired within informal and non formal contexts. The professionals involved into support programmes confirmed that migrant women have many competences that are very valuable in the labour market.

In this sense, they agreed that competences currently associated to employability are adaptability, flexibility, entrepreneurship, initiative and organisational capacity. And many migrant women have got them. However, they also recognised the fact that instrumental knowledge or technical competences are crucial for competitiveness in the labour market. And in this last competition migrant women for now are likely to lose.

The research explicitly demonstrated that there is a need to reconsider integration concept. First and foremost it is important to increase employment possibilities for migrant women. However, the several factors influencing migrant women's employability should be taken into account, considering the need to also use individual approaches. In parallel, applying competence-based methodologies and involving migrant women themselves to assess their own competences in all spheres of life may be a very powerful and useful tool.

Assistance in language training could be offered, but it is also important to increase migrant women competences of change management, coping with critical life events, building new networks, managing bicultural identities or gathering new information. Empowerment is a core element, which should be used to increase self-confidence of migrant women.

Finally, the validation of originally acquired certificates should probably not be so complex and off-putting, as well as there should be efforts put to fight xenophobia.

4. GLOBAL SWOT

Remarks:

- The following SWOT analysis gathers information about the situations of migrant women in Austria, Spain, Finland, Italy, Romania and Lithuania, as identified by the Forward partners in their research, and regarding the employability and social inclusion of migrant women.
- Partners have made an effort to find common situations between the different countries. However, it should not be understood that all the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities listed below are present in all partner countries or among all migrant women. Factors listed in the SWOT analysis may be best used as a guide of elements that should be taken into account to analyse the particular situation of each migrant woman.
- Generalisations about the situation of migrant women in the table below should only be understood as general trends all over the existing differences. For example, it should not be understood that all migrant women arrive in a host country that is more liberal and democratic and less patriarchal than the country of origin, which is not necessarily always the case.

STRENGTHS OF MIGRANT WOMEN	WEAKNESSES OF MIGRANT WOMEN
<p>Migrant women's formal and non-formal education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory education completed. • High percentage of migrant women with very high educational background. <p>Migrant women's competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living as a migrant woman is an ongoing learning process. • Knowledge of own competence capital (especially personal and social competences). • Wider outlook on life than before the migration. • Finding sources of information and using public and private resources. • Competences in change management, networking and negotiation. • Effective, short and regulated procedure for the validation of competences for specific jobs, which leads to qualifications. • Planning and organizing work. • Establishing personal contacts because they need resources, information or cultural ties. • Planning and preparing the needs associated to the migration process (saving, numeracy, contacts). • Motor and manual skills because in home countries they carry out family tasks and occupations where they need to be good with their hands (cooking, sewing). • Competence in "handling with money". • They define the need to use technology as an essential way to obtain information, communicate and develop possible occupations. • Ready to learn and participate actively in improving languages to be able to establish social and work relationships and communicate with children at 	<p>Migrant women's formal and non-formal education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal education in the country of origin. • Disproportional high number of migrant women with very low (as well as very high) educational background. <p>Migrant women's competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and skills about job search techniques and/or ways to get a job which are different to those in the home country. It requires information and practice. • Lack of knowledge of the labour market, regulation, distribution of subsectors, role of social partners and different names of professional profiles. • Definition of potential occupations which require many personal and social competences but not much technical competences (labour-intensive business), which they choose because they lack the requirements for other jobs and they are not aware of the tasks associated to other occupations. • Lack of knowledge of host country language, which in many cases does not allow them to communicate in their new context. • Migration process experienced as a road full of difficulties and obstacles, as a problem. • Willing to learn only things which give an immediate response to their needs. • Willingness to adapt may lead to acceptance and coping of situations of discrimination. • Work as a way to obtain income and sustain personal and family needs, as another resource. • Use of technology for transnational family communication in the host country. • Acting because of obedience or respect to the family, without considering if it is their option.

<p>school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to establish goals. The obstacles they overcome gave them strength to face others. • Good knowledge about different cultures. • Motivation and will to do things as the elements which allow them to attain their goals. They accept certain activities and/or situations due to structural needs or few options available (limitations in documents, money, etc.) which sometimes makes them confront problems. • Ability to identify when they are needed as daughters, mothers and wives, and responding to this need. • Willing to learn from the new context they are in. Adaptation to any situations that may arise in order to obtain documents and residence and work permit. • Detecting opportunities and threats in potential migration destinations to determine the viability of the process. • In situations of stress they are conciliatory and control their emotions. • Tendency to look forward. • Willing to do volunteering. • They are aware that their situation may be worse and they value positively how they are, in spite of the difficulties. • Redefining self-worth and developing some sort of independence from their environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency to avoid looking at the process carried out and giving value to what has been learnt. • Decision to migrate linked to giving family support, improving family and/or linked to men's/family will. • Disappointment in goals that were not achieved. • Not knowing where to find needed information.
---	---

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HOST COUNTRY	THREATS IN THE HOST COUNTRY
<p>Host country policies and society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free national support in national language of host country (only few training hours). • Formal recognition of inequalities between men and women and existing political measures to define them and limit them, including measures combating violence against women. • Possibility to reunify the family to arrive in the host country with a residence permit. • Gender equality in host country – women’s equal opportunity to study or work. • Access to structural economic resources to sustain situations of lack of income. • A much more individualistic social model of family and more coresponsibility in the host country than in the home country. Opportunities for women to argue for distribution of homework because in the host country things are different. • Gaining rights as opportunities they did not have before in education and health. • Ability to participate in community projects. • Access to housing through peer support or parallel network of people with few resources, generating strategies of families sharing a dwelling. • Systems of free training in the host country, which allow access to vocational training on certain occupations. • Possibility to learn other systems of communication through technology and thus improving skills. 	<p>Host country policies and society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a few hours available in training in national language training. • Recognition of gender inequality is not fully integrated in society. • Current EU strategies like partial access (for regulated professions) and the development of a European professional card (forthcoming). • Basic social and financial security is sometimes lacking for migrants without a permit to stay and/or work. • Labour market integration is obstructed by discrimination, racism, xenophobia and islamophobia, especially in case of (head)scarf. • Different legal framework for the settlement of migrants according to origin, which limits the access to rights. • Network in the host country defining opportunities and success in migration in homogenous terms (when they are different for each person) and migrants feel that their countrymen/women deceive them. There are many differences between what they have been told and what they experience. • Separation of the care roles if the children stay in the home country. Feeling of guiltiness for not carrying out care tasks. • Difficulties to have access to housing regularly. They don’t have the minimum requirements to be able to rent housing (documents and payslips). • The peer community and the market define occupations according to their condition of migrants. Segmentation of occupation in low qualification sectors and clear impact of the sexual division of work based in the reproduction of roles. • Found information can be too difficult to understand. • Negative attitude towards migrants from native people. • A recognition framework of education and work experience which is not developed for all countries, unclear, time-consuming and expensive. It is not an option because it does not lead to the recognition of a qualification equivalent to the home country title allowing to carry out the job.

