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SMART
VOLUNTEERING

**FOR
FEMALE
MIGRANTS**

VOLUNTEERING:

**Perceptions, Experience and Barriers
among
Migrant Women, NGOs and Private Sector
in Six European Countries**

Project Partners



Volunteering: Perceptions, Experience and Barriers among Migrant Women, NGOs and Private Sector

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INTRODUCTION

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, 41% of women born in countries outside of EU were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2014 (EIGE Report, 2016). In 2015, migrant women's population in the 'active labour force' was recorded to be at least 16 % lower than the employment rate of women with EU nationality.

Many third country nationals (TCN) in Europe are overqualified or over-skilled for their jobs and women tend to have particularly low employment rates. Even though they are more educated than migrant men, they experience de-skilling than other women and migrant men (EIGE Report, 2016). Their skills and qualifications are not completely utilised. Related to these, a special focus on migrant women's labour integration has been found as indispensable in the EU Action Plan for Third-Country Nationals adopted in 2016.

Interest in migrant volunteering has been rising in the European countries even though it has not yet received full recognition. Promoting immigrant volunteering has been on the agenda of many EU states since they have realised the potential and advantages it might bring. The need to provide immigrants with voluntary work opportunities has also been referred in the Common Agenda for Integration adopted in 2005. However, 'Immigrant volunteering' has been mentioned mostly in relation to 'increasing civic participation,

active citizenship, intercultural dialogue and cultural awareness' (Handbook of Integration for Policy makers and Practitioners, 2010).

Apart from social added value of volunteering, there is an important element that remains to be explored today - skills and competences volunteers can gain through volunteering. It is an important step towards sustainable employment.

Volunteering as an integration method has been highly beneficial to any participant and the receiving society. However, there is a lack of knowledge and data about migrant volunteering in European countries.

As a multi-agency cooperation project, SMART Volunteering aims to fill this gap by exploring understanding of volunteering among migrant women and the crucial roles of civil society organizations and business actors in creating the conditions conducive to social integration.

The research works on broadening traditional concept of volunteering by highlighting its more strategic aspects .

This summary report, collated by the European Network of Migrant Women, is based on the national reports in Belgium, Cyprus, France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom, written by SMART Volunteering partner organisations.

METHODOLOGY

TARGET GROUP I: Migrant / Third Country National (TCN) Women



Method

Desk Research
Focus Groups
Individual Interviews
Questions-Activities

Participants

Variability in ethnic background
(Highly) skilled migrant women.
Total of 55 women

Analysis

Emerging themes in discussion
Group consensus & dissenting views
Degree of conviction in responses
Key Similarities & Differences



Key Questions

- Main challenges TCN women face in getting access to employment in partner countries
- How volunteering responds to TCN women's socio-economic integration need
- Main perceptions and understanding of volunteering amongst TCN women



In conducting interviews and focus groups partners aimed at adopting a **FEMINIST METHODOLOGY** which encourages a more reflexive and reciprocal approach seeking to neutralise the hierarchical power relations inherent to traditional interview structures.

TARGET GROUP II: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) / NGOs



Method

Desk Research
Semi-Structured
Interviews

Participants

Representatives of CSOs/NGOs
Experienced with volunteers
Total of 31 organisations

Analysis

Legal VS Cultural barriers
Most common needs & problems
Gaps between perceptions & needs



Key Questions

- Existing volunteering programs & opportunities available to TCN women
- Perceptions and understanding about volunteering
- Barriers to volunteering
- Transferable skills TCN women can gain through voluntary work
- Legal and administrative framework for working as a volunteer in partner countries

TARGET GROUP III: Business Organisations



Method

Desk Research
Online Surveys
Interviews

Participants

Small scale companies
Medium scale companies
Total of 90 companies

Analysis

Legal VS Cultural barriers
Most common needs & problems
Gaps between perceptions & needs



Key Questions

- Perceptions about and barriers to volunteering for migrants & refugees
- Internal Equality policies & protocols on ethnic/racial & women's representation
- Legal and administrative framework for working as a volunteer in partner countries
- Training needs for working with volunteers & ethnic groups
- Barriers faced in working with ethnic minority groups / migrants
- Available mentoring & training schemes within business entities

MIGRANT WOMEN: VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES & NEEDS

BELGIUM

Studies show that as many as a third of migrant women in the labour forces of Belgium are either unemployed or involuntarily part-time employed. In 2008 migrant women constituted only six percent of Belgium's female labour force (Rubin et. al., 2008). Compared to other old migrant receiving countries, Belgium has the smallest proportion of its TCN women in the labour force (44.0% of all those aged from 15 to 64).

The results of the interviews and focus groups show that objectives of the women have been shaped and reshaped depending on the years of their residency in Belgium. Although their common ambition was to have a suitable job in Europe, most had to take different paths leaving their studies unfinished, giving up their dream jobs, changing sector and taking 'blue collar jobs' with short-term contracts. In some cases, women lack professional usage of local language, creative skills, social support and contacts. In other cases, gaining skills do not always help women to access desired jobs. In general, results show that they need networking skills, new contacts, certification of already existing skills, communication and inter-personal skills. In addition to these, there is a great need for social support and guidance to develop these skills and to understand where to start.

Discrimination, gendered caring responsibilities, limited social support, legal status problems and insufficient language level are the main causes of the weak position of migrant women in labour market (European Commission, 2014). Despite some improvement, the recognition of foreign degrees in Belgium remains burdensome, which demotivates many immigrants (De Keyser et al., 2012). Additionally, the lack of required skills and social support, discrimination and social exclusion, dependency, different working culture, family obligations, lack of information and guidance, lack of empathy and relevant knowledge are the most frequently mentioned barriers for women. Moreover, there is a time pressure for women over 30 y.o. to gain skills and use them in labour market due to 'popularity of young people in business world'. There is a lack of information about national system and public employment services. Although they are highly qualified, TCN women are directed to jobs and trainings mostly in care sector, secretary, and back office, unsuitable to their qualifications.

Overall, volunteering is perceived in a positive way by migrant women. It means social life, empowerment, being active, feeling integrated, recognition and learning. It is also a good opportunity to have 'in-job training'. Volunteering can help women to meet new people, have self-confidence to understand their skills and what they can do especially in local language. Women are motivated to do volunteering to develop themselves and find a proper job in the next stage. However, it is believed that volunteering helps people socially integrate but it mostly helps only young people to integrate economically, because their experiences suggest that volunteering does not lead to working opportunity if participants are not young enough to improve their skills and use them in labour market.

CYPRUS

Existing studies show that majority of highly skilled immigrant women in Cyprus either have low skilled jobs or are unemployed (Harakis et. al., 2005; Trimikliniotis & Fulas-Suroulla, 2009). Interview and focus group participants also support this findings because they are either unemployed or have temporary jobs in Cyprus. These women initially came to Cyprus for family reunification, studying, employment and better working and living conditions as well as fleeing violence and/or discrimination in their home countries. The objective of migrant women is to find a permanent job, but they need more instrumental support to realise their objectives. Although they are interested in attending trainings and educational programmes to improve their skills and gain working experiences, they have limited access to information about learning opportunities.

On the other hand, most women experience multiple challenges in private and working life due to strict visa and residence permit requirements along with nonrecognition of existing degrees. Results show that these barriers are brighter for asylum seeking and refugee women. Moreover, family obligations create challenges for women with young children. To sum up, getting access to labour market is not always about skills, degrees and working experiences. These women have serious drawbacks in their professional life even though they are highly qualified.

The participants in the interviews and focus groups were not aware of volunteering programmes that are available for them in Cyprus. None of the women interviewed had volunteering in their home countries. In addition, their motivation for voluntary work was negatively impacted by what can be described as 'basic survival' - their struggles to make a living, lack of time and family obligations.

FRANCE

Studies show that there is a considerable level of deskilling of TCN women in France (Noblecourt, 2014). Highly skilled migrant women have been mostly directed to low skilled jobs, especially in the care sector. Research also shows that recognition of existing qualifications is challenging for migrant women, they have very limited access to public sector jobs, and they are expected to have diplomas issued in France for certain occupations. For example, it has been estimated that 5.3 million jobs 4.5 million of which are found exclusively in the public sector are inaccessible for immigrants.

Interview and focus group results indicate that third country national women settled down in France to work, learn another language, complete their studies in French universities and to make family reunification. Their primary intention is to get necessary education and training to enter into the labour market with a proper job. Much needed transferable skills are good command in national language, networks and contacts and degrees or certificates obtained in France. They face barriers in obtaining necessary paperwork to reside and work in France.

The administration system is found to be very complicated, especially for newcomers. Besides that, family obligations and multiple tasks of mothers limit their labour market mobility. Moreover, intersecting conditions of vulnerability of being a woman and being an immigrant make their labour and integration choices particularly difficult.

Despite this, overall, migrant women in France perceive involvement in voluntary activities favourably. There is a general interest in helping others through volunteering which is also perceived as having potential to ease integration process. Particularly, unemployed women find it as an opportunity to be socially active and meet new contacts. However, there is a consensus about the need for motivation and positive feedback to continue volunteering.

ITALY

To date, over two million regular female migrants are living and working in Italy. But despite their important presence (52% of the total migrants) they are increasingly exposed to unqualified occupations, daily problems of integration and reconciliation with their lifestyles. TCN women participating interviews and focus group came to Italy to flee from civil war in their countries, find better working opportunities, make family reunification and complete their studies. They mostly have temporary jobs that are not suitable to their qualifications. Training and internship opportunities can be complementary tools to develop their skills and ease labour market integration. They report the importance of having a local social network along with communication and interpersonal skills. However, lacking skills is not the only problem. Although they acquire necessary skills, their already existing degrees are not recognised, and this makes them tend towards getting more modest jobs. Findings gathered from this research highlight the importance of identifying and certifying both soft and hard skills of each women by making them aware of their potentials.

On the other hand, most women's lives are defined with their husband's migratory project and this recreates traditional gender roles in country of origins. They have problems in balancing work and family responsibilities. It seems that migrant women also face challenges in communication with public authorities. Public employment services do not respond to their needs and therefore women find them useless. Moreover, authorities have lack of training on specific procedures of migrant women.

Local authorities in Italy are encouraged to carry out voluntary works designed for asylum seekers who are waiting for international protection. Therefore, the prefectures sign agreements with local authorities, other public bodies or third sector organizations to involve migrants in voluntary activities. Although volunteering is not common in country of origins, there is a positive perception of volunteering among informants. Volunteering can help TCN women to meet new people and create their own local network, give them a perspective to look for a job, improve and practice their local language, recognise their skills and interests. However, the priority is always finding a stable job to spare time in engaging voluntary activities.

SPAIN

According to Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), Spain hosts 2,25 million female migrants (50.5% of all immigrants and 4.84% of the total population). In the last quarter of 2017, 25.59% of these migrant women were identified to be unemployed, according to the Labour Force Survey (EPA) carried out by INE. Similar to other countries, women's settlement to Spain was driven by having better social, economic and political situations compared to their country of origins.

Although their objectives have changed over the years, their intention is always finding a stable job. Long years of working experience in home countries does not help women to get a proper job directly due to challenging administrative requirements and lack of training in Spain. Therefore, they turn to short-term and unstable jobs mostly in care sector. For migrant women, accessing to the labour market entails a wide range of difficulties. They face migration related barriers such as limited access to decent housing, difficulty in learning the local language, and limited information about administrative and healthcare system.

Respondents highlight the necessity of social and interpersonal skills in communicating with companies to get jobs. They do not have language problems because of they originate from Spanish speaking countries and their education was in Spanish. Moreover, they have necessary academic degrees and complementary trainings and certificates from Spain. Thus, the problem lies not so much in the lack of formative and academic skills, but more in the lack of recognition and appreciation of existing skills. Besides these, public immigration departments do not provide social support and guidance for TCN women. They cannot get benefits from public employment services; therefore, they prefer not to use them. Furthermore, they do not get access to information about educational programs available for them.

Perceptions about volunteering are mostly positive among informants. The concept of volunteering is related to altruism, empathy and assistance. Women consider that volunteering can be very positive in terms of social and labour market integration. It might also be helpful in creating a professional network, developing professional skills, broadening their perspectives and creating social awareness. However, volunteering activities can take so much time that could be devoted to active job searching. Most of them do not have volunteering experience and it is not very common in their countries of origin.

UNITED KINGDOM

According to the report published by the Migration Observatory in 2017, migrant women who are employed in the UK are more often employed in low-skilled sectors such as processing or elementary occupations, compared to UK-born women. The only high-skilled group where migrant women are more represented are professional occupations, for which 29% accounts for nurses or midwives. There is a higher percentage of migrant women who have a higher degree, but at the same time the percentage of migrant women active in low-skilled sectors is also higher compared to UK-born women. This finding suggests that there is a real gap in the utilisation of skills of TCN women.

The reasons of TCN women for coming to the UK were mostly family reunion or working opportunities. However, the results show that they are disillusioned and frustrated since it was very hard to reach their objectives in the labour market and find a job matching their skills. Specifically, for refugees, one of the main obstacles is the 5-year term status which gives them no certainty about their long-term stay in the UK and makes it very demotivating to try and integrate (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014).

Another main challenge relates to language, especially since there have been cut backs in free English language classes since 2005 in UK, which makes it harder for migrants to get their English level to an advanced one required for many high-skilled sectors.

Similar to these results, findings of interviews and focus group discussions report that one of the most common skill gap is language, especially for employment in the teaching and healthcare sectors. Missing the right certification is frustrating, as they will lose their jobseekers allowance when they take up language courses and would have to pay taxes for this. At the same time, employers will often not employ them without a certification of their language level, even if their English is sufficient. Other skills that could be improved to be more successful in the labour market are self-efficacy and resilience. Moreover, it is hard for many TCN women to get access to relevant and intensive courses to develop their business skills necessary to build up their confidence and prepare them to open a business. Likewise, access to educational programs to further develop their skills is very limited.

TCN women have had difficulties in finding out where to receive the proper information on legal advice, employment opportunities or educational programs. A central information centre where all necessary information can be found easily is lacking. In addition, the feeling of hopelessness has a big influence on their self-esteem and confidence and increases the feeling of loneliness and isolation.

Participants who can be employed are more reluctant to apply for volunteering positions. Some want to do this to improve their CV or to help other people and be engaged in it as well. Many volunteering positions do not offer enough opportunities and make them feel too demotivated to continue for an extended period. For asylum seekers who are not allowed to be employed, volunteering is a great opportunity to engage in the local community and keep them busy. Most volunteering experience among participants was gained from taking care of older people, being a receptionist or cleaning

CONCLUSIONS

Migrant women are motivated to integrate into social and economic life if/when they are provided with necessary support and tools. Even though their reasons for moving to Europe vary, they all aspire to study, be trained and get proper jobs suitable to their qualifications.

Training, volunteering, internship, and educational programs can be among the best methods to develop migrant women's skills. However, there should be a combination of training and opportunities to use these skills in the labour market.

Most migrant women believe that volunteering can play an important role in their self-development, access to labour market, engaging in community and coping with uncertainty. This should be recognised by different actors, and volunteering should be easily accessible to all women from different backgrounds.

Helping other people and feeling useful is the biggest reason for TCN women to volunteer, but many volunteering positions do not offer enough opportunities, which demotivates them to do volunteering in long term.

Migrant Women's Skills

Academic Degrees
Working Experience
Vocational Training
Certificates
Different Languages

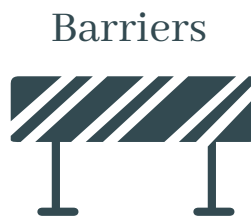


Migrant Women's Needs

Networking & Contacts
Communication & Interpersonal Skills
Social & Legal Support & Guidance
Certification of existing skills
Professional Language Skills

In the post-migration period the 'dream' objectives of migrant women turn into 'available' objectives due to barriers.

Lack of knowledge on available volunteering opportunities
Difficulties in balance between volunteering & job seeking time
Lack of Required Skills
Lack of inter-agency cooperation



Discrimination & Social Exclusion
Family Obligation & Lack of Child Care
Legal & Economic Dependency
Non recognition of existing skills
Lack of Professional Language Skills
Lack of awareness among authorities

Most women, especially newcomers, are left without guidance and cannot easily access information on national system, training and employment opportunities. More coordination between authorities and support are required to help women achieve their goals.

Benefits of Volunteering for Migrant Women

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL:** Empowerment, Confidence, Feeling valued & recognised, Feeling connected to community
- **SOCIAL:** Eased & improved integration, New friends & contacts, Being socially active
- **ECONOMIC:** Increased & acquired skills, Job-related networks, Legal & economic knowledge, Confidence in job seeking

Key Challenges Faced by Migrant Women in Volunteering

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL:** Keeping up the motivation to continue volunteering in long term
- **SOCIAL:** Lack of time, Burden of Family, Unstructured & inefficient state support
- **ECONOMIC:** Pressure to find paid jobs, Focus on youth volunteering & lack of opportunities for women above 30 to move from volunteering to employment

Migrant Women Volunteering: Perceptions & Opportunities among Civil Society Organisations

BELGIUM

Belgian law defines volunteer as someone who voluntarily give a piece of their time to private or public organisations that do not pursue a profit and they do this unpaid. Therefore, internship and community services are not considered voluntary work according to law and for profit companies cannot be organisers of voluntary work. Everyone can volunteer after 16 and being a Belgian national is not a requirement. People with a valid residence permit and asylum seekers with residence documents can volunteer without any problem. If asylum seekers are in reception centres, they must report their volunteer work to Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers.

Interviews with civil society organisations and voluntary centres suggest that volunteering, in general, is seen as beneficial both for participants and organisations. In addition to skill development, there are also unmeasurable benefits such as motivation and enthusiasm volunteers bring to organisations. However, some organisations prefer internship over volunteering. They only accept volunteers for specific periods and tasks without a formal agreement. They do not want people to spend their time without getting paid, therefore, volunteering is not prioritised. Other organisations have a more positive attitude towards volunteering. Their idea is to stimulate volunteers to think about competences they can gain and skills they can develop through volunteering. Based on experiences of organisations, certain groups including lower educated people, migrants and refugee women are less represented in volunteering. Moreover, organisations are still not that diverse. Findings show that organisations identify the profile of volunteers and interns considering their own target groups. For instance, a woman organisation prefers to work with young feminist women, and the other migrant women organisation prefers recruiting migrant women volunteers or interns.

Main advantages volunteers and interns can gain include: learning to work with autonomy, having responsibilities, project management, organising the tasks, writing skills, writing formal e-mails, gaining a broad network, digital skills, doing desk research and communication skills. Apart from these technical skills, it is likely that soft skills like team working, interpersonal skills, self-esteem and self-confidence gained through working together and cooperation are also important. The voluntary centre wants to make sure that people coming from more vulnerable backgrounds can also be more attracted to volunteering, to see their competences and how they can develop their skills. They believe that volunteering mostly helps people to develop soft skills.

Although there is a willingness to engage with refugees and asylum seekers, most organisations do not know where to find refugees. If there is a good communication between the local municipalities and reception centres, it is believed that it might work well. However, it takes time and courage for the organisations to go to asylum centres directly. Moreover, some organisations do not have enough information about volunteering. Volunteering, for them, is working for free and this is unfair for these organisations. They do not have relevant knowledge about rights of volunteers, responsibilities of organisations. Getting correct information about volunteering is emphasised by these organisations.

CYPRUS

Law in Cyprus allows any individual to be engaged in volunteering activities regardless of employment status, ethnicity, occupation and age. However, it is not allowed to do volunteering for profit gaining entities. Volunteer is defined as a person who offers, without financial reward, services to individuals, groups or to the society at large, to address social needs. Although advantages of volunteering as a means of socio-cultural and economic integration for immigrants have been adverted, volunteering is still highly underestimated in Cyprus.

Interviews with organisations show that voluntary work TCN women provide include translation services, giving courses to children, giving social support to other migrant women in helping their integration and finding right information, participating events, and helping organisations to reach their target audience for their programmes. In general, organisations define voluntary activities depending on women's capabilities and interests. However, volunteering is not always formalised with a contract and practised in an organised way. Due to increasing lack of interest in volunteering, organisations intend to make voluntary work more visible by publishing their vacancies on their social media accounts or creating specific groups for volunteering opportunities. Duration of volunteering depends on the needs of organisations. Specific criteria about the profile of volunteers are not introduced by organisations. Findings indicate that providing trainings to volunteers is not common. Volunteers are mostly assigned with tasks that are compatible to their existing skills. This weakens the skill development aspect of volunteering. However, there is an intention to improve volunteering experiences with specific trainings.

Apart from social advantages of volunteering, participants can learn networking, multi-tasking, flexibility, and adaptation to a new working culture. Organisations also highlight the importance of volunteering in facilitating labour market accession. They help volunteers through their professional networks in Cyprus or they give long-term working opportunities to volunteers in their own organisations. Despite all, TCN women have challenges in combining volunteering with their family obligations and financial problems that make them seek paid work rather than volunteering. Moreover, lack of training for volunteers minimises the benefits both for participants and organisations.

FRANCE

Volunteering is described with the terms 'bénévolat' and 'volontariat' in France. Bénévolat refers to the free engagement of the individual citizen for non-remunerated purposes, while volontariat is closer to the notion of voluntary service and has a more formal nature. In France there is no legal status for bénévoles. There is no general legal framework, but only some provisions granting rights to volunteers in view of their activities or main status. Volontariat is regulated in several specific legal provisions. Each law provides for the conditions of this specific type of volunteering, the associations or organisations concerned, which individuals can be volunteers and the conditions of their duties. Asylum seekers with legal documents can also do voluntary work.

Organisations interviewed emphasize the importance of migrant volunteering in fighting against xenophobia, racism and stereotypes about immigrant communities. Although there is not a specific criterion, some organisations prefer volunteers with adequate language skills, which might decrease the representation of migrants in volunteering. Recruitment of volunteers are done through social media advertisements and mostly by word of mouth. Activities are mostly short-term and include helping other asylum seekers in administrative matters, mentoring asylum seekers, giving French courses and hosting asylum seekers.

Volunteers, especially TCN women, can gain mainly soft skills through their activities. They learn local community culture and practise their language. They create their professional and social network and improve their communication skills. Most importantly, they develop self-esteem and recognise their capabilities. On other hand, organisations face some challenges when hiring TCN women as volunteers. The lack of adequate language skills is the biggest issue. Moreover, financial problems and urgent need to find a paid job affect their concentration on volunteering.

ITALY

Although very specific characteristics of volunteering are defined in the national legislative framework on volunteering, no legal status is conferred to the person carrying out this activity in Italy. Anyone wishing to carry out voluntary activities can do so without any consequences on his/her benefits. There is not a specific provision about voluntary activities of refugees and asylum seekers.

Volunteering is associated with unconditional time, willingness and gratuitousness, sharing ideals and being an active and responsible citizen. Activities are mostly informal in civil society organisations, while civil service also provides opportunities for more formal volunteering. Migrants are also involved in activities to help asylum seekers and refugees in understanding local system. Although volunteering is popular among highly educated Italians, target groups of these organisations are mostly lowly educated asylum-seeking men. The representation of women is very low, even though some organisations try to reach migrant women.

Voluntary activities are organised with contribution of participants and based on their own interests and skills. As observed in other countries, women improve their language skills through volunteering. Also, some organisations provide legal counselling and social support to migrant volunteers, which might facilitate their integration. Besides soft skills, volunteers can learn specific job-related skills. On the other hand, organisations can provide women only services (language courses, trainings) to their volunteers so that they can feel safe. However, training during volunteering is not always available.

Both lack of local language and cultural-religious differences create barriers for organisations. Family interventions seem to limit TCN women's participation to voluntary activities. Furthermore, organisations cannot provide enough social support for migrant women volunteers and this is likely to affect their works' quality.

Voluntary law in Spain defines the concept of volunteering and establishes its limits. It sets out as well the main rights and obligations of volunteers and of the people to which volunteering activities are targeted to. It also foresees the principle of non-discrimination by establishing that volunteer entities must guarantee the right to equal opportunities and universal accessibility so that any person can exercise, on equal terms, the rights and duties that correspond to them, eradicating any possible form of discrimination. Apart from the obvious reference to NGOs, this law also refers to the role of businesses regarding volunteering. Companies can promote and participate in volunteering programs if the actions are of general interest, they are included in one of the volunteering areas, the values and principles of voluntary action are respected, and they reach an agreement with a volunteer entity. Although volunteering is considerably high among Spanish nationals, figures remain low when it comes to unemployed female migrant volunteers. According to International Organization for Migration, in 2015 only 3.5% of unemployed migrant women were carrying out voluntary work or participating in social organizations during their unemployment (IOM 2015, p.38).

Interview with organisations show that volunteering can include different types of activities that should always be supervised by an employee of the entity and that would be mainly related to the area of social intervention. Local level volunteering programmes include a wide range of working areas volunteers can choose from according to their interests: immigration, training, employment, interculturality, gender, awareness raising, cooperation for development, communication, humanitarian aid are some of them. Organizations are, in general, open to anyone wishing to collaborate, therefore, there is no limitation to become a volunteer. The profile of the volunteer would range from youngsters to adults and from low to high education levels. However, the participation of TCN women is very low. Due to familial responsibilities, informal volunteering with flexible working hours is more likely to be favourable for migrant women.

Before their incorporation, most volunteers undergo an initial training provided by the organization and that, sometimes, is complemented with refresher courses. Additionally, as mentioned before, they are usually invited to take part in the trainings organized. Volunteering could contribute to the employability of TCN women through acquiring resources and skills and developing social networks in the host society. To this purpose, there should be more emphasis on activities related to language learning, social interaction and job seeking tips. With a view to improve employability in women's areas of interest, matching women's knowledge with the specific area of volunteering would help to have a better and more complete experience focusing on skill development.

UNITED KINGDOM

Voluntary work is not defined in the law in the UK. There is also no law that protects the rights of volunteers. Therefore, volunteering can remain flexible, inspirational and spontaneous. However, volunteers are not legally protected against unfair dismissal or discriminatory practice. The volunteer agreement isn't compulsory but will define what the volunteer can expect from the organisation. Volunteering is only allowed for public organisations, charities or non-for-profit projects/programmes like Erasmus.

The best way to look for volunteering opportunities is to go through online databases where more than 300 organisations in the area are registered and can easily help you find volunteering opportunities in different fields. However, the outreach and information of various opportunities in volunteering is often lacking.

Organisations working with volunteers seem to lack a clear and precise strategy on how to reach interested people. There are enough opportunities, but information is often lacking and especially does not reach the ethnic minority communities in an effective manner.

Gaining work experience in the UK is one of the most important advantages of volunteering. It is also related to developing self-confidence and understanding what they can do with their skills. Volunteering is also a good way for newly-arrived TCN women to get a better grasp of the English language into their daily lives. Volunteering gradually helps TCN women to have things settled independently in the British society, and to find information on employment opportunities. TCN women can also support the organisations with their native language skills which are needed especially in organisations working with migrants.

Lack of confidence due to limited language skills and familial responsibilities block TCN women volunteers reach their full potential in a certain position. Lack of childcare make it hard for these women to do voluntary work on a regular basis. Cultural and language differences might cause miscommunications between coordinators of voluntary organisations and the migrant volunteers. Many organisations are not aware of the skills of the volunteers they receive and for this reason often do not take full advantage of the skills they possess.

CONCLUSIONS

Legal framework on volunteering varies in partner countries. In some of them, law clearly defines volunteering, while there is no legal framework on voluntary work in others countries.

NGOs agree that volunteering is helpful for migrants and refugees but some find unpaid volunteering unfair, therefore prefer interns supported by universities.

Only few NGOs offer professional tasks to volunteers, helping acquire transferable into labour market skills. Most organisations provide informal volunteering not clearly defined with an agreement.

Volunteering is unpaid and can only be done in non-profit organisations, charities and public services. Spain is the only country where for-profit companies can engage with volunteers

Skills Acquired by Migrant Women through Volunteering in CSOs

Communication
Interpersonal
Multi-Tasking
Teamwork
Self-Efficacy



Cultural Awareness
Writing
Digital & ICT
Self Confidence
Time Management

TCN women mostly volunteer to help other newcomers through interpretation & sharing information on legal-administrative system. Ethical reservations of NGOs about unpaid tasks limit the chances of TCN women for whom volunteering is the only opportunity to develop their skills.

Main Barriers Faced by CSOs in Providing Volunteering






Lack of recruitment strategies to reach migrant women
Lack of time & resources
Lack of information on rules & regulations on volunteering
Miscommunication







Cultural & religious differences
Lack of knowledge on how to make volunteering available for TCN women
Ethical considerations of not using unpaid labour
Lack of language skills of migrant women

There is a shortage of information & lack of awareness about the 'formal' volunteering and the advantages it might bring, among CSOs

Key Benefits for CSOs in Working with Volunteers

-  Combatting stereotypes about migrant communities & migrant women specifically
-  Creating diverse & gender balanced team
-  Contributing to social cohesion in communities
-  Improving self image in the eyes of partners, funders and communities
-  Volunteering is particularly beneficial for grassroots NGOs

Key Challenges Faced by Migrant Women in Volunteering

-  Unorganised Voluntary Work
-  Lack of social support from organisations
-  Lack of training & skill development in volunteering
-  Financial pressure to engage in paid activities

Migrant Women Volunteering: Diversity in the Business Sector

BELGIUM

Employment rate of immigrants in Belgian public sector is considerably low. This low share of immigrants can be explained with European Economic Area citizenship requirement for statutory positions in public sector. In the Belgian public sector as whole, the share of the foreign-born increased by only 0.7 percentage points in 2008-12 (Pina et. al., 2015). A more diverse workforce is also required to promote equality of opportunities and fighting discrimination. Some regions in Belgium started a series of diversity plans. Diversity plan initiative has gradually increased but it remains low and its impact on the employment rates of target groups remains very limited.

In Belgium, law does not allow voluntary activities in profit making companies. However, internship opportunities in big, but also in small companies in Belgium exist on a large scale. But since the internships are mostly connected to existing skills and are rarely addressed at people without these needed skills, e.g. digital competence, a high threshold exists to join these programs. The benefit of volunteers / interns is seen in helping the company in a professional way. A different kind of view on specific issues and diversity is not mentioned as benefits. However, proactivity and the willingness to learn are strongly appreciated and can thus open the door for less skilled participants.

Furthermore, the survey illustrates a lack of information and a lack of training in Belgium. None of the respondents was convinced the business sector had sufficient knowledge / awareness of the diverse groups existing in Europe. But also, the employees themselves do hardly know about gender-equality policies in their companies. Secondly, almost two thirds (62,5%) of the companies have no specific strategies to connect to ethnic minorities. It is therefore not surprising, that 75% of the respondents have not undertaken any training program about working with disadvantages groups / ethnic minorities. A lack of sensitivity on that issue exists in the majority of the business entities / companies. Therefore, a large need for those trainings exists.

CYPRUS

Despite measures taken to promote gender equality through changes in policies, amendments in legislation and inclusive practices, studies show that many TCN women face discrimination and various problems in access to employment opportunities in Cyprus (Solomi, Maouri, & Stavrou, 2018). Survey results show that only 42% participants responded positively about the existence of equal opportunities and gender equality policies in their companies. Their volunteering/internship programmes are directed mostly to general public and students, while migrants and ethnic minorities are ranked last. 52,4% of companies work with ethnic minority groups either within their entities as employees or in the framework of particular projects. However, most of them do not have specific strategies to recruit ethnic minorities. Interns/volunteers can gain various skills including language skills, technical work-related skills, networking and social skills.

Most participants believe that business sector has sufficient knowledge of the diverse groups existing in Cyprus. Moreover, the majority of them think that working with different groups made them more aware of participants' socio-cultural background. However, companies reported to have challenges when working with ethnic minorities due to communication difficulties, lack of cultural awareness, lack of quality in their work and their training needs. Companies require professional skills related to their sector and soft skills. Lastly, most participants have not taken part in any training programmes about working with disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities. However, they are willing to take part in trainings about multicultural awareness, training interns/volunteers, gender equality and intercultural education.

FRANCE

According to the survey "L'insertion professionnelle des femmes immigrées", TCN women with high degrees do not have an easy access to the labour market in France. Immigrant women are less active compared to native women with the same level of education, and this difference is particularly strong for TCN women with a high level of education.

Survey results in France show that 53,3% of companies who participated in the survey have policies about equal opportunities and 40% of them have gender equality policy. Although 60% of them reported to work with ethnic minorities, their volunteering/internship programmes are directed mostly to general public and students, and least to ethnic minority groups. In addition, most of them do not have any strategy to connect to ethnic minorities. Participants also think that their programmes are not so accessible to different groups.

Majority of companies appear to see benefits of working with ethnic minority groups. This experience can teach them cultural awareness, tolerance and different cultural skills, while having ethnic minority volunteers will bring 'good public image' to companies. On the other hand, volunteers can practise their language skills and improve other soft skills including interpersonal skills and cultural awareness. Other hard professional skills were rated less. Results also show that there is a lack of awareness about diverse groups in their countries. Moreover, the majority of companies do not offer training to interns and volunteers. However, they expect sector related professional skills and communication skills from potential volunteers/interns. Although most of them have not attended any training programmes, they are willing to participate trainings about intercultural sensitivity, tolerance and diversity.

ITALY

Diversity Management Lab in Italy reports that only 21% of the companies participating in the research adopt diversity policies. The same research displays additional disadvantages women experience in recruitment and promotion processes. In addition to these existing information, small-scale SMART survey results show that almost half of companies have policies about equal opportunities and gender equality. Majority of companies offer internship/volunteering to students and young people. Although limited, some programmes are addressed to ethnic minority groups. Results also show that most companies (72,7%) work with disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities. However, only 18,2% reported to have recruitment strategies to connect to ethnic minorities.

Half of the participants do not think that business sector has sufficient knowledge about diverse groups in Europe. Companies reported the lack of required language skills and trainings needs of ethnic minority groups as main challenges they experience. More professional and technical skills are expected from volunteers/interns, but the rate of trainings is very low. In addition, the majority of participants have not attended any training program but they would like to have trainings about creating tools for job placement, capacity building and intercultural awareness.

SPAIN

Survey results introduce that only two companies out of 15 have equal opportunities and gender equality policies. Internship programmes are available in most companies and they are addressed to students within the framework of University programmes and general public in different areas based on the needs of companies.

Majority (93%) do not have any experience in working with minorities and none of the companies have strategies to connect to ethnic minorities. Results also show that most participants assume that business sector does not have relevant knowledge and awareness about diverse groups in Spain and in Europe.

Although most participants do not have related experiences, some of them reported that volunteering/internship can be helpful for social integration of ethnic minorities and they can develop various skills. Some participants mentioned challenges such as language and cultural differences of ethnic minorities. They also referred to challenges created by Spanish system with lack of relevant knowledge about needs of ethnic minorities and lack of entrepreneurial culture to increase employment opportunities of ethnic minorities. In addition, there is lack of training for volunteers/interns even though they are expected to have certain professional skills to participate programs in companies.

Lastly, 14 out of 15 participants have not attended any training programmes about working with ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups. However, most of them would like to undertake trainings about business integration of disadvantaged groups and identification of candidates' skills and competences.

UNITED KINGDOM

Ensuring diversity in business sector is also a challenge in the UK. In August 2017 the Guardian analysed the results of the Green Park Annual Leadership Survey which examined the ethnic background of 10,129 individuals who were active in the top 100 companies of the UK. This survey showed that progress of ethnic minority representation at the senior level of these companies is only going very slow. What is even more staggering, is that none of these companies have a CEO or chief financial officer who is a woman from an ethnic minority group.

UK survey results show that 78.9% of the respondents mentioned that there is a specific equal-opportunity and non-discrimination policy in place within their business, while only 57.9% of the respondents reported to have a specific policy on gender equality. Some companies offer internship/volunteering programmes to specific target groups such as ethnic minorities, disadvantaged groups and women, while others are addressed to general public.

The majority of companies have experiences in working with ethnic minorities either within their companies or through external cooperation. However, almost none of them have specific strategies to connect to ethnic minorities. Results also indicate that interns/volunteers from ethnic minority groups bring more diversity and getting ideas from different cultures to adapt their business to the needs of a broader range of society. Migrant employees could also help the company with outreach to ethnic minority communities and building of relationships. These programmes might be beneficial to develop organisational skills, cultural awareness and language skills.

A considerable number of participants think there is not enough knowledge in the business sector on how to integrate ethnic minorities properly into society. One common challenge about working with ethnic minorities was reported to be language barrier. Although there is not any specific programme, 9 out of 19 companies mentioned that they have offered trainings through personal monitoring of interns/volunteers. On the other hand, the majority of participants have not taken any training about working with ethnic minorities and some of them are not interested. However, some others are interested in joining trainings to learn more on diversity, cultural awareness and engaging with migrant communities.

CONCLUSIONS

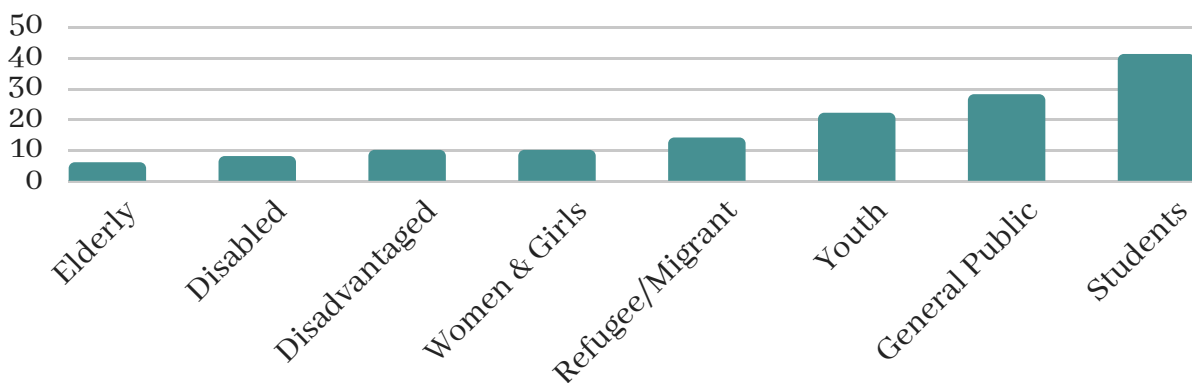
Most companies either do not have official policies on equal opportunities and/or gender equality or do not find it applicable to their companies.

57 out of 90 companies provide internship or volunteering opportunities. However, volunteering is not common since the law does not allow volunteering in profit making entities.

Most participants believe that their companies ensure easy access to their programmes to disadvantaged and diverse groups, including migrant women.

Target groups of these programs show variability but students and young people are the main target groups of internship/volunteering programmes in partner countries.

Main Target Groups of Volunteering/Internship Programmes



Training Needs of Business Sector

Gender Equality
Intercultural Awareness
Managing Diverse Groups
Social Inclusion
Interfaith Dialogue



Interviewing Skills
Conflict Management
Engagement with Ethnic Minorities
Intercultural Teamwork
Negotiations Skills

Most private companies believe that business sector does not have sufficient knowledge and awareness of the diverse groups in Europe

Main Barriers to Volunteering Reported by Business Sector




Cultural differences
Prejudice & Lack of Trust
Unreliability
Bad time management





Lack of relevant skills
Language barriers
Different work ethos & culture
Integration Problems

Language barriers, lack of relevant skills and difference in cultures are the most frequently mentioned challenges by the business sector

Diversity in Private Sector: Key Elements

-  78 % of participants have not taken any training programme about working with disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities
-  Only 22,2% have training experiences in cultural awareness, disability/accessibility, diversity strategies, disabled migrants and intercultural education.
-  Almost 54% have experience in working with ethnic minorities.
Only 11% have specific strategies to connect to ethnic minorities.

-  Communication is encountered as a challenge for companies, as well as for the interns, however, the internship programs do not provide them with such skills.
-  Internship programmes focus on professional, technical skills and the number of coaching/mentoring programs remains low.

Despite the striking lack of diversity skills in business community, most do not see the need to improve their cultural & gender equality skills. This can be explained by the lack of sensitivity and of information on the possible contribution these groups can make in the business sector

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