# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## Creating Upskilling **Pathways for** Migrant Women

UPSIM
Upskilling Paths for
Social Integration of Migrants

**upsim.aidlearn.eu**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION TO THE UPSIM CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## About the project

The UPSIM – "Upskilling Paths for Social Integration of Migrants'' (ID 2020-1-SE01-KA04-077915) project is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme, KA204 – Strategic Partnerships for adult education. The project is being developed by a trans-sectoral consortium which involves 5 organisations and institutes from different countries: the coordinator, Internationella Kvinnoföreningen (Sweden), and partners, Coneqt (Denmark), Spolek PELICAN, z.s. (Czech Republic), Aidlearn, Consultoria em Recursos Humanos Lda. (Portugal) and Maryse COPPET's Lawfirm (France – Guadeloupe).

The project aims to provide young adult migrant women residing in the EU (Target Group 1) with a suite of tools to acquire non-formal competence (learning to learn) and the language skills required to reach their educational goals. The consortium will achieve this objective by (1) implementing Multimodal Learning Scenarios through the project learning platform designed to promote self-learning and present the tools, resources, and project results; and (2) gathering best practice examples of successful preparation of young adult migrant women for further education in their host countries from professionals and volunteers who work directly with TG1 (Target group 2) and organising these examples under a successful integration manual.

**Definition of the Target Groups:**

*Target group 1 (TG1a):* Young adult migrant/refugee[1] women aged 18-30 years in situations of vulnerability (who will benefit from the results of this IO). The assumptions are that these women have completed the basic language course (of the host country), have a lower education level, have low skilled job experience, lack support from their network and/or wish to attain higher education.

*Target group 1 (TG1b):* Foreign-born women aged 30-60 years with similar background to TG1a, but who have succeeded in accessing higher education. These will be used in the study, in preparation for the development of the concept. The consortium has made use of the successes of these role models, and included their experiences in the analysis of needs.

*Target group 2 (TG2):* Professionals and volunteers who work with TG1 in terms of social work, integration, language training, counselling/mentoring (who will benefit directly from this IO as well) professionals who are in direct contact with TG1. They work with migrants and refugees on a weekly basis, and are the ones most likely to be able to change the approaches in their respective organisations/institutions. The assumptions are that these social workers/volunteers and/or mentors are interested in gaining new skills, are working with TG1, will attend our workshops, will use our concept, and will support and recruit migrant women.

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[1] Often used interchangeably by the general public, the terms "refugee" and "migrant" nevertheless have essential distinctions.
**Refugee** "is the official status of a person who has been granted asylum from a third state. Every refugee is a **migrant**. Refugees are outside their country of origin because of fear of persecution, conflict, violence or other circumstances which have seriously disrupted public order and which therefore require **"international protection"**.
There is no legally recognized definition of the term "**migrant**". However, according to the United Nations, this term designates "**any person who has resided in a foreign country for more than a year, whatever the causes**, voluntary or involuntary, of the movement, and whatever the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate". (However, it is common to include certain categories of short-term migrants, such as seasonal agricultural workers who move around during planting or harvesting times).

# Introduction

The UN, in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration[2], refers to language-learning programmes as measures that empower migrants to become active members of society and foster cohesiveness and inclusiveness among its members. Accordingly, research has found that skills in the host language are positively related to better employment status of migrants in the EU[3]. Nevertheless, this Conceptual Framework reveals that upskilling mobility often requires, among other things, a deeper knowledge of the host language than the one usually offered by national programmes, especially regarding young adult foreign-born women.

According to the consortium's objectives, this Conceptual Framework collects relevant information related to the five member countries that integrate the UPSIM consortium, Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic, Portugal, and Guadeloupe (France). In particular, it compiles important data about the specific demographic, socio-economic and educational realities of young adult foreign-born women in each partner country, analysing the different realities and vulnerabilities they face and identifying the respective national integration strategies and their shortcomings. Furthermore, this report offers the results of qualitative research conducted for needs analysis in terms of education, integration, and language acquisition. Through semi-structured interviews, each partner assessed obstacles, tentative structural solutions, and key individual actions identified by members of TG1a, TG1b, and TG2. The analysis provided by the partners offers thorough descriptions of the context and assumptions that are central to our aims and makes explicit connections to the cultural and social contexts that surround our data collection and needs analysis. Lastly, our findings are connected with a conceptual framework designed to empower, motivate, and equip young adult foreign-born women to learn.

The main objective of this Conceptual Framework is to identify the underlying needs of adult foreign-born women in their upskilling journey and allow a compared analysis among the considered countries – essential to a personalised approach regarding innovative content development and dissemination strategies. The findings will help the consortium develop the tools to support TG1 in gaining access to upskilling pathways and TG2 in supporting them through this transition process. Furthermore, the Conceptual Framework is a part of the learning platform and workshop materials that shape the mentoring circles and support the acquisition of background knowledge. Finally, our materials will be Copyleft, meaning that organisations working in this sector will be able to use the resource freely if they wish to run their own inspirational workshops or further adapt the work for other target groups.

The topics related to each of the five countries present the results of the analysis carried on by the partners of the consortium. To foster a more clear and accessible presentation, firstly, each country is presented individually under the same overall structure. The previously mentioned data regarding demographics and socio-economic and educational realities is followed by the result of the qualitative research analysis. Secondly, the conceptual framework is explained. Finally, our conclusions are summarised.

Of note, we understand and agree with the notion that "migrants" is usually intended as a neutral umbrella term that simply reflects the act of moving from a usual place of residence[4]. However, the negative connotation often associated with "migrants" compels us to look for a less encumbered word. Therefore, as of now and for the resources intended for foreign-born women, we will utilise "foreign-born" instead of migrant.

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[2] UN General Assembly 2018a. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* – Intergovernmental Negotiated and Agreed Outcome, Available at: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

[3] Gazzola, M. Language skills and employment status of adult migrants in Europe. In *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants/L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes* (De Gruyter Mouton, 2017) pp. 297-302

[4] International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration* (International Organization For Migration, 2019)

# DENMARK

## Demographics[5]

Apart from hosting refugees from Germany after WWII, Denmark's population has been rather homogenous until the 1960s. As the industrialisation of Western Europe created more jobs than could be covered by the local populations, including the inclusion of women in the labour force, work migration became a necessity. In 1967, the first foreign workers from Turkey, Pakistan, and ex-Yugoslavia arrived. In the 1970s, a new wave of immigration came across the country. This time it would be refugees from dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece as well as groups of people from Chile and Vietnam due to war and dictatorship. Furthermore, in the 1970s, Denmark saw a high number of Tamils fleeing to Denmark and bringing their families over for reunification. In the 1980s and 90s, with the ratification of international conventions for refugees, Denmark saw an influx in refugees from the Iran-Iraq wars as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the end of the 1980s, a civil war in Somalia broke out, and over 1 million people fled the country. Today around 16.700 Somalians live in Denmark and are the largest African population[6]. Following the downfall of the constituent republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Denmark also gave temporary asylum, with the possibility for extension, for all ex-Yugoslavs in the end of the 1990s.

On October 1st, 2020, a total of 814.488 foreign-borns and descendants resided in Denmark, which corresponds to 14% of the total population. Of these, 521,982 people originate from non-western countries[7].
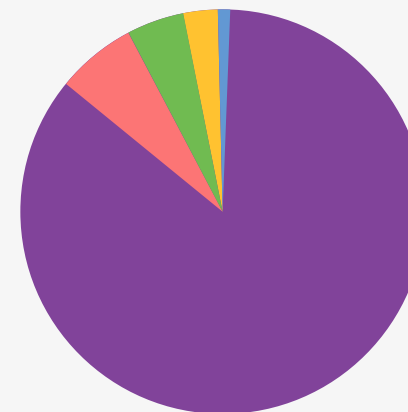


**Figure 1:** Foreign-borns and descendants by origin, per. October 1, 2020. *Source: Danmark Statistiks.*

The overall largest foreign-born population residing in Denmark, EU/EEA mainly, originates from Poland: 41,529 people by 2020. The largest non-Western group residing in Denmark comes from Syria. This is also the second largest group of foreign-borns in Denmark, with 35,536 people, with foreign-borns originating from Turkey being the third largest with 33,111 people. Almost 36% of the Turkish migrants came to Denmark during the first major non-Western immigration to Denmark, which took place in the 1960s[8].

[5] Det Nationale Integrationsbarometer, "Dan overblik over tal og tendenser på uddannelsesområde", Danmark Statistiks database. Available at: https://integrationsbarometer.dk/tal-og-analyser/uddannelse
[6] Ibid
[7] Ibid

[8] Theis Stenholt Engmann, *Tyrkere er den tredjestørste indvandrergruppe i Danmark* (Denmark Statistiks, 2018). Available at: https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/bagtal/2018/2018-06-22-tyrkere-er-den-tredjestoerste-indvandrergruppe-i-danmark#:~:text=Denne%20tidlige%20indvandring%20skyldes%2C%20at,fandt%20sted%20i%201960'erne.&text=Indvandrere%20fra%20Tyrkiet%20er%20

# Educational Background

The composition of foreign-borns' level of education varies on the basis of their stay. According to data from Danmarks statistik[9], and as seen in the Figure 2 below, the proportions of both Western and non-Western male foreign-borns who have completed a vocational education are somewhat lower than those of men of Danish origin. For Western men, the proportion is 25%, while it is 19% for non-Westerners. Among female foreign-borns, the proportion of those who have a vocational education is also somewhat lower than for women of Danish origin. However, of Western foreign-born women, 29% have a tertiary higher education, as opposed to 12% of non-Western female foreign-borns, and 13% of women of Danish origin.
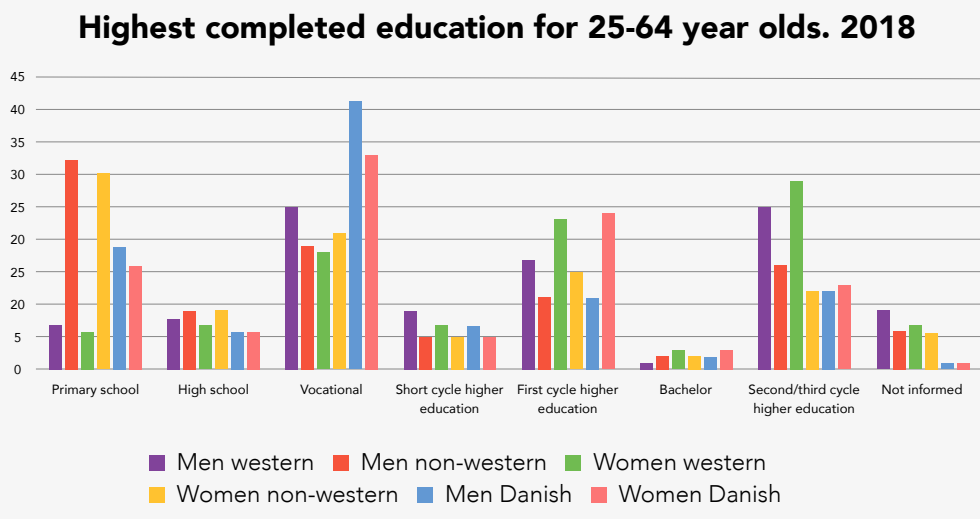


**Figure 2:** Highest completed education for 25-64 years old. 2018. *Source: Danmarks statistik.*

Foreign-borns with asylum as a basis for residence are the group where the fewest have a vocational qualification. 50% of foreign-borns with asylum as a basis for residence have primary school as the highest

completed education, while only 6% have a tertiary higher education. One-fifth (21%) of the group have a short, medium- or long-term higher education which is lower than the other foreign-born groups.

In 2017 31% of non-Western women between the ages of 24-40 had no education compared to 17% of women of Danish origins. There is also a small difference in numbers regarding education, with those for non-Western foreign-borns being slightly lower than those for women of Danish origins. 25% of non-Western women between the ages of 24 and 40 residing in Denmark have a vocational education in the care sector, 6% have a short higher education level (such as financial economics, pharmacologist), 25% have a medium-term higher education (such as social worker or child-care worker), and 13% have a tertiary higher education. These numbers, however, do not say anything about the women's origins and length of their residence. We do not have many studies about non-Western women foreign-borns, which indicates that they are still a "young group" with few years of experience in the labour market. But we can try to look at it through the perspective of non-Western descendants, to gain a better picture.

According to SFI[10] research from 2015, non-Western descendants generally have poorer labour market status than persons of Danish origin. On the bright side, they also found that education increases the probability of filling a position at basic, intermediate, or highest level equally for descendants and Danes, and that descendants also have approximately the same return on education as Danes. Unfortunately, the analysis does not distinguish between women's and men's use of education. But we can see that non-Western descendants of women with a vocational education have a greater risk of ending up in a passive group (i.e., not working or studying) than women of Danish origins with the same vocational education level.

i,eller%20som%20resultat%20af%20familiesammenf%C3%B8ringer.
[9] Det Nationale Integrationsbarometer, "Dan overblik over tal og tendenser på uddannelsesområde"

[10] Anders Rosdahl, *Integration På Arbejdsmarkedet Af Ikkevestlige Indvandrere Og Efterkommere* (Socialforskningsinstituttet, 2006). Available at: https://www.vive.dk/media/pure/3532/334304

# Employment and Work

Among foreign-borns with asylum, 81% of 30–59-year-olds receive a median income of 181.000 DKK per household. With a median Danish salary being around 300.000 DKK and the poverty line being around 150.000 DKK, we can see a gap between this group and EU/Western foreign-borns, of which only 20% are in the same financial situation. Studies show that non-Western foreign-borns who have completed vocational training in Denmark are more likely to be employed than non-Western foreign-borns with the same education level from a foreign country[11].

In 2018, numbers showed that employment levels rise with time. This may seem logical, as there will inevitably be an adaptation phase, but when it comes to foreign-borns with asylum, we might need to be concerned. For foreign-borns with asylum, who have lived in Denmark for 3-6 years, 51% are employed, and for those living there for 0-3 years, only 36% are employed. However, for those residing in Denmark for 10 years or more, the employment rate was at 47%.

We are aware that the numbers here are not sensitive to differences in age, background and/or origins. Therefore, we will take a gender-specific perspective as we analyse the data. Data from Denmark's national statistics (Figures 3 and 4) provider shows in a study from 2018, that male foreign-borns with asylum who have resided in Denmark between 0-3 years have an employment rate of 47%. When they have lived in Denmark between 3-6 years, the employment levels rise to 60%. However, when we compare this to women in the same groups we see a rather different picture. Only 16% of foreign-born women with 0-3 years asylum in Denmark have entered the labour market. Although there is a general tendency for employment levels in this group to rise after 10 years' residency, in the case of women, the level is only 42%.



**Employment by length of stay – Men**
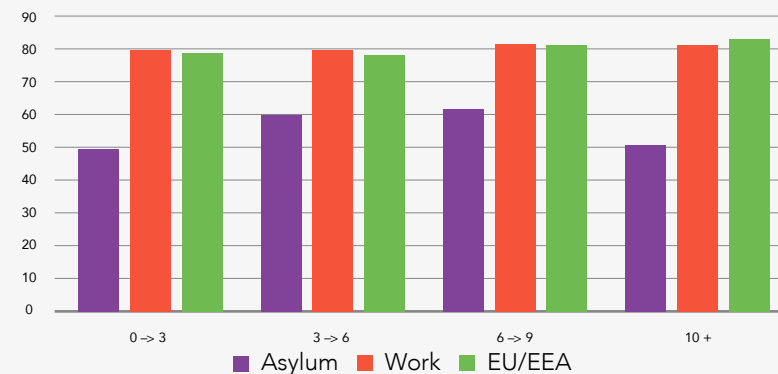
**Figure 3:** Employment by length of stay among foreign-borns with asylum, occupation and EU / EEA paid work as a basis for residence in 2018 (Men). *Source: Denmark Statistik.*



**Employment by length of stay – Women**
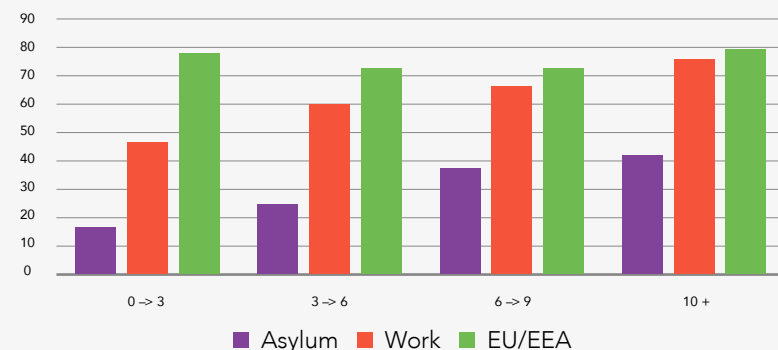
**Figure 4:** Employment by length of stay among foreign-borns with asylum, occupation and EU / EEA paid work as a basis for residence in 2018 (Women). *Source: Denmark Statistik.*

When foreign-borns are distributed according to the length of residence, there are different populations that have resided in Denmark for a shorter or longer period, which can therefore be composed differently with regard to age, level of education and country of origin, etc.

[11] Denmark Statistik, *Befolkningens løn* (København Ø, Temapubl, 2013). Available at: http://www.dst.dk/pukora/epub/upload/19581/befloen.pdf

# Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Integration

Barriers for the integration of non-Western women, including those with asylum, are both individual and structural. These women's demographics are very varied, as they come from over 150 different countries, and come to Denmark either as asylum seekers, family reunification, or to work and/or study. One thing that really stands out, is that the barriers that these groups of women face are bigger than for their western peers. Even though they bring with them valuable potential, the women with refugee background can be seen as triple challenged (Leibig & Tronstad, 2018) on the Danish labour market, as they are faced with barriers relating to a) being migrants, b) being refugees, and c) being women. There is a general tendency for certain origins to have a certain basis of residence.
   - Asylum and family reunification; Syria and Bosnia-Herzegovina
   - Education related; Ukraine and the Philippines
   - Work; India
In the later years, there has been a rise in the number of labour and education related migration. In general, foreign-borns have greater difficulty in gaining access to the labour market than the ethnical majority group. This is especially a barrier for women with non-Western backgrounds. Their employment rates are lower than those of men, and are overall the group with the lowest employment rates. There is a big difference between men and women's employment rates, especially for those categorised as an asylum seeking group. Women with asylum will typically have been reunified with their spouses. A high number of these women will be on social benefits but also in education. One probable explanation why non-Western women typically have a higher unemployment rate, than women with a Western background, could be linked to their educational background. Educational levels play an important role in integration to the labour market, and when we look at educational backgrounds for the majority of non-Western foreign-borns with asylum, they seldom bring a vocational qualification from their home country, limiting their options in terms of employment. Approximately one third choose to take an education in Denmark. Especially if they already have vocational qualifications upon arrival. However, education is expensive for the state, and paying for this, when other alternatives exist are also being considered. Research shows that employment rates are linked to educational attainment, but this is based on having a Danish education, and not one that comes from abroad. The Danish employer is more comfortable and familiar with a Danish based education, and then there is the question of having a foreign education approved. Another barrier for unemployed non-Western women is the lack of access to networks, lack of knowledge of the Danish labour market and mastery of the language. We assume that women with a Danish education have access to better networks, good understanding of the labour market and they have proven that they have a suitable language level.

Furthermore, the length of residence and time of immigration, play an important role in the possibility of getting an education, working up labour market experience and finally acquiring necessary language skills. Studies have shown that women with minority backgrounds often don't have the attitude that women should stay at home and be housewives. So this does contradict some of the prejudices that people in the west have towards women from certain countries. In fact, they are usually held back because of their low education background, they tend to have poorer Danish language skills, compared to their male counterparts, and they have less access to networks. Research suggests that non-western immigrants experience prejudice on the labour market. The experienced discrimination manifests itsself as direct, indirect and structurally, and stereotypical conceptions are often the underlying factor. For example, women who practice the Muslim faith, and wear head coverings are often not considered for positions in the public sector. Whereas non-western women in the private sector have higher chances if they do not wear religious coverings.

Another barrier can be family structures, when there are children involved, there are many issues related to taking time off when the children are ill, maternity leave and such. With a higher frequency of absence, the women from minority cultures often have a weaker connection to the labour market or language school compared to the men.

Along with human capital, there is also a need for:
- more clarity about internationally acquired education
- more awareness about discrimination and stereotypical attitudes towards immigration, ethnicity and gender
- a deeper understanding of the social inequalities that are prevalent in our communities

The women who do succeed in getting a good job-match have:
- good Danish language skills
- higher education
- work experience
- good social and professional networks

None of the aforementioned barriers are insurmountable, but measures will need to be taken, such as thinking out of the box, to tackle these issues.

# National Integration strategies

Between 2008 and 2019, Denmark saw a positive development in the number of non-Western foreign-born men and women, between the ages of 25-39, who completed vocational education[12]. This development was especially positive for women of non-Western origins, with a 19% rise for the period, whilst the portion of men rose by 13%. This may likely be due to the Danish government's "Teaming up for Integration" partnership, which arose from a September 2015 summit. Social partners, business representatives, NGOs,

[12] Ibid

researchers, and other stakeholders from civil society, got together to discuss how to improve the integration of refugees in Denmark. From here, a partnership was created between the government, businesses, and municipalities, who subsequently joined forces to support more businesses with the purpose of providing employment opportunities for refugees.

In March 2016, two agreements on integration were drawn-up. One between the Government and the social partners, a so-called "tripartite agreement" on integration in the labour market, and the other "building on the first" an agreement between the Government and the municipalities to improve the framework for integration in the municipalities. The two agreements laid the foundation for what they hoped would be more "effective" (for the Danish economy) and a job-oriented integration of refugees[13].

## THE TRIPARTITE INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

Better screening of asylum seekers' formal and informal qualifications while they are still at the asylum centre having their application for asylum processed
• Ensuring that job opportunities are a primary consideration when deciding to which municipality the individual is transferred, upon being granted asylum
• Refugees and reunified relatives must be considered ready to work when they start integration programmes (meaning that they are able to work, and for instance, lacking language qualifications cannot be an excuse for not finding a job)
• Municipalities shall offer participants in integration programmes early and intensive job-oriented measures to commence as soon as possible after taking over responsibility for their integration. 'As soon as possible' is now specified in the Integration Act to mean within one month
• The content and organisation of Danish language education is to be updated and made more labour market oriented
• A new two-year programme that combines work and on the job practice with labour-oriented education
• Introduction of a bonus scheme for private sector companies that hire refugees and reunified relatives in regular, non-subsidised jobs.
• The agreement between the Government and the municipalities had as its main objective to provide the municipalities with a more flexible and more effective legal framework to handle the integration of newcomers.

[13] "Tripartite discussions in 2016 and 2017" (København Ø, The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, 2018). Available at: https://www.star.dk/en/social-partners/tripartite-discussions-in-2016-and-2017/

**THE SECOND INITIATIVE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPALITIES INCLUDES:**

More flexible rules on the municipalities' obligation to provide housing for refugees
• Intensifying the integration programme
• More efficient sharing of information on skills and competencies when refugees are transferred from asylum centres to municipalities
• Better screening of formal and informal qualifications
• A more job-oriented approach to Danish language courses
• Financial incentives for municipalities comprising a bonus granted to municipalities who succeed in finding regular jobs for refugees or family reunified persons.

As the figure explains, the Tripartite initiatives include Danish language education. The Danish language course, which is offered for free to foreign-borns, is a basic, compulsory education for foreign-borns receiving governmental financial assistance or have asylum. The students learn to understand, speak, read and write in Danish. They also acquire knowledge about culture and social conditions in Denmark, including a basic introduction to the Danish labour market, educational offers, and democracy.

There are three independent "Danish educations", which are organised differently, so that the teaching corresponds to the students' goals and prerequisites: Danish education 1, Danish education 2 and Danish education 3.

**DANISH EDUCATION 1** is designed for students who cannot read and write in their mother tongue, as well as Latin illiterates who do not master a European writing system. The aim of the teaching is basic skills in oral Danish and reading and writing skills in order to be able to cope in the Danish labour market and as a citizen in Danish society.

**DANISH EDUCATION 2** is designed for students who have a short school and educational background from their home country. The aim of the teaching is to understand, speak and read Danish in order to be able to cope in the Danish labour market, in subsequent labour market training and as a citizen in Danish society

**DANISH EDUCATION 3** is designed for students who have a medium or long school and educational background. It can be vocational education, a high school education or a higher education. The goal for Danish education 3 is that the students should be able to get a job or take further education and be able to function actively as a citizen in Danish society.

The UPSIM concept is aimed towards women who have taken Danish education 2 and 3.

These strategies have brought along successful elements, and some other perspectives need to be further evaluated. Overall, there has been a positive development regarding ensuring a quick entry to the labour market. But this also had its downsides. It was rather challenging for asylum centres to communicate information about everyone's competencies to the municipalities, and integration into society does not automatically occur simply because they are in the labour market.

When the focus has been guaranteeing employment for refugees as quickly as possible, many of these tripartite agreements were made with supermarkets and other low-skilled jobs in the retail industry, where upskilling may not necessarily be on the agenda. Furthermore, many jobs where we are seeing a rise in employment levels of non-Western foreign-borns are in sectors that are facing a general decline in employment opportunities and turning certain sectors into the go-to job for "these groups of people". There should be some concerns about the sustainability of this strategy. One concern could be that this tendency creates an A and B group, with foreign-borns in low-skilled, low-paid jobs and people of Western and Danish origins taking up skilled jobs.

For example, between 2012 and 2016, Denmark had a high concentration of male non-Western foreign-borns working in specific vocational sectors, such as slaughterhouses, transportation (bus, train/taxi), and postal services, many of which have seen a general decline

in employment levels. Additionally, we see a large concentration of women in the care and service industry[14]. Although the access to employment and financial stability are positive in the short term, the long-term consequences could hinder integration, as it can affect the diversity of the composition of employees in the different sectors. This creates an imbalance in the representation of the diversity which exists in the country as it creates a society with an "A" and a "B" group.

Also, just because a non-Western foreign-born does not have a vocational or higher education, it does not mean that education isn't an option. Appointing specific groups of people to low-skilled work could imply that they are provided with limited demands to skills and few opportunities for professional development. Although effective in the short term, this "one size fits most" strategy does not always let us consider the wishes and potentialities of the individual which, in turn, does not necessarily help with labour market retention.

## Qualitative research for needs analysis, Denmark

The analysis of needs in the Danish integration context results from a series of qualitative interviews with the intent to uncover how professionals actively working with our target group, as well as foreign-born women themselves, experience their realities. The Danish team spoke to three professionals, all are female and in their late 40s to mid-50s. Furthermore, a group of women with migrant backgrounds who either wish to upskill, or have successfully done so, was interviewed in order to help us uncover what hinders and aids them on their journeys.

- The first interviewee has worked as a job consultant at a centre for integration of foreign-borns with asylum. The main task for

this particular person was to prepare the target group for the Danish labour market, assist them in creating CVs, applying for jobs and job training, and understanding the Danish work culture. On top of working as an educator in a job training position, she also worked as language educator for refugees, and as project manager with a "new future goals" project; The purpose of her project was to help integrate refugees into the care sector to become economically independent, a project in which many women from Syria participated.

- The second professional interviewed works in the University sector as; Associate Professor at the Centre for Modern Middle East and Muslim Studies; Associate Professor at the Department of History; and as a Project Officer at the Human Health department. Her expertise covers a broad range of topics in the Social Sciences relevant to the integration of women of non-Western origins in Denmark. She also has experience in language policy as well as identity and belonging among Muslims in Denmark, as it is expressed among young, well-educated Muslims, the older generation of Muslims, and in vulnerable housing areas such as Vollsmose in the city of Odense. Furthermore, she has also written and contributed to many books about integration and women groups.

- The third interviewee has worked within the field of vocational psychology and coaching. She has many years of experience with designing content for personal development programs. One such project involved coaching foreign-borns (including non-Western) to help them gain a foothold in the Danish labour market. To achieve this, she designed a psychological coaching tool for a nationwide Danish integration project to coach unemployed foreign-borns to find employment. This was part of a large-scale pilot project in which five Danish municipalities participated.

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[14] Theis Stenholt Engmann, *Fakta om indvandrere og efterkommere i Danmark* (Denmark Statistiks, 2019). Available at: https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/bagtal/2019/2019-02-18-fakta-om-indvandrere-og-efterkommere-i-danmark

The Danish partner also conducted interviews with a group of women of non-Western origins residing in Denmark. Three of the women, in their mid 30's, came from Syria between 2016 and 2018. At the time of the interview, they were employed as unskilled workers, or in job training through the jobcentre, and had a wish to move forward in their upskilling pathways. Another two women in their mid to late 50's, one of which has a Palestinian background and one with a Turkish background, also agreed to be interviewed. They came to Denmark in the late to mid-'90s and have succeeded in reaching their education goals with a bachelor-level education.

The UPSIM consortium was very interested in finding out what types of challenges non-Western women generally encounter when attempting to gain access to upskilling pathways, as well as to find out what enables them. One major issue that we found in Denmark, was a general perception that many of the women in our target group had insufficient learning to learn competence. It is not uncommon for women in our target group, specifically from rural areas, to have very little experience from employment and schooling, which means that some of these women may have little to no experiences to base an education or career identity on. The lack of work and academic identity, coupled with socio-cultural factors of gender roles, also means that it is difficult for some women to find the motivation to want to get a job in the first place. Consequently, to keep women with this profile in employment can be a struggle for caseworkers and the women themselves.

The interviews gave us the impression that the learning to learn competence can easily be developed, especially if we start by focusing on simple key areas such as creating a structure for the day. The interviews revealed that many women in our target group are not accustomed to performing certain organisational tasks such as planning and organising childcare or scheduling transportation. With so many unresolved practical issues, it would be fanciful to be able to motivate oneself for higher education or long-term employment. The advice

we took away from this is to start with the "where are you now" and then make a plan based on the participant's long-term goals, focus on defining the next best steps, and guide her in taking them.

Furthermore, the interviews uncovered that it is not uncommon for women with Arabic as their mother tongue, who have rarely been confronted with a foreign language before arriving in Denmark, to expect that learning this new language would be easy. When confronted with reality, most were very much taken aback, realising that this was not the case at all. The participants' cognitive and intellectual ability, coupled with gender barriers, are also to be taken into consideration. Aspects such as the individual's own (and that of their immediate family) socio-cultural expectations of what a man and a woman can and can't do also have a clear impact, especially on women.

During our interviews, we found that certain cultural interpretations of gender roles play a central part in the exclusion of women from the labour market. We do not necessarily see this as an ill-intended exclusion but simply as a side effect from cultural expectations and identities that have been formed in a culture and reality which is very different from the majority of the Danes. For example, the husband of a woman, who was attending a career coaching course, had suddenly decided that he could not accept that she was going to start working in the near future. She had been attending a coaching program intended to help her find a career path with success and enthusiasm until her husband became very concerned about what that meant for his family and her. He was adamant that she must not continue the process, with the wife subsequently quitting the program.

On the surface, we could assume that this particular husband was being irrational and dominant, but when we spoke about "the why" this happened, a different picture emerged. In this couple's culture, it is the man's responsibility to ensure the safety of his family, especially that of his wife. He was not comfortable with the

situation because he didn't understand the process that his wife was going through, what this entailed for the family structure, and what his wife might be subjected to when she started working. We can try to analyse our way to an assumption that, for him, the unanswered questions were too unsettling, and his best solution was to remove her from the threat. In situations like this, the only solution that we can think of, is to try to at least limit these types of scenarios by ensuring that the husband/immediate family is included during or in part of the process. In doing so, we give information and knowledge as a replacement for the preconceived ideas that were causing a problem. Creating a dialogue to clear up any misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and preconceived ideas about the host culture. We need to not just work on the development of the woman's personal development. We also need to help her include her immediate family to understand what is taking place, show how this can be beneficial to them, and take away the misconceptions that may exist about Western society and the values from which they arise. By focusing on changing the mindsets of the closest people to the woman, we enable their immediate networks to become supportive in the process while simultaneously removing harmful ideals of what women and men can and can't do.

Further barriers that were uncovered during our interviews was that of convenience. Some women may be "content" to have an income that covers the bills, and it can be difficult to see how it would work out financially to, for example, leave a job in order to study. For this, we also need to help the individual "zoom out" and give her examples of alternatives to full-time studying and, in general, outline which opportunities she must support herself and her family.

It would also be beneficial to highlight the longer-term financial benefits of studying, and show what it will look and feel like, when the goal has been reached. We have learnt that we must not try to go too far too soon. Once we have had a look at the overall end goal, and taken a broad perspective on the plan, we will need to

keep the next best step in mind for the mentee, without forgetting a review of her academic potential. It is not beneficial for the process, when there are no small rewards to motivate along the way, or to aim for a goal that is not achievable. By starting with the bigger picture, we can then go in and break the process down into smaller steps. One suggestion as to how this can be done, is the migration path tool (in Danish; Migrationssti). Perhaps not a very attractive tool to look at, but it's effective and simple. The migration path tool is helpful because it gives the individual a bird's eye perspective of the process.



**Syria**          **Denmark**

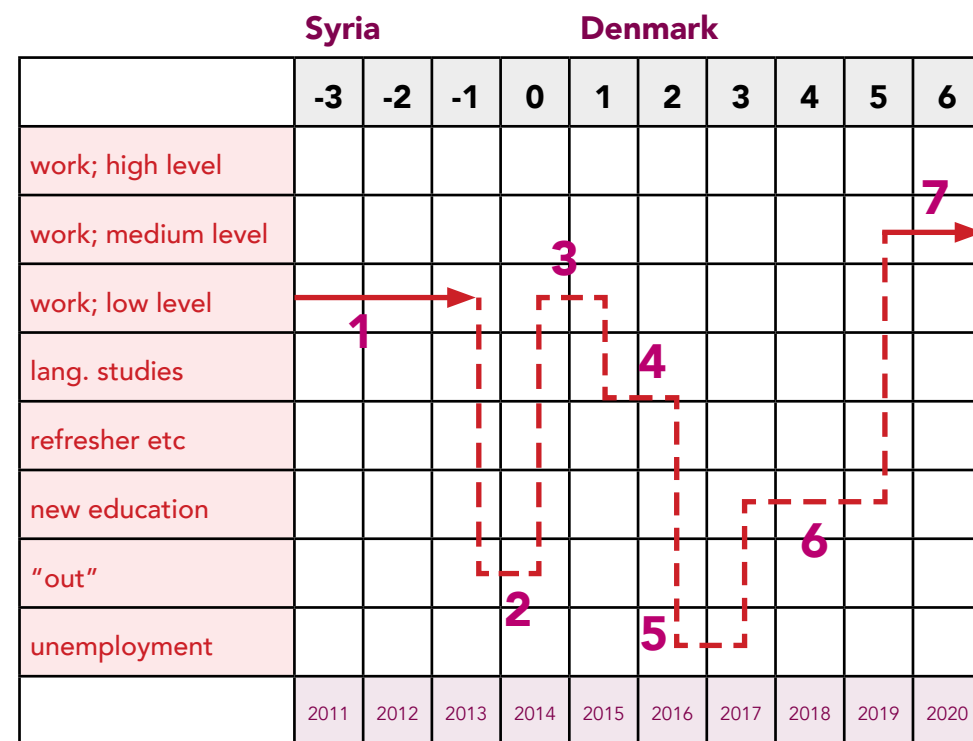| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| work; high level | | | | | | | | | | 7 |
| work; medium level | | | | | | 3 | | | | |
| work; low level | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| lang. studies | | | | | | 4 | | | | |
| refresher etc | | | | | | | | | | |
| new education | | | | | | | | | 6 | |
| "out" | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| unemployment | | | | | 5 | | | | | |
| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |

**Diagram 1.** Example of a migration path, which will be drawn up together with the participant during mentoring circle sessions.

| 1 | work level in country of origin – the field of early childhood education until entry to host country in year 0 |
|---|---|
| 2 | waiting for asylum |
| 3 | attending language school |
| 4 | work experience in local supermarket |
| 5 | unemployed |
| 6 | study to become childcare worker |
| 7 | employment as childcare worker in an afterschool program |

The migration path tool has been used by caseworkers to help summarise what typically happens to people on their journey from asylum to the present situation. It turns out that when you work with it, it helps the individuals to understand that it's not just about jumping into the education system, and presto, you have reached your goals. One must remember to take the time to sit down with the person and fill in the diagram, to see what the path looks like, and to illustrate how someone can achieve a dream career. Because the tool is graphic, it helps the participant and the mentor to make a plan together, and the drawing of the path creates an overview, shows patterns, and minimises the need for writing. By drawing it together with the individual, it helps to visualize what to expect and can show if an expectation is unrealistic, but also shows that the path can be long, and illustrates where attention needs to be, for the best next step. The positive takeaways from using such a tool is that the mentor and the participant are able to come up with a plan which is realistic, as it stimulates dialogue about the goals they want to achieve and what it will take to get there.

In Denmark, the natural direction for people who have attained lower education levels abroad, is to go through a so-called *"education bridge"*. For example, both of our interviewees who had successfully achieved their career goals, had not attained the

necessary educational levels to access an academic path in Denmark. In order to follow this route, they had to go through the adult education pathways, to gain the formal competences necessary for the national equivalent of a leaving certificate. Such adult education programs can benefit from our resources by incorporating the language tools in their Danish as a Second Language subjects, as well as the mentoring resources for student counselling programs.
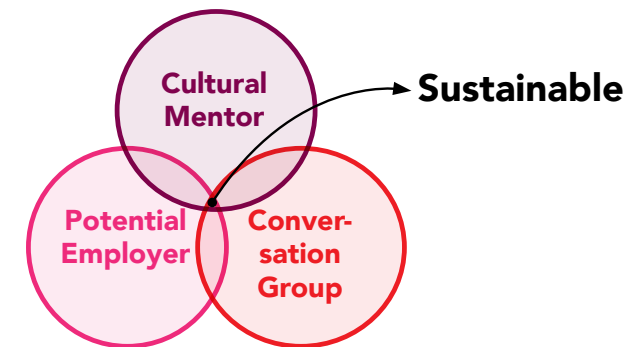


**Diagram 2.** Venn diagram illustrating a proposed structure for successful integration of recently arrived people with asylum into the labour market

The interviews also revealed that one of the most successful initiatives was a 20-week support program which was put in place in earlier efforts to integrate foreign-borns into the labour market. The main purpose of the program was to put the participant in connection with a cultural mentor, a company interested in employing the individual in question, as well as a person to "*hold their hand*" and guide them through the process. Our interviewees also advise that the cultural mentor places focus on how women from other countries relate to other women. It's unavoidable, when people travel from different cultures, to encounter challenges based on different socio-cultural worldviews. Factors such as these affect the relationships that we have; especially when it comes to how we take initiatives and whether we dare to speak our minds towards, for example, a husband and how women support other women. By introducing people who can act as role models, it has been suggested, we provide examples of new ways of seeing the world, i.e. through conversation groups.

# CZECH REPUBLIC

## Demographics

The Czech Republic has proven to be a very attractive place for foreigners, as shown by the increasing number of newcomers in the last decades. But it was not always like that. Only since the 1990s, with the fall of communism, the Velvet Revolution, and the opening of borders, can we speak about the real confrontation of the local society with immigration and foreigners. Before that, the Czech society was very homogeneous. Later, the entry to the European Union (2004) and the Czech Republic being a part of the Schengen Area (2007) meant a new chapter of immigration and integration.

During the Soviet-style state socialism (1948-1989) borders were closed to all countries outside the socialist bloc. The labour migration was supported within the bloc resulting in close cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam. Vietnamese citizens were migrating into Czechoslovakia, which significantly increased the percentage of the Vietnamese population in Czechoslovakia. After the fall of the socialist regime, most workers returned to their country of origin due to the economic crisis in the mid-nineties, which was followed by strict foreign regulations and changes in the immigration policy. Nevertheless, after 1989 many economic opportunities occurred, which led to increased immigration. Since 2008, when the economic crisis occurred repeatedly, the number of foreigners has declined[15].

The number of foreigners living in the Czech Republic has recently become higher than ever before. In 2019, there were slightly fewer than 600 000 foreign nationals residing in the Czech Republic on visas and permits (stays over 90 days or permanent residence)[16].

For the data from 2004 to 2019, see Figure 5 below. In the Czech Republic, the terms "immigrants" or "migrants" are not frequently used. The terms "foreigners" or "newcomers" are used instead.



**Trend in the number of foreigners in the CR by type of residence**
2004-1019 (31.12)
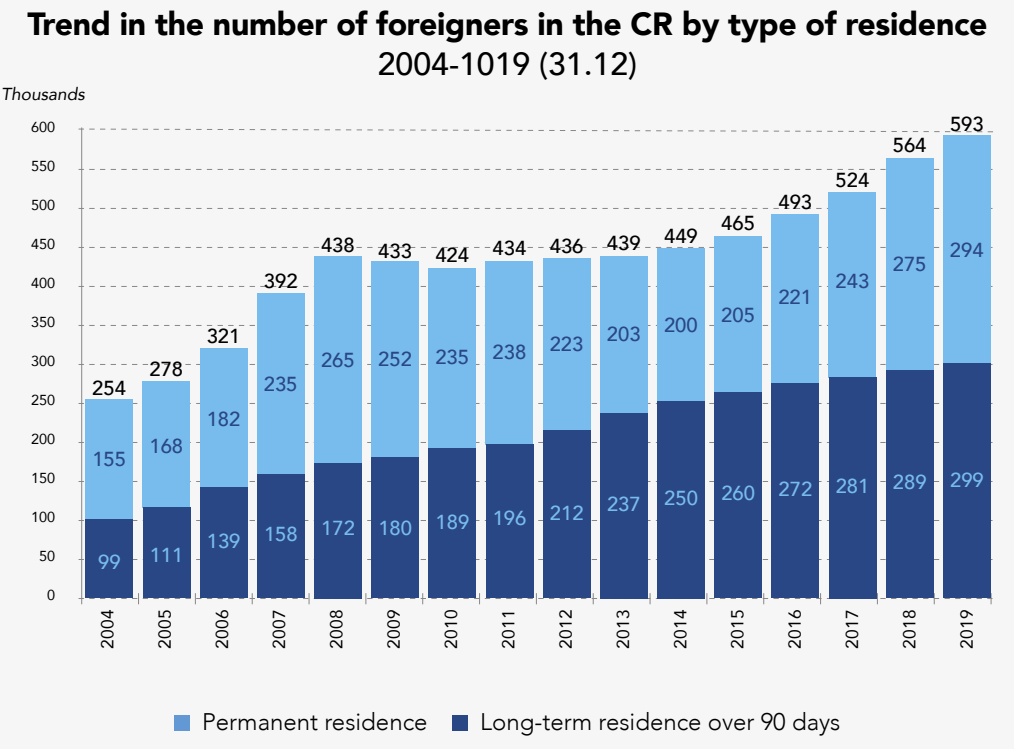
**Figure 5:** Trend in the number of foreigners in the CR by type of residence. *Source: Czech Statistical Office.*

The situation of foreign nationals is quite stable in the Czech Republic. The most represented foreign-born nationals in Czechia (see Figure 6) are Ukrainians (25%), whose numbers have been increasing following the conflict in the Donbas region; neighbouring Slovaks[17] (20%); Vietnamese (10%), and Russians (4%).

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[15] Macáková Libuše, *Selected problems of integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic* (Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy, vol. 8, No.1, 2013), p. 109-124.
[16] CZSO: Český statistický úřad. Cizinci v České republice 2019. (Praha: Český statistický úřad. 2019).

Available at: https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/91605941/29002719.pdf/74e31838-8cfa-4e93-9aed-4771e13683a8?version=1.0
[17] The high number of Slovaks living in the Czech Republic is due to the fact that until 1993 these two states were one country – Czechoslovakia. Both states have similarities and are culturally close. Slovaks and Czechs understand each other's language without a problem. Many Slovaks move to the Czech

**The most frequent citizenships of foreigners in the CR**
31.12.2019

Ukraine 25%
Slovakia 20%
Vietnam 10%
Russian Federation 6%
Poland 4%
Others 35%

**Figure 6:** The most frequent citizenships of foreigners in the Czech Republic. *Source: Czech Statistical Office.*

In the Czech Republic, there are slightly more foreign-born men (55%) than women (45%). The portion of women aged 18-30 year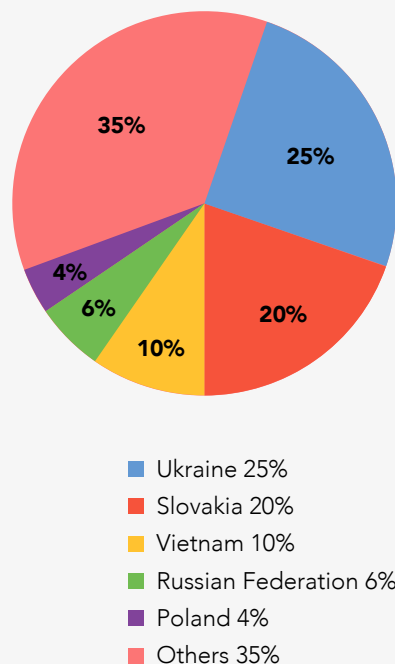s is 7%, and 30-60 is 25%. Most foreign women are in the age group of 35-39 years old (see Figure 7). The migration of women has a more permanent character compared to men, who predominantly stay in the Czech Republic temporarily.

As for the professional research, foreign-born women were not included in the migration studies (not only) in the Czech Republic. For this reason, it is pivotal to support this kind of research and be interested in the challenges foreign-born women face.

Republic because of the better quality of higher education.

**Age distribution of foreigners in the CR**
31.12.2019

*Males*                                          *Females*

Age

*Share of total (%)*
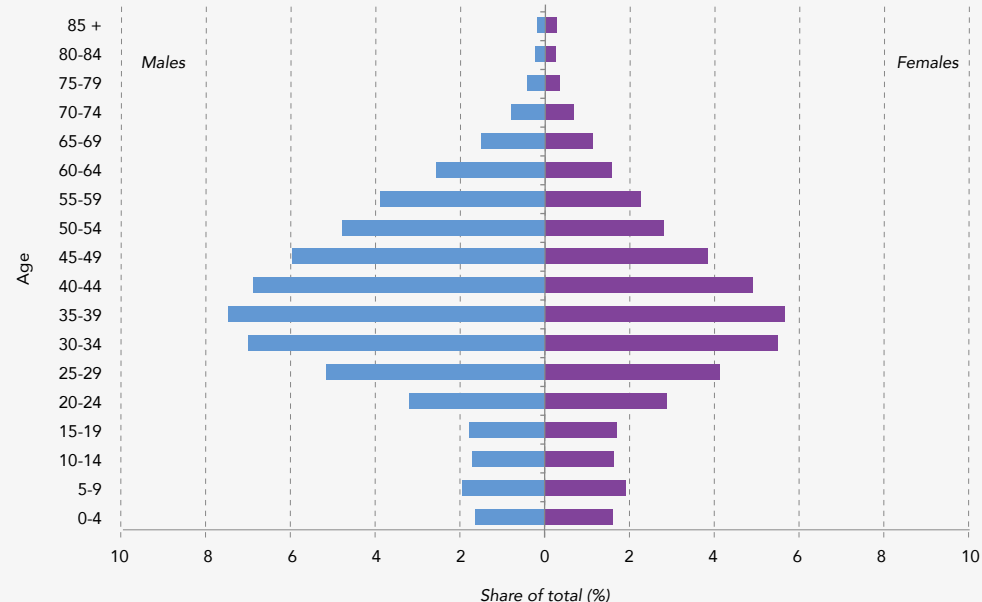
**Figure 7:** Age distribution of foreigners in the Czech Republic. *Source: Czech Statistical Office.*

Foreigners staying in the Czech Republic for over one year are the majority (97%) of the total number of registered foreigners. Foreigners come to the Czech Republic mostly for employment and business[18]. This data applies mainly to male foreign-borns.

For women, family reasons prevail. One of the reasons is also the sole reason and overall conditions of migration. While men more often use the agencies' services to find a new way of living in the country, women tend to follow their husbands or close family. Their expected role in the new country is thus at least partially predefined – they often take care of family or help their husbands run their business. This family composition is often why women in family businesses get lower wages than men and thus their economic dependence on

[18] Uherek Zdeněk, *Migration from Ukraine to the Czech Republic with Respect to the War Conflict in Eastern Ukraine* (Warsaw, Centre of Migration Research Working Papers, No. 93/151, 2016).

their husbands. A standard difference between the net incomes of immigrant men and women is about one-fourth of the income.[19]

Another crucial fact is that incoming women are usually less informed about the conditions and overall situation in the country they are moving in. Hence, they are much more vulnerable to risk situations in the Czech job market. This lack of information also leads to less qualified jobs, difficulties with payments, and not using their qualifications at all. The third most common reason is to study followed by humanitarian and other reasons.[20]

## Educational Background

The statistical data describing the level of newcomers' education are not available regularly. However, according to news articles[21], there is a direct ratio – higher education correlates with higher income. There's an exception in the case of Ukrainians who, despite having university diplomas, often end up in non-professional or lower-paid positions. Since Ukraine is not a member state of the EU, the process of nostrification and recognition of their titles is very complicated. According to the research outcomes, there is not a striking difference between the level of education of incoming men and women in the Czech Republic. The only visible difference is in the percentage of requests for nostrification of qualification documents, where men more often apply.[22]

There is a striking difference, however, in the usage of achieved qualification, where women use their qualification much less than men (52 percent of incoming women do not use their qualification

in the Czech Republic at all). In contrast, men usually use their qualification at least partially.[23]

The Organisation for Aid to Refugees' practice shows that foreign-born women with a university degree often face dequalification and non-utilization of their potential in the Czech Republic. The client, who worked as a university professor of law in Cuba, performs auxiliary work in a massage parlour and also washes dishes in a restaurant.

These facts prove that the education that most foreign-born women have received in their country of origin is not accepted or recognized in the Czech Republic. To realise their potential, they have to go through nostrification, which requires passing various exams and supplementing their education. For many women, this process is both financially and mentally / psychologically demanding. In many cases, these are also foreign-born women who are already older and are therefore forced to mainly perform low-skilled jobs.[24]

## Employment and Work

The foreigners in the Czech Republic often work in the manufacturing industry and are, in many cases, unskilled employees. On the other hand, while the average wage in the Czech Republic exceeded 33 000 Czech Crown (approximately 1280 Euro), almost 200 thousand Slovaks who are employed in the Czech Republic receive, on average, more than 40 000 Czech Crown.[25]

The requirement for the economic independence of women has been continuously increasing. Despite this fact, women in general

[19] Kocourek Jiří, *Analýza přístupu imigrantek a imigrantů ke vzdělávání a na trh práce v České republice* (MPSV, 2007). Available at: https://www.esfcr.cz/documents/21802/739492/Anal%C3%BDza+-+publikace/d5582df7-6f3e-4705-b23f-275c523180a0
[20] Ibid
[21] Stejskalová, Alice *Nejhůře a nejlépe placené práce v Česku. Nový žebříček ukazuje, kdo si polepšil dvojnásobně* (Aktuálně.cz 2017). Available at: https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/finance/nejhure-a-nejlepe-pla-cene-prace-v-cesku-novy-zebricek-ma-cis/r~20b5b8641185211e7a70b002590604f2e/
[22] Kocourek Jiří, *Analýza přístupu imigrantek a imigrantů ke vzdělávání a na trh práce v České republice*

[23] Ibid.
[24] Matheová Beáta (MigraceOnline.cz), "Vykořisťování žen migrantek na trhu práce", (MigraceOnline.cz, 30. 3. 2016). Avaliable at https://migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/vykoristovani-zen-migrantek-na-trhu-prace
[25] Holý, Dalibor 2021, *Ekonomická migrace ze Slovenska.* (Statistika & my, 2015). Available at: https://www.statistikaamy.cz/2015/10/15/ekonomicka-migrace-ze-slovenska/

still face inequalities in the labour market compared to men. This issue is even more visible in the case of female immigrants. Female foreign-borns often have to face lower payment, secondary status as well as disrespect, stereotypical perception of female foreign-borns, humiliation, and general unequal attitude.[26]

As mentioned above, in the Czech Republic, the recognition of qualifications, nostrification of diplomas, and the related process of work permits are quite complicated. Most women are not able to find employment corresponding to their qualifications. This situation makes them accept any job (often a low-paid one). Thus, foreign-born women are at a higher risk of falling into poverty than male foreign-borns.

Consequently, foreign-born women are largely employed in informal and unregulated services, such as work in services, the hotel industry, care for elderly and disabled groups, but also in the sex industry.

A specific problem of foreign-born women in the labour market is their involvement in domestic work (nanny, cleaner, etc.), because the Czech legal regulation does not provide sufficient protection for them, at least at the minimum level.[27]

The number of foreign-born women who are able to enter the labour market is significantly lower than for foreign-born men. For instance, in a business area, foreign-born women represent around 30 % of businessmen from people of foreign origin.[28]

## Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Integration

Integration of foreigners into the Czech society is a crucial part of the immigration policy of the Czech Republic, and it is essential for smooth immigrant participation in the Czech labour market and life in the Czech Republic in general. The main problems regarding integrations are insufficient knowledge of the Czech language, access to health care[29] and education.

Lack of language knowledge prevents foreigners from integrating into society and entering the education system. The Czech language remains the main communication language in the job market, with the exception of highly specialised technical jobs where English or any other world language can be a sufficient prerequisite in addition to the relevant knowledge and job experience. Outside of the job market, at least basic knowledge of the Czech language remains a key prerequisite for successful integration, especially to deal with standard situations of daily living. A majority of personnel in shops, restaurants, and other establishments still do not possess a sufficient command of English, notwithstanding their lower openness to use it at work. Furthermore, for the permanent stay, it is necessary to have A1-level knowledge and, for citizenship, on level B1. The Czech language is spoken only in the Czech Republic, which means the newcomers are mostly taught the basic language skills after their arrival.

A significant difference between men and women also emerges in language learning and intercultural interaction opportunities, further deepening the chances of successfully integrating. According to the research[30], 65% of male economic foreign-borns work with Czech colleagues while only 52% employed women do so. The difference

[26] Klvačová, P.'Když sem jdeš, tak to musíš vydržet'. Vyrovnávání se nerovností ve výpovědích cizinek žijících v České republice." In Šanderová, J. (ed.). *Sociální nerovnosti v kvalitativním výzkumu.* (Praha: ISS UK FSV., 2007)
[27] Holý, Dalibor "Mají vyšší vzdělání, ale pořád berou méně." (Statistika & my, 2018). Available at: https://www.statistikaamy.cz/2018/04/27/maji-vyssi-vzdelani-ale-porad-berou-mene/
[28] "Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace a integrace cizinců na území České republiky v roce 2015" (Praha, 2016)

[29] FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Cost of exclusion from healthcare. The case of migrants in an irregular situation.* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015) Available at: http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2015/cost-exclusion-healthcare-case-migrants-irregular-situation.
[30] Hradečná, P., Jelínková, M., Ezzeddine, P., & Havelková, H. . *Ženy na vedlejší koleji(?): gender, migrace a stárnutí* (Sdružení pro integraci a migraci, 2016)

goes much further when considering the much higher unemployment among foreign-born women, who are the least exposed to the Czech language of all groups. Immigrant men also work under the Czech boss much more often (70%) than foreign-born women (54%).[31]

Another factor is the negative attitude towards foreign-borns from the view of the general society. The statistics show that negative attitudes toward immigration highly correlate with a low level of education and higher age of the citizens (over 60 years). Due to that fact, the majority of the Czech population has a negative perception of immigration.[32] For instance, 63% perceive long-living foreigners as a health risk, 57% as a reason for criminality increase[33], and 66% wouldn´t want to live next to a Muslim.[34]

Furthermore, the mass media plays an important role that significantly shapes the perception of general society by eliciting fear and encouraging negative attitudes.[35]

## National Integration Strategies

As mentioned above, one of the most significant integration efforts occurred between 1948-1989 when the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance created special long-term cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Czechoslovakia. Second, during the economic crisis, cooperation and integration were frozen and immigration declined.[36]
The migration to the Czech Republic can be effective and beneficial only if connected with proper integration strategies. The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic runs the integration policy based on the *Conception of integration of foreigners – In Mutual Respect*, which the Czech government adopted in 2016.

The integration policy in the Czech Republic is focused on engaging foreigners into the society, creating conditions for good and non-conflictual coexistence between foreigners and the majority, or preventing negative social interactions. The integration measures are based on the support of the self-sufficiency of foreigners who know their rights and are able to navigate themselves in Czech society. The integration assistance significantly reduces the risk of their manipulability, abuse, and dependence on third-party.

The fundamental part of the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic is the network of 18 Integration Centres, which provide a wide range of integration services to foreigners and mediate the communication between them and the majority and work on its improvement. Centres offer Czech language courses, sociocultural courses, or free social or law counselling. They cooperate with other integration initiatives such as NGOs, schools, etc. in order to provide Czech language courses free of charge as well as leisure activities, and introduction to Czech culture and customs, providing guardianship throughout the integration process.[37] However, in order to gain awareness about relevant information, it is necessary to have access and skills to work with the internet, which can be a limiting factor.

## Qualitative research for needs analysis, Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, we interviewed a total of 4 foreign-born women who have recently come to the country, 2 foreign-born women with a longer history of stay and have already found their "*niche*" to realise their dreams and goals, and 3 social workers who are in direct daily contact with the target groups of this project.

[31] Kocourek Jiří, *Analýza přístupu imigrantek a imigrantů ke vzdělávání a na trh práce v České republice*
[32] Macáková Libuše, *Selected problems of integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic*
[33] Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav AV ČR (CVVM), "Postoje české veřejnosti k cizincům – březen 2020", (CVVM, 2020). Avaliable at https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/ostatni/vztahy-a-zivotni-postoje/5207-postoje-ceske-verejnosti-k-cizincum-brezen-2020, (accessed on 12.12.2021).
[34] Ibid
[35] Macáková Libuše, *Selected problems of integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic*
[36] Ibid

[37] Ibid

The first incoming woman, aged 22, came to the country as an absolvent standard 11-year education programme in her home Russia, with the aim to learn the language and start her studies at a local university. Her goal is to start a professional career in Europe which would help her become more financially independent. She identified the level of language knowledge as the biggest obstacle to achieving her dreams. Unfortunately, she was not able to get to the university recently. Because of her pregnancy, her future goals are limited to passing a one-year-long language course before deciding her next steps.

The other woman, 18 years old, came from Ukraine, where she had completed a standard 11-year long education process with official outcome papers. In her story, another issue resonates with many other foreigners' – the lack of working opportunities due to the restrictions imposed by her visa status. Thus she is not officially employed, but she still has to take care of her living, while she does not want to rely entirely on her family. The biggest issue she is facing, however, is the lack of moral encouragement, be it from her family abroad or from a community of people around, to persist and constantly work to reach her dreams. Also, the lack of working experience is hindering her access to the job market.

Another story shows a woman of Buryat descent, a citizen of the Russian Federation, who has already achieved a bachelor's title at a Russian university. According to her explanation, however, the quality of the study programme was very poor. There is also another issue – the problem with the nostrification of her diploma in Western countries. So, her goal is to obtain a diploma at a European university, so she can reach stable employment in Europe. She identified another big issue that is very common to women coming with similar goals: a lack of information available, be it about the study opportunities, visa procedures, conditions of their possible stay, job opportunities and options of legal employment, etc. She is also striving against the lack of support, while her goal is to become independent and strong enough

financially to be able to help her family abroad and cover her costs of living in Europe.

The next woman, 24, comes from Kazakhstan and her story puts her somewhere between the first and the second target group in our project. She has already finished the study of teaching and also her working experience in her homeland. However, the lack of quality of her education and the lack of job opportunities even the qualified people forced her to come to the Czech Republic. Her success story consists of a very intensive study of the host-country language (Czech) She succeeded in getting into a Czech study programme at a local university after just 1 year of language study. Currently, she continues her university studies and works in the Czech programme of teaching English. Her goal is now firmly settled – she is going to become an English teacher in the Czech Republic next year.

From the stories of four young women who have recently come to the Czech Republic, we can define several obstacles and pressing concerns they have to face:

- The financial situation is always a big factor, especially if the women are not allowed to work regularly in the country due to visa restrictions. A lack of legal job opportunities blocks possible chances of stable employment and forces many to find an unofficial job without a proper legal basis.

- The lack of information about possible study options, visa procedures, job opportunities etc.

- The low level of language knowledge is a big hindrance to the level of education, job seeking, as well as contact with official institutions.

- The lack of moral support when struggling – be it from distant family or the community around, the perceived "*loneliness*" is a great psychological hindrance to everybody when facing other problems.

The stories of older women who came to the Czech Republic earlier and succeeded in building their lives in a new country largely confirm the issues foreigners have to face, as well as the importance of some support factors that greatly enhance the probability of success. The first lady, 34, came from Russia with a proven work record as an office assistant. Her goal was to get an education at the Czech university, which she successfully achieved. After obtaining bachelor title in Economy, she went on to get a permanent job in the country. She described the opportunity to study the language in an intensive and very concerted way at a language school as pivotal to fulfilling her dreams later. Moreover, she mentioned it would not be possible for her to pass all the obstacles without the help of one family member who had come to the country before and helped her at the beginning. The second woman, 41, arrived from Uzbekistan with a family friend without a proven working record, which partly adds to the lack of economic and job opportunities she is now facing. However, she defines the help from the community around as the big asset which ultimately helped her to prevail, learn the language and get a proper job.

The interviews with social workers from NGOs brought a bigger overall picture of the situation of foreign women in the country. The first interviewee works in the Together for Diversity programme as a coordinator of community activities with newcomers and a volunteer "buddy" program. The second interviewee is employed in a programme where the contact with foreign-born women, their partners, and children is frequent and whose goal is to harmonise family life with career and job opportunities. The third interviewee organises courses on social work and also provides some job coaching to foreigners.

The scale of persons they are working with is very broad. Some of them face the language barrier as the most difficult obstacle to move forward in their goals, for others, the cultural barriers are the most difficult one, and others cannot overcome dependency on everyday exhausting low-qualified work. A problem of particular target groups is the legislature, although they have access to the job market after a six-month period of asylum seeker status. Before the 6-month period is over, they cannot start looking for a job at the job market, so this can be a hindrance for them. However, most of them have to take low-qualified jobs, even if they have high education, because they are unable to nostrify their diplomas and other documents or do not have them at their disposal. Connection to the Internet is sometimes also an issue, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, when public internet access is restricted (e.g. in a refugee camp, the computer room is closed).

It is difficult to say which of the issues are most difficult to overcome. Among the cases that have not been mentioned before, there are also instances of domestic violence and problems with overcoming a traditional role of women in the family – taking care of children, etc. Very often, the lack of knowledge of the legislature is a big issue; however, we have already prepared a course for foreign-born women which supports them in this field to be able to start their own business. Some other women, however, are not able to even use the tools we have developed. They either do not know about them or are so enrooted in their community and feel obliged to stay within the traditional role, that they do not feel any chance to follow their dreams even with the tools available. This is a difference in the sociocultural environment that they are unable to overcome. It is sometimes connected to education – in some countries, a woman cannot get access to education even if she is intelligent and motivated.

Another big issue is a nostrification process – there is always a percentage of qualified foreign-borns who could become medics, dentists, veterinarians, etc., but their papers cannot be nostrified. Furthermore, they are not able to pass the exams right now in the Czech Republic – they either do not know the language well enough, or they do not have time to prepare properly because they have to earn money for living by taking low-qualified and exhausting jobs.

Moreover, some employees prefer agency employers because they have somebody with good knowledge who takes care of their issues, so an employer does not need to overcome language barriers with an employee in person.

It is difficult to tell which of the barriers are most difficult to overcome – for some, it is language deficiency, for others sociocultural differences, overcoming the role of women, for some even lack of legislative knowledge, although this can relatively easy to overcome from the institutional point of view, if the woman is otherwise motivated, strong and not overdependent on others (regardless of the source of her dependency – cultural, social, family or other reasons).

The second employee explicitly mentioned the language barrier as a key factor – especially for foreign-born women. Also, finding the time between jobs and caring for kids can be difficult. This is also strongly affected by gender barriers as the man of the household very often does not support a language education of his wife/partner. It is especially difficult if the woman is not literate in her native tongue to begin with, which is also often the case.

Other interviewees added the importance of securing housing/accommodation and access to basic services as a minimal platform for further growth.

Among the suggestions for other social and intercultural workers, there were these important points:

• Try to work with your clients individually, take each client as an individual with specific needs, goals, set of values, obligations, and problems. A big part of this work is communication with all interested parties and providing an interpreter for key meetings of the client, including negotiations with his employer, labour office, immigration office, etc.

• Instead of making the women commute to language courses or support centres, our volunteers/workers go to their houses. They teach the lessons there and answer current questions the women might have and thus target the overcoming of other barriers (lack of information, socialisation etc.).

• It is important to find the right way to facilitate the language acquisition of foreign-born women.

# GUADELOUPE

## Demographics

Out of the foreign-born population in Guadeloupe, one in four have French nationality. Almost 30% come from the neighbouring island of Dominica, while less than 14% are from Haiti. Over the decades, the share of foreign-borns in the population has increased: it reached 4% in the 1982 census, then 7% in 1990, with the significant arrival of foreign-borns Haitians fleeing political unrest in their country. Haitians then represented 44% of foreign-borns. Since then, the geographical origin of migratory flows has diversified: in 1990, three quarters of foreign-borns were native from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, or Dominica, compared to less than seven out of ten in 1999. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of foreign-borns fell by 18%, while the regional population increased by 9%. Immigration is becoming more feminine, a sign of the gradual shift from labour immigration to immigration that is more family-oriented: from 49% of women in 1974, this rose to 56% in 1999.

Overseas[38], France presents, because of its prosperity in relation to its regional environment, a migratory attractiveness which is more important than in metropolitan France.

This particularity is reflected, for these territories, by:

- a much higher proportion of foreign nationals in the total population than in mainland France and other overseas communities.
- much more annual admissions to stay.
- more deportations of illegal foreigners.

In total, 8 out of 10 foreign-borns were from the Caribbean in 1999. In 2005[39] foreign-borns represented less than 7% of the population and the proportion of women among foreign-borns seems to have increased further, from 52% to 53% between 1999 and 2005. In 2011[40], an estimate of the population in an irregular situation was established by the General Overseas Delegation. For Guadeloupe and the northern islands, the estimation ranged from 10,000 to 20,000 illegal foreign-borns. This immigration is, above all, an immigration of proximity (Atlas des Population, Guadeloupe, 2006):

- Foreign-borns from Haiti represents today almost half of foreign-borns, up from 38% in 1999;
- Foreign-borns from Dominica, who still form the second largest group, with 25% of the Foreign-borns in 1999;
- and foreign-borns from the Dominican Republic represented 7% in 1999.

According to a meeting with the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) in Guadeloupe in March 2021, 80% of the foreign-borns who contact the OFII come from the Caribbean. Haitians constitute the overwhelming majority of applicants for a residence permit (representing up to 50% of the applicants) to the OFII (where almost 99% of their asylum requests are rejected), followed by foreign-borns from Dominica and the Dominican Republic (representing altogether up to 30% of the applicants).

In Guadeloupe (France), the conditions for the right to asylum are very strictly defined, and many foreign-borns do not meet the conditions and are therefore rejected. The foreign-borns that are meeting the conditions are then invited to sign for a CIR (Contrat d'intégration Républicain), as further explained hereafter. The foreign-borns living on the fringes of the legal system, sometimes for many years in the region, and who request regularisation, can benefit from this system (which was in 2006).

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[38] Secrétariat général du comité interministériel de contrôle de L'immigration, *Rapport d'activité 2012 de l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration external* (Paris, Direction de l'Information légale et administrative, 2012). Avaialble at https://www.ofii.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Rapport_Immigration_2012H_Web.pdf

[39] Éric Moriame, Sandrine Pitot, *L'atlas des populations immigrées en Guadeloupe* (e l'Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques et l'Agence nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et l'Égalité des chances, 2006). Available at: https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1289809

[40] Secrétariat général du comité interministériel de contrôle de L'immigration, *Rapport d'activité 2012 de l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration external.*

# Educational Background[41]

The foreign-born population has a large proportion of people without a diploma, regardless of the country of origin concerned. On average, 2 in 3 foreign-borns have no diploma, and only 6% have a diploma university (in 2006). This training deficit only improves slowly over the course of time and creates the conditions for success and professional integration more difficult for foreign-borns. On the one hand, they are more affected by unemployment, and on the other hand they are more often in precarious jobs or low-skilled. Recent immigration concerns a growing share of qualified people, who fit more easily into the job.

The educational level of foreign-borns depends on their migratory journey, particularly their age on arrival in France. It also depends on the quality of the school system and enrolment rates in their countries of origin, as well as socio-cultural characteristics aspects of foreign-born populations. Haitian foreign-borns (see table 1 hereafter), of French-speaking origin and long-term immigration, are few graduates: 80% have no diploma; and less than 1% have a level diploma higher than a baccalaureate. People from Dominica are in a similar situation: 78% have no diploma, and only 1% have a tertiary degree. 70% of people from the Dominican Republic have no diploma, and only 2 % have a tertiary degree.

| DEGREE/ QUALIFICATION | All immigrants | Of which country of birth: | | | Whole population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Dominica | Dominican Republic | Haiti | |
| No diploma | 66,0 | 78,0 | 69,5 | 80,0 | **46,5** |
| Primary school certificate, or Diploma of studies of the first cycle of the second degree (BEPC), (...) | 9,7 | 8,6 | 10,6 | 8,2 | **17,0** |
| Professional diplomas (BEP, CAP) | 10,0 | 8,4 | 13,8 | 7,6 | **16,3** |
| College bachelor's degree. (Baccalaureate) | 7,9 | 3,8 | 4,0 | 3,2 | **10,8** |
| University diploma | 6,4 | 1,2 | 2,1 | 0,9 | **9,4** |
| TOTAL | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** |

**Table 1:** Level of qualifications according to origins: diploma for 15 years old and over in 1999 (in%) *Source: Population census 1999*

[41] Éric Moriame, Sandrine Pitot, *L'atlas des populations immigrées en Guadeloupe*

# Employment and Work[42]

Guadeloupe has 191,000 working people[43] (data from 2006) of which 13,000 are foreign-borns. About four in ten are women, the majority of Haitian origin (40%). The activity rate of foreign-borns, down 6 points compared to 1990, remains significantly higher than the regional average. foreign-borns often have low-skilled, salaried jobs: 65% are workers or employees. More than one in five is self-employed. In the majority, foreign-borns are more exposed to precariousness, in particular women and young people. Their unemployment rate of 42% is higher than in the rest of the population: six times out of ten, this is women. Women are less present in the labour market, and combine low activity and a high unemployment rates.

# Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Integration

In the West Indies region, French is not necessarily dominant. In certain islands like Saint Lucia or Dominica, the inhabitants speak mainly Creole and English. In Guadeloupe, however, the trend is quite different: French is the official language, but it is not the only language spoken on the island.

In the Caribbean, the Jamaican and Haitian Creole, languages are considered distinct from West Indian Creole, which is standard in Saint Lucia, Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthelemy, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, and French Guiana. However, it cannot be said that there is only one West Indian Creole. Even if they are very similar, the French-speaking Creoles of Guyana, Martinique, Saint Lucia, or Dominica are not the same. They are all coloured with the specific migration and colonisation histories of each home island.

[42] Marine Haddad, *Migration from French Overseas Departments to Metropolitan France: What we can learn about a state policy from the censuses, 1962–1999* (INED – French Institute for Demographic Studies, 2018). Available at: https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02365921/document
[43] Éric Moriame, Sandrine Pitot, *L'atlas des populations immigrées en Guadeloupe*.

In Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Saint-Martin, the spoken language is "Gwada Creole". The mix of French, African, and Indian languages tell the story of the West Indies. Its lexicon is made up of 90% French words. This does not mean that people understand it when someone speaks French, as Gwada Creole is indeed a different language. Reserved for slaves, it was not spoken by the settlers, and was not originally a written language. Today it is written on a phonetic basis.

What are the consequences in terms of language acquisition for foreign-born adult women from the 3 main countries identified as the main "provider" of foreign-borns in Guadeloupe? In Guadeloupe, foreign-borns, no matter where they come from, acquire the Creole language first, not the French language. Therefore, they are more likely to find a job thanks to their abilities in creole than in French. However, this is not helpful in terms of education. Based on an interview with a woman from the Dominican Republic, we have learnt that women from this country, who speak Spanish, often stay within the bounds of their Spanish speaking community or even their home, severely limiting their learning of the French language, or even Creole from Guadeloupe.

In terms of opening access to rights (i.e., open a bank account because having bank details is needed for almost all administrative steps; open a file to have a social security number, which is also needed for many administrative actions, such as for any employment contract, or getting a residence address; being able to get to the specific office, which became even more difficult during the Covid-19 crisis) the framework exists but is not sufficient. Consequently, this constitutes a major obstacle to the integration of foreign-born women.

About foreign-born women, and vulnerability, it is important to note the existence of clandestine prostitution of a specific group of women in Guadeloupe. Indeed, according to a survey made in 2015-2016 by "l'Observatoire féminin" in Guadeloupe, which interviewed a group of women. Out of 80 girls, around the ages of 20 to 75 years old, most of them were prostituting themselves. Most of these women and girls are from the Dominican Republic. For reasons of expired residence permit, some of them had to leave the region and found prostitution as their source of income. Associations have observed the continued arrival of new young women.

## National Integration Strategies

The major objective of France integration[44] regarding foreign-borns is their republican integration in French society. The Act of 24 July 2006 provides that the republican integration of a foreigner into French society is assessed in the light of his commitment to respect the principles governing the French Republic, the effective observance of those principles, and his sufficient knowledge of the French language. Following this perspective, the signature of a specific contract, Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration (CAI) was made compulsory from 1 January 2007. The CAI is presented to the foreign-born "in a language he understands". By his signature, the foreigner "undertakes to follow a civic and, when the need is established, linguistic training".

Knowledge of the functioning of public institutions and services, of the Republic's laws, principles and values, and sufficient knowledge of the French language constitute the bases of the integration path. As such, the State offers the following services:

- a training course with the participation of interpreters if necessary: this one-day training includes the presentation of the French institutions and the values of the Republic, in particular with regard to equality between men and women, secularism, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, the security of persons and property.

- a language training with the objective of obtaining the initial diploma in French (DILF), a diploma recognized by the State.

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[44] Secrétariat général du comité interministérieL de contrôle de L'immigration, *Les orientations de La politique de L'immigration OFII* (Paris, Direction de l'Information légale et administrative, 2011) Available at: https://www.ofii.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/rapport.pdf

This training is of varying duration and intensity according to the needs of each person.

• an information session on life in France, designed to sensitise newcomers to the functioning of French society and to introduce them, during thematic workshops, to the main public services, including health and social protection, school and childcare, training and employment, housing.
• an assessment of professional skills in order to enable the signatories of the reception and integration contract to make use of their professional qualifications, experience and skills in the context of a job search.
• social support if the personal or family situation of the signatory justifies it.

All these training and benefits are provided free of charge. The benefits associated with the CAI are set up and financed by the National Agency for the reception of foreigners and migration (ANAEM) since 11 January 2007, the OFII since 2009. The CAI is concluded for a period of twelve months. It may be extended for a further year, in particular to allow the foreign-born to complete his course of learning French. In fact, the OFII strives to close the CAI within eighteen months of the signature. Checks are made at six months, twelve months and possibly eighteen months. If all the training and services provided have been completed, the contract is concluded positively. If not, it is the subject of a proposal for negative closure addressed to the prefect who assesses the relevance of a sanction measure in terms of stay.

The associations listed below carry out social actions in the favour of vulnerable foreign-born women, including language courses, but also, somehow, learning-to-learn skills, as well as support for women in precarious situations, who are vulnerable and subjected to physical and psychological violence.

At the time, 57 women in prostitution are followed by an association (APAPED). They are called "old" by members of the association because they have been in business for many years. Most of them have children. It is more difficult to obtain this information from very young girls, who are less easily accessible. Actions implemented within the framework of the APAPED association are:

A) Support in social initiatives: women are followed and accompanied in the different approaches to their social life (Residence permit, family allowances, Tax declaration, Registration of children in school, in the canteen, Civil status process, approach with the official job search centre, Passport or Identity card, Housing request)

B) Access to healthcare

C) Professional integration (CV writing, Training for certain cases that remain marginalized, French language learning, Employment of one of the people by the association)

D) Parenthood action in partnership with another association "FORCES" (...).

The main issues identified by the head of the APAPED association are as follows (inter alia):
Questions about children and parenthood (number and difficulties encountered).
Questioning on the dangerous situations encountered.
• unsanitary housing
• the need for educational support and parenting assistance
• the need to set up rights opening actions
• the need for medical consultations
• domiciliation issues for people in an irregular situation
• violence in the environment especially between women themselves

71 other women in prostitution were supported by the association GWADA-UNI-VERS. Young women (16 years old for the youngest) who arrived at the end of 2015, were spotted but remain difficult to access by members of the association. Actions implemented within the framework of the association are:

A) Prevention workshops against sexually transmitted diseases and reduction of sexual risks

B) French learning workshops (introductory French language courses are taught by a teacher). Furthermore, the vocabulary of health prevention is discussed.

C) Training peer educators (11 women in prostitution were trained to pass on information to other people in their community about HIV, transmission of sexual risks, violence).

The "Fédération Force" is an association committed to the equality of women and men, especially in Guadeloupe. The association has implemented for 4 years, and until 2020 (just before the global health crisis of covid-19), a programme with the aim of taking care of newcomers, with most women. The programme was financed by the DJSCS (General Directorate of Youth, Sports and Equal Opportunities) and was carried out in collaboration with the OFII (which receives asylum seekers). Actions implemented were:
- self-esteem course
- an assessment of professional skills
- a report on their situation in Guadeloupe upon their arrival
- their employment situation
- their possible illiteracy status: introduction to the French Republic in particular by helping them discover the island and its history, through a module "illiteracy – learning the French language" with a teacher, to bring new competences to these newcomers.

The Federation would have appreciated the renewal of the programme, but due to the looming sanitary crisis, this was not discussed. (The Federation also has a daytime reception for women victims of violence, which includes women of Haitian, and Dominican origin).

## The term "Minorities" is not used in Guadeloupe

There is a specific feature in Guadeloupe when it comes to citing the target population of the UPSIM project. In fact, we are not talking about "women from minorities", but "socially excluded women". Indeed, no physical difference can categorise these women, they have the same ethnic characteristics as most of the population of Guadeloupe.

## Qualitative research for needs analysis, Guadeloupe

Anonymous qualitative Interviews were conducted in Guadeloupe, based on the IO1 UPSIM questionnaires, during February to May 2021, with the purpose of establishing the main Target Groups' needs to be used later by the IO2, IO3 and IO4 leaders.

With the support of the learning centre language in Guadeloupe, called FORE Alternance, which gives French lessons on behalf of the OFII (French Office of Immigration and Integration), we could collect answers from 5 women from the Target Group 1a (TG1a) "enrolled" into the CIR process (including language learning, see the above description) with the OFII. A sixth woman was found with the support of the Project Manager of the UPSIM project in Guadeloupe, who is from Guadeloupe.

The first interviewee is a woman of 27 years old from the Dominican Republic. She only speaks Spanish. She has a bachelor diploma

(university level or similar). In her native country she worked as a cashier in a supermarket, had a driving licence, a stable job and her own house. Now that she is in Guadeloupe, she is looking for a part-time job and she would like to obtain her driving licence. In her opinion, her language level in French is her main vulnerability, and her lack of proof of previous education / work experience could prevent her from achieving her goal / dream. The help she would need to achieve her dream would be to be offered a job.

The second interviewee is a woman of 29 years old from Haiti. She speaks French and Haitian Creole. In her opinion, her main vulnerability is her economical vulnerability.  She has a secondary education level (11-18 years) and has some (few) experience in catering. Her dream and her goal is to have her own shop. Her current poor financial situation could prevent her from achieving her goal / dream. The help she would need to achieve her dream would be to receive financial support.

The third interviewee is a 30-year-old woman from Haiti. She speaks French and Haitian Creole. She did not want to select any of the suggested vulnerabilities she faces. She has a secondary education level (11-18 years) but has no diploma. She only had professional experience in 2012-2013. Her dream in 5 years is to obtain her driving licence. Her aim is to become a chef, but her lack of professional experience could prevent her from achieving her goal / dream. The help she would need to achieve her dream would be to receive some support to take care and keep her children.

The fourth interviewee is a 26-year-old woman from the Dominican Republic. She speaks Spanish and French. In her opinion, her main vulnerability is her lack of information. She has a secondary education level (11-18 years) and has her "baccalaureate" diploma from the Dominican Republic. She has no professional experience. Her dream in 5 years is to "*be well economically*". Her aim is to have professional experience.

The fifth interviewee is a 29-year-old woman from Haiti. She speaks French (good level) and Haitian Creole. To her opinion, her main vulnerability is her economical vulnerability. She has a secondary education level (11-18 years), but no diploma. She has no professional experience. Her dream in 5 years is to, with her savings, "*achieve a lot if God brings me life*". Her goal is to stay honest to herself, help people, be in good health, and find a good job so she can achieve a lot of things. Having no job and a bad financial situation could prevent her from achieving her goal / dream. But if she manages to design a plan with some support, she could for instance attend training to have a job.

The sixth interviewee is a 24-year-old woman from Haiti. She speaks French, (she is perfectly fluent) and Haitian Creole. She was sent to Guadeloupe to live with her godmother (who acquired the French nationality) when she was 16 years old, and she never seems to have experienced difficulties with her godmother (*violence or family abuse?*) and no longer lives with this lady. She always had a resident permit from long to short term and one year ago she received the order to leave the territory. The justification given is that she no longer lives with her godmother. She requested the support of two lawyers, but they seemed to drag her file, to her opinion. She Studied several years in the French system; she even has her CAP (a 2-year diploma) and BEP (another 2 years diploma) in hairdressing. She is working as a hairdresser in Pointe-à-Pitre, the main city of the Guadeloupe Region. Her dream is to have her own business as a hairdresser in Guadeloupe of France (metropolitan) or elsewhere but not in Haiti, and above all to have his mother by her side. The only way she could achieve her dream would be to have his residence papers or French nationality with the support of a lawyer.

### Analysis:

- 5 women out of 6 are from Haiti and are fluent in French.

- The only woman from the Dominican Republic does not speak French at all.

• All the women except one (who studied in the French system), have no professional diploma and little or poor professional experience.

• Their main issue is their financial vulnerability, and they all dream of a better economic situation.

• They all want to get a job, even a part-time job.

• One of them expressed the difficult access to information in Guadeloupe.

• One woman expressed her difficulties with the care of her children.

*Some testimonials of foreign-born women who are on the track to achieving their dreams, shared their success stories.*

Among the five women contacted to share their successful personal experience during their immigration journey, all are from the Dominican Republic (so they speak Spanish as their native language). Unfortunately, we have no testimony of Haitian women and women from Dominica. But the interview experience we had in Guadeloupe with Haitian women in the first group (1a) shows us that the French language is not a vulnerability for them.

The first interviewee is a woman of 59 years from the Dominican Republic who acquired French nationality. She explained that the French language was her main vulnerability upon her arrival. She has a secondary education level from her birth country (11-18 years). She managed to finance and negotiated to be accepted in a "CAP Esthétique" (diploma in aesthetic) in Guadeloupe even though the Direction told her she did not have a sufficient level of French. She used to be a Station agent at Air Caraïbes (an Airline company).
**Q/A:** What changed your destiny? My own actions and my desire to succeed in my professional and family life. She was not afraid to speak even limited French, if she understood the lesson.

The second interviewee is a woman of 42 years old from the Dominican Republic. She explained that her economic situation was her main vulnerability upon her arrival. She has a secondary education level from her birth country (11-18 years) and has previous experience as a cashier in 1999 to 2000.
**Q/A:** What changed her destiny? Her desire to progress in life.

The third interviewee is a woman of 40 years old from the Dominican Republic. She explained that the French language was her main vulnerability upon her arrival. She had a university or similar education level from her birth country and experience as a management assistant between 2011-2014.
**Q/A:** What changed your destiny? It happened because I got married to a Guadeloupean (French) man.

The fourth interviewee is a woman of 43 years old from the Dominican Republic. She has been in Guadeloupe for 20 years. She is trying to get French nationality, but her written level of French is poor, whereas her verbal language is very good. Indeed, she writes the same way she pronounces (with a Spanish accent). She first arrived in Guyana with a visa from Suriname. Then at the age of 20, she joined her mother, who had been in Guadeloupe since the interviewee was 5 years old. She got a 10 years resident permit (every 10 years). She has 5 children of French nationality (her first child acquired the nationality, as he was Dominican). Her vulnerability is linked to the lack of information and her written level of French. She managed to ask for French nationality, but she still needs to attend French lessons online. She has a secondary education level from her birth country (11-18 years) and experience working as a hairdresser. Still, she could not get her diploma validated in Guadeloupe because they told her to study one more year, whereas she was already working in the hair salon. She has had her own salon for 11years, but one man advised her to create her own business, which she did for 4 years (officially).
**Q/A:** What changed your destiny? Her own determination and the several training sessions she attends in nails and beauty care

in general. Note: she has important difficulties using her mobile phone (i.e., uploading the right application, creating an account, and registering), and she uses a paper agenda where she stores all important administrative documents. She often asks for the support of her current companion, who is from Guadeloupe. She always wants to have more aptitudes in her professional sector. However, she wanted to be a Lawyer or a Journalist, and she believes that she has no opportunity to be advised on her choice of study and career.

The fifth interviewee is 43 years old and is also a woman from the Dominican Republic. She obtained French nationality. She speaks fluent French. She explained that she didn't like the French lessons in her native country, and since then, she has had trouble with French. She has been in France/Guadeloupe since she was 14 years old. Her mother married a French man and acquired French nationality. However, she got back to the Dominican Republic to study and pass her baccalaureate (at 18 years old) and would come back to Guadeloupe twice a year to work as an intern in the hairdresser business of her mother. She explained that she experienced adaptation difficulties in Guadeloupe because of her language and education, unlike her brother, who had studied in the French system. Her main vulnerability still exists, access to the correct information. She explained that depending on the person or the service you visit, you receive different information about the visa or resident permit, which sometimes leads to difficult situations, time loss, stress, and fear. France allowed her to have an equivalent of her training as a hairdresser in her birth country, which was mandatory to open her own hair salon. She is now well integrated, has good revenue, but still faces issues with her "*origins*".

There was also a woman who was not part of the first group nor the second. She is a woman aged 44 from the Dominican Republic. She has lived in St Martin (France) for 13 years with a renewed residence permit, then in Guadeloupe for 3 years, in France (metropolitan), and she is back in Guadeloupe for 1 year. She never asked for French nationality. She understands French, but when the interlocutor speaks slowly. Her daughter (15) is French, since she was born in France (St Martin). She faced a difficult family (marital) situation. She had the opportunity to have French lessons from the OFII (immigration office) in St Martin and then in France (metropolitan) and accessed level B1. Her main vulnerability is economic and related to the language. She expressed real difficulties accessing the correct /right information from the several administrations related to her legal status on each island (specific issues with "*la Préfecture*"). She only manages to do what she calls "*little jobs*". She has a diploma as a hairdresser in the Dominican Republic, but she never tried to have an equivalence. She just started to do pedicures and manicures with the help of another Dominican woman; She dreams of opening a bar or restaurant and a hairdresser salon. Only money could help her achieve her dream. She did not feel that she got support from her family or other people, she could have had a better life. At 44 years old she starts again in Guadeloupe almost from zero.

### *Analysis:*

• Self-confidence and proactivity are something which characterises these successful women.

• All of them had a poor level of French upon their arrival in Guadeloupe, and this has been a difficulty to their "integration" but has never stopped them and did not prevent them from succeeding in their career. 4 women out of 6 who succeed have their own business.

• These women managed to have an equivalent of their diploma (their profession is related to an "artisan" profession: hairdresser, aesthetic).

• One of the women had issues with the use of a smartphone (downloading an application, registering and creating an account, and an easy password, …).

• Some testimonials of social workers and language teachers on

the life situation of the foreign-born women they work with

• The three social workers that answered the questions are 2 French teachers working for the Language centre FORE alternance (under contract with OFII for the foreign-borns that are enrolled under a CIR), and with 10 years' experience with foreign-borns, and 1 French teacher of the OFII.

The first interviewee is a FLI /FLE (French language learning) Trainer Worker. He has been working for 10 years with foreign-born women. The most common barrier to his opinion is economic vulnerability. Based on his experience, the obstacle which is the easiest way to overcome is the language, and the most difficult to overcome is the level of education and the lack of information. To solve these obstacles, he suggests local social development actions in the neighbourhoods where many foreign-borns live. "*It would also be good to have educational actions such as parental support*".

The second interviewee is a Trainer in French as a "language of integration" at the OFII (French Office for Immigration and Integration). She has been working for 5 months with the target group. The most common barrier to her opinion is the level of education ("*except if they are literate and have attended school in their country which is not always the case*"). Based on her experience, the easiest obstacle to overcome is the language, and the one she found the most difficult to overcome is the level of education. According to her, these obstacles are "*very difficult to solve*", but she suggests that, for non-literate people, language courses should integrate a specific literacy programme (which is already partly the case).

The third interviewee is a FLI /FLE (French language learning) Trainer Worker. He has been working for 10 years with the target group. The most common barrier to his opinion is the women's dependency. He has no opinion on the easiest way to overcome this issue, and the obstacle he found the most difficult to overcome is economic

vulnerability. To solve this obstacle, he says that the target group would need better information on what they can access to integrate socially and professionally and work on self-confidence for a "*better life together*".

### Analysis:

They consider that the level of education is the most important vulnerability factor for foreign-born women, but also the economic vulnerability and the lack of information. Some interesting suggestions can be to help them work on their respective self-confidence/esteem.

### *To summarise:*

• The women from TG1a are young Haitian (except one) women with an average age of 27,5 years old with no issue with the French language (issues and vulnerabilities collected are: no diploma, little or poor professional experience; economical vulnerability, and difficulty to have a job in Guadeloupe). They all dream of a better economic situation.

• The women from TG1b are mature Dominican women with an average age of 45,4 years old. Although the French language was a hindrance to their arrival, the factor of success was that they all studied in sectors that allowed them to have their own business (hairdresser, beauty care, nail care).

• Many women expressed their difficulties accessing the information, and the right information, about diploma equivalence, their status on the territory, among others. Social networks are very important for these women, and often they need to ask outside their community network to cross-check the information they receive.

• The three social workers shared that the level of education is an issue in the integration process that has an impact in the

language learning process. The level of education  also impacts the use of a smartphone for some women.

• The language tool needs to be available on a smartphone, as none of the women we have met have a computer at home, nor will they have access to a computer on a regular basis.

# SWEDEN

## Demographics

First of all, we will try to understand the dimensions of the target group in the context of the total population of Sweden. The number of foreign-borns, their countries of origin, and their reasons have varied from year to year: from labour immigration at the end of the 1960s from Finland and Greece, to refugees from Iran at the end of the 1980s and from former Yugoslavia countries in the beginning of the 1990s, to its peak in 2016 with asylum seekers from Middle Asia. Since then immigration has decreased, but it still remains at a historically high level.

In gender, there is a higher immigration of foreign-born men than of foreign-born women.

According to Statistics Sweden[45], the population of Sweden on 31 December 2020 was 10,379,295 of which 2,046,731 were foreign-born (19.7% of total population) with 1,016,425 women and 1,030,306 men. Additionally, 639,309 people were domestic born to two foreign-born parents. In total, 25.9% of the Swedish population has a foreign background. The most common countries of origin are Syria, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, former Yugoslavia countries, Afghanistan, Turkey, Thailand, and India, and EU countries: Finland, Poland, Germany, and Norway.

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[45] Statistics Sweden, "Summary of Population Statistics 1960–2021", SCB database. Available at: https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/pong/tables-and-graphs/yearly-statistics--the-whole-country/summary-of-popu-lation-statistics/

**The most common countries of birth among foreign-born by 2020**

| Country | Women | Men | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Syria | 85 325 | 108 269 | 193 594 |
| Iraq | 67 680 | 78 760 | 146 440 |
| Finland | 85 421 | 54 916 | 140 337 |
| Poland | 49 333 | 44 429 | 93 762 |
| Iran | 38 437 | 42 864 | 81 301 |
| Somalia | 35 490 | 34 694 | 70 184 |
| Yugoslavia | 31 722 | 31 697 | 63 419 |
| Afghanistan | 21 024 | 39 834 | 60 858 |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | 30 352 | 29 809 | 60 161 |
| Turkey | 23 639 | 28 989 | 52 628 |
| Germany | 27 077 | 24 357 | 51 434 |
| Eritrea | 21 296 | 25 860 | 47 156 |
| Thailand | 34 741 | 9 598 | 44 339 |
| India | 19 811 | 22 979 | 42 790 |
| Norway | 22 463 | 18 599 | 41 062 |

**Table 2:** The most common countries of birth among foreign-born by 2020
*Source: Befolkningsstatistik, SCB Sveriges officiella statistik*

Out of the total number of foreign-born women, our TG1 contains only young foreing-born women. Therefore, using the data published by the Swedish Register of Education, 2020 version, TG1 of this project in Sweden, "young foreign-born women" are women 16 to 34 years old, meaning a total of 282,162, of which: 37,027 are 16 to 19 years old, 57,621 are 19 to 24 years old and 187,514 are 24 to 34 years old.

# Educational Background

The data from Swedish Register of Education (2020)[46] are summarized in the Table 3:

| Women Age | No info about their education | Primary education | | Secondary education | | Post-secondary education | | Post graduate education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Less than 9 years | 9 years | up to 3 years | 3 years | up to 3 years | 3 years or more | |
| 16-19 years | 25% | 0% | 64% | 1% | 9% | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20-24 years | 17% | 6% | 15% | 11% | 28% | 17% | 7% | 0 |
| 25-34 years | 11% | 8% | 7% | 13% | 14% | 16% | 30% | 1,2% |

**Table 3:** Education level of young foreign-born women

Analysing the data obtained, we observe the following trends:
- Young foreign-born women aged 16 to 19 have primary education in a high proportion (64%), but there is no information about an important part of them (a quarter);
- Young foreign-born women age 20 to 24 have, in general, a form of education, with only 6% with less than 9 years of primary education, but there is no information about the education of 17% of them;
- Young foreign-born women aged 25 to 34 also have, in general, a form of education, with 8% with less than 9 years of primary education, but there is no information about 11% of them;
- For a better understanding of this data, we performed a comparison with Swedish-born young women:

[46] Statistics Sweden, "Educational attainment of the population", Swedish Register of Education database. Available at https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/education-and-research/education-of-the-population/educational-attainment-of-the-population/

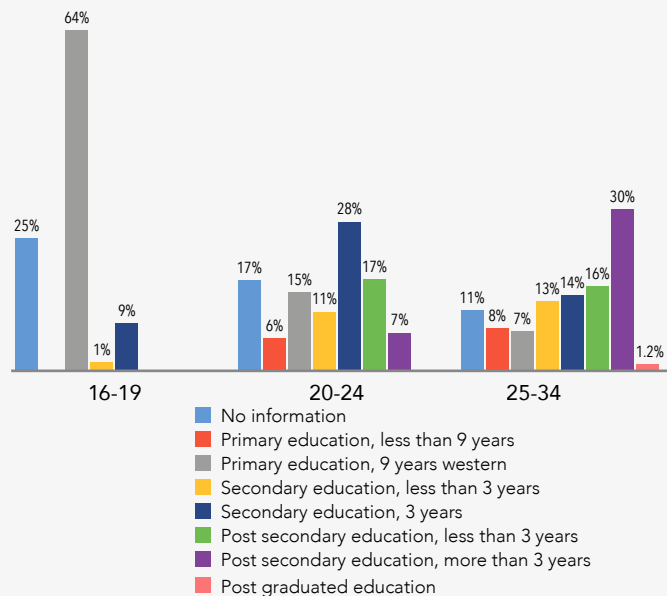## Foreign-born young women's education level, by 2019



**Figure 8:** Foreign-born young women's education level

## Swedish young women's education level, by 2019
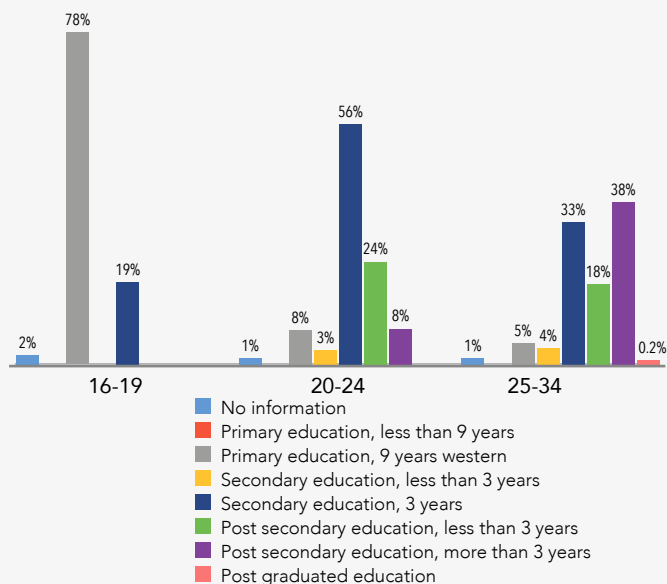


**Figure 9:** Swedish-born young women's education level

Comparing these two categories, we note that the biggest difference is that unlike the foreign-born young women discussed above, all Swedish-born women have the full 9 years of primary education. Notably, there are more foreign-born women with post-graduate education than local women. In conclusion, the vast majority of Swedish-born young women have a higher education, but this is also true for more than 50% of foreign-born women.
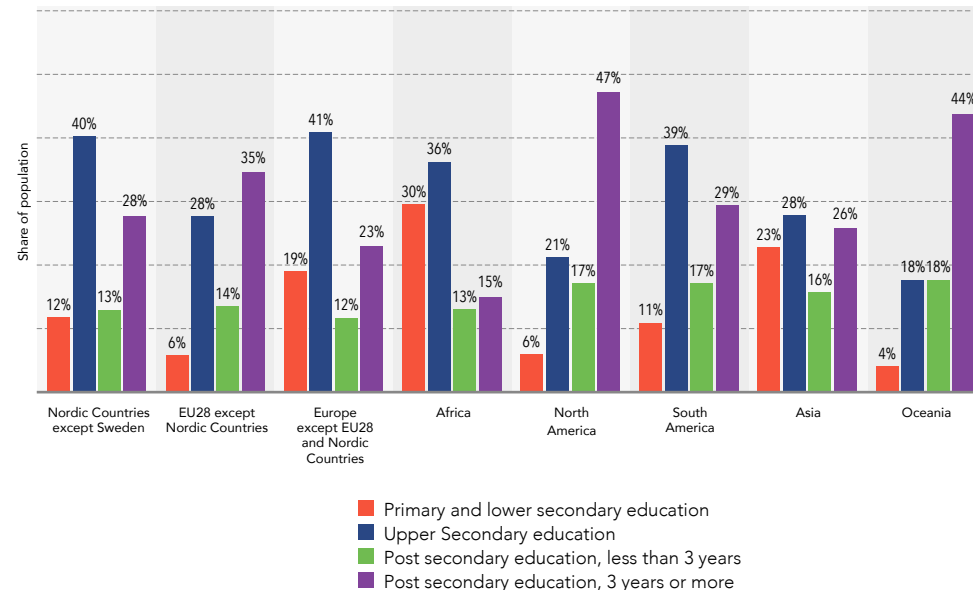


**Figure 10:** Foreing-born population of Sweden in 2019, by educational level and origin.

Further research[47] revealed that foreing-born people coming from the other European countries from within the European Union have a greater percentage of higher education (35%), than those coming from Africa (15%) and Asia (26%). Furthermore, 47% of the foreign-born coming from North America have higher education, while 39% of those coming from South America have secondary education. Although 36% of foreign-born people from Africa have secondary education, a noticeable percentage of 30% only have primary

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[47] Statista, *Share of the foreign born population in Sweden in 2020, by education level and origin* (Statista Research Department, 2020) Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/532639/sweden-foreign-born-population-2015-by-level-of-education-and-country-of-birth/

education. At the same time, an average of 27% of foreign-borns from Asia have a high education level and 23% with primary education only. This information is not differentiated on gender but reflects the education level situation of foreign-borns in Sweden.

To conclude, in the cases where there is no information about foreign-born women's education, we assume they have no formal education or very little, and they represent the main target group of this project. The second category of our target group is young women with less than 9 years of primary education.

# Employment and Work

Researchers identified [48] that newly arrived women started out with lower employment rates than men (21% compared to 33%). Ten years later in 2016, the gap between men and women was reduced from 12% to 4%. At the same time, compared with the level of employment of the native women, after a decade of residence, only 64% of foreign-born women were in work compared to 80% of native women.

When looking at the situation of the low-educated persons during a decade, the unemployment rate of non-European foreign-borns is exponentially higher than natives and European foreign-borns, as is shown in figure 11:
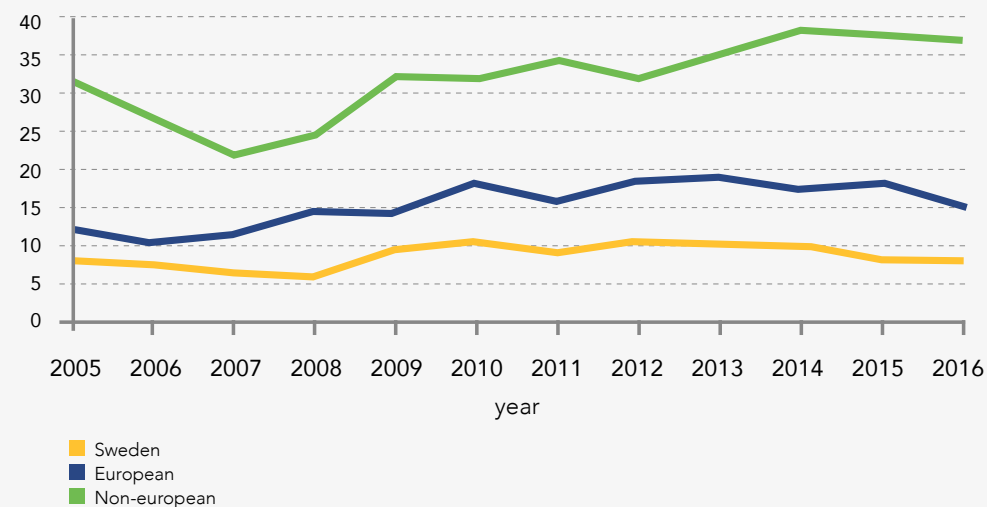


**Figure 11:** Unemployment rates among low-educated people in Sweden, by origin. *Source: Statistics Sweden: The labour market for persons with a lower level of education 2005-2016.*

A study[49] conducted by the Swedish Public Employment Service in 2019 showed that unemployment is decreasing faster among men because they can find work easier than women. In one year, the number of unemployed men registered in the Swedish Public Employment Service has decreased by 14,000 (to 185000). At the same time, the number of unemployed women registered has decreased by only 4,000 (to 164000). The unemployment rate in2019 of foreign-born women has fallen from 20.8% to 19.6%, while foreign-born men's decreased from 21% to 18.5%. Regarding young foreign-borns, the unemployment rate among young men is 10.1% and 6.9% among young women.

As mentioned above, the government grants work permits. The following table 4 shows the situation, by industry and foreign-born status.

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[48] Andrey Tibajev; Carina Hellgren, *The Effects of Recognition of Foreign Education for Newly Arrived Immigrants* (Oxford, European Sociological Review, 2019). Available at: https://academic.oup.com/esr/article/35/4/506/5384517

[49] Swedish Public Employment Service, *Arbetslösheten minskar mest bland män* (2019) Available at: https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/press/pressmeddelanden?id=E959110C714713A4

## Work permits granted 2020

| Area of work | Of which applications from employees abroad | Of which applications from persons in Sweden with an asylum application that has been refused and entered into final legal force | Of which applications from persons in Sweden who are studying | Of which applications from persons in Sweden with a visa | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Administration and client information | 212 | 77 | 34 | | **323** |
| Agriculture, gardening, forestry and fishery workers | 167 | 20 | 1 | | **1 170** |
| Construction and manufacturing | 1 090 | 176 | 4 | 2 | **1 272** |
| Machine manufacturing and transport | 122 | 53 | 9 | | **202** |
| Managerial professions | 242 | 10 | 3 | | **324** |
| Military professions | 8 | | | | **8** |
| Professionals | 1 212 | 19 | 73 | 1 | **1 325** |
| Service, care and sales | 817 | 239 | 24 | 3 | **1 111** |
| Specialists | 3 658 | 21 | 244 | 4 | **4 037** |
| Technicians and associate professionals | 3 976 | 744 | 154 | | **5 409** |
| Others | 13 | 1 | | | **50** |
| **TOTAL** | **11 517** | **1 360** | **546** | **10** | **15 231** |

**Table 4:** Work permits granted 2020. *Source: Migrationsverket, Beviljade arbetstillstånd 2020* The figures cover both the decisions of the Swedish Migration Agency and the Embassies and Consulates of Sweden. The figures do not cover athletes, artists, au-pairs, self-employed, visiting researchers, trainees, holiday workers or relatives of employees.

We witness that the total annual number of jobs (15,231) is relatively small compared to the foreign-borns' labour market needs. The overall employment picture of foreign-borns in the labour market and the industries is missing information. Regarding the women's situation, the research shows that foreing-born women work mainly in elementary occupations and services and sales, two of the lowest paid areas. They also capture around 80% of the jobs in health, social services, and veterinary services – the sectors that provide the most middle-skilled jobs for foreign-borns.

# Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Integration

Most young foreign-borns who arrive in Sweden, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, have lower wages and smaller returns to education than natives. Refugees from culturally distanced countries and regions (Iran/Iraq and the Horn of Africa) experience the greatest obstacles when initially entering the labour market, despite living in Sweden for many years.

There are significant disparities in wages between foreign-borns versus natives across almost all groups and occupations, as well as poorer outcomes for females overall. Their returns from observed labour, market experience, and education differ significantly from natives, second-generation who have at least one foreign-born parent, western foreign-borns, non-western foreign-borns, and also by gender and education. Furthermore, foreign-born women take longer to enter the labor market than foreign-born men. Foreign-born women have health problems more often than men, lower education, and greater responsibility for children and families, aspects which keep them out of the labour market.

Another factor that negatively influences foreign-born women's integration into the labour market is the deficiencies in language skills. The main reason is poorer access to social networks than the men. The difference between women and men is further strengthened by different access to interventions at the Swedish Public Employment Service. Women received work-oriented initiatives/labor market policy measures to a lesser extent than men. The Swedish Public Employment Service acknowledged this issue. Its own statistics show that it is mainly foreing-born women who have ended up under their radar for matching to work due to lack of previous employment or completed documented schooling. Since then, they, introduced the project *Gender Equality* in 2019. Within this project, each participant's motivation, informal skills, and characteristics are mapped and made visible. After two years, in 2021, the results show that those furthest from the labor market – mainly foreign-born

women – are helped though, and 10% more are in work, which is a third more than they would have been otherwise. The increase corresponds to just over half of the employment gap between foreign-born women and domestic-born women.[50]

## National Integration Strategies

The leading authorities in charge of the implementation of Swedish integration strategies are The Public Employment Service, counties, and municipalities.

The Public Employment Service or PES (Arbetsförmedlingen) is in charge of establishing newcomers in the labour market. Already during the asylum period, it starts mapping the asylum seekers' skills (i.e., education and work experience) using a skills mapping tool. After the asylum decision, this skills-mapping helps with the development of an individualised establishment plan, which lasts for a total of 24 months, and includes (a) Swedish for migrants (SFI – Svenska för invandrare), (b) civic orientation, and (c) work preparation (e.g., validation, internship). We appreciate t*he establishment plan* as a strength of the Swedish integration strategies.

A weakness of this plan is that it is too long for highly educated foreign-borns. In contrast, those lacking basic skills (reading, writing, or lack of basic digital skills) need a more flexible approach combining longer-term educational support with a gradual introduction to the labour market. Another weakness is the insufficient connection between this plan and the vacancies, and the lack of guidance on how and where to find a job. This aspect is especially significant for foreign-borns with low skills, in general, and low or lack of basic digital skills, knowing that all

jobs are advertised on the internet in Sweden. However, Sweden is a country with a very limited number of low-skilled jobs. On average, only 28% of men and 19% of women are working or studying one year after completing the programme.[51]

Another strength of the Swedish strategy is that Asylum Seekers can be exempt from a work permit if they can prove that Sweden is responsible for their asylum application and provide identity documentation. With the work permit exemption, asylum seekers can work immediately after arrival. This policy gives access to the labour market to highly qualified persons with the required proficiency, knowledge, and skills needed in Sweden. A similar strength strategy is the fast-track programme for recognised refugees. Refugees with in-demand professional education or work experience are quickly moved into similar jobs in Sweden, like social scientists, social workers, teachers, health-care workers, construction workers, woodworkers, electricians, butchers, and chefs.

A weakness of this programme is that it addresses only highly educated refugees, mainly in the health sector, leaving the low educated ones behind. Sweden is a highly-skilled economy, and the low-skill segment of its labour market represents just 5% of total jobs, so not/low qualified foreign-borns compete in a small and crowded space.

Despite the governmental measures and efforts, the foreign-borns' unemployment rate is high (see Figure 11) and considerably worse than native-born Swedes'. The situation among the lower-educated foreign-borns is even more difficult, as mentioned above. There is also a high number of qualified foreign-borns with difficulties in having their qualifications recognised, and often they could only get jobs under their qualifications. Integrating their skills and avoiding "brain waste" remain an unresolved issue by the local policies.

[50] Swedish Public Employment Service, *Drygt 30 procent fler utrikesfödda kvinnor i arbete tack vare ny matchningsmetod* (2021). Available at:
https://arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss/press/pressmeddelanden?id=1275BEDE62850127&pageIndex-=2&year=2021&uniqueIdentifier=Riket

[51] OECD, *Better Policies Series. Promoting Well-Being and Inclusiveness in Sweden* (OECD, 2016)

# Qualitative research for need analysis, Sweden

To complete the Swedish research on the needs assessment of foreign-born women, in terms of education and language acquisition besides the demographic report, the IKF team has conducted a series of interviews following the structure proposed by the UPSIM consortium.

The interviews targeted 3 groups of people:
- Operators and organizations working in the field of social integration of foreign-born women (specialists in the field).
- Foreign-born women successfully integrated
- Foreign-born women that feel the need to improve their education to integrate into the Swedish society

The results are presented below.

## Opinions of specialists in the field
(Operators and organizations)

Five social workers were interviewed, who dealt directly with the obstacles that foreign-born women face on arrival until they reach the first stage of integration. According to them, this process ranges between 2 to 15 years.

According to their experience, on arrival, the Swedish state offers the opportunity to learn the language free of charge through a program called SFI (Svenska för Invandrare), where there are 4 beginner levels, A, B, C, and D. The program is available in almost all the *Folk Universities* (Peoples Colleges) and other educational centres accredited by the state.

To facilitate access to the labor market, some schools offer Swedish language classes focused on different domains such as business and health, increasing the integration chances.

The obstacles foreign-born women face in learning the language are mainly economical as most of them are dependent either on the social system or their partners. However, education is the second most common barrier, as in some cases they do not even know how to read and write, or they come from educational systems that incited fear of schools and teachers. This is reflected either in foreign-born people not daring to communicate and talk, being very shy, or being considered aggressive by their way of communicating (talking too loud for the Swedish society), which in their origin country is a common way to express themselves.

There is no magic formula for overcoming the barriers these women face, and the process varies from case to case, requiring some time even for highly educated women with professional work experience. Based on their experience, the women are between the following categories:
- Time of integration: Newly arrived; long term not integrated.
- Level of education: illiterates; medium education; high education.
- Reason to migrate: Love migrants (moved for their partners in Sweden); moved with working contracts; expats families; asylum seekers and refugees.

# Perception of the foreign-born woman's obstacles
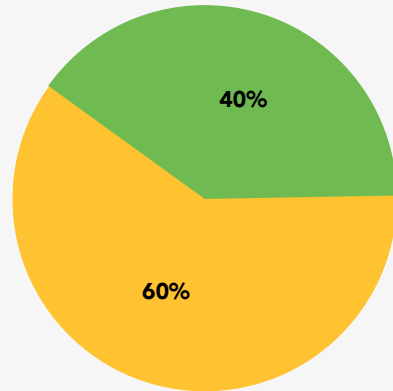
## Common obstacles
5 responses



- Education
- Language
- Economic
- Lack of Information
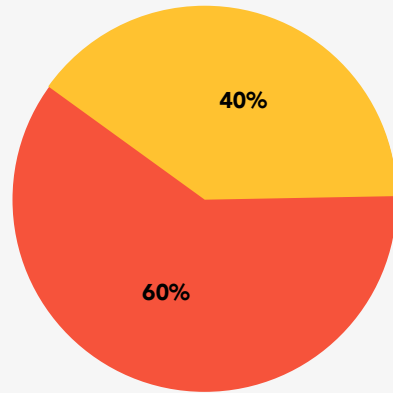
According to the operators, the main obstacles foreing-born women must overcome in order to get into the labour market are the language (60%), followed by lack of income, and their economic situation (40%).

## Easiest to overcome
5 responses



- Education
- Language
- Economic
- Lack of Information

In terms of solutions and overcoming the obstacles, the respondents perceive that the easier barrier to overcome, in principle, is the economic (60%), followed by the lack of information (40%), as the Swedish social security provides financial support and information in most of the state institutions. However, it takes some time to understand the system.

## Most difficult
5 responses



- Education
- Language
- Economic
- Lack of Information
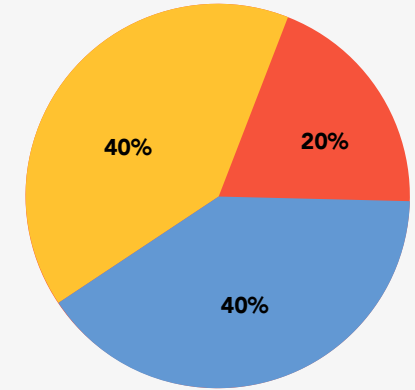
Although the Swedish government somehow addresses the economic obstacle is as expressed above), intending to help with some incentives for some women, the operators consider that the economic issue remains a difficult obstacle to overcome (40%). This is explained by them as the state incentive often provides for basic needs, whilst the rest of the expenses and debts accumulate, making it harder to solve without any other income that could raise the bar on their social and economic status.

Likewise, education is a difficult obstacle (40 %) that takes a long time to overcome and adds layers of complexity to the stress of their situation, leaving women unable to see a positive outcome in the long term. Lastly and connected to education, the language remains a barrier (20%) as this is, on the one hand, the entry point to the Swedish society and on the other hand, a distinctive of the local people, which reveals discrimination against foreign people unable to reach a high language level. Hence, the barrier prevents access to jobs that match the capital skills that foreign-born women have in their baggage.

# Role model contribution
## (Foreign-born women successfully integrated)

As we mentioned in the introduction, the second set of interviews was focused on foreign-born women who have been successfully integrated, and on whom we are basing our observation for the use as role models. Below we will list some quotes from our role models.

*"My destiny has changed because I wanted it to change. I always pursued what I liked in the professional area. For example, I tried to be a private lawyer for a year. Since I didn't enjoy working at the Courts, I had to listen to my instincts to find jobs that I love in NGOs and contribute to women's liberation and inclusion. I was and still am very enthusiastic to learn different levels of project management. This is another point that changed my professional destiny. All these changes were initially created with my personal wishes, but I was also blessed to be surrounded by international experts to learn a lot of things and be mentored by them. Another destiny change is coming to Sweden which I couldn't have done if I didn't get a 2 years long full scholarship from the Swedish Institute. Financial support was important to get a good education, otherwise, tuition fees are not affordable. I am also enrolled in secondary school (Grundläggande) to learn the Swedish language. If the Swedish State was not having such integration strategies, it could have been harder to learn the language as a student. In the end, I assume learning the language will contribute to my destiny. All in all, there is help that we seek from our network but all that matters is wanting to change the destiny and this is very personal."* – Anonymous woman 1

*"I wanted something more for my life, and I was curious to develop myself more and more. As a result, I am still studying now. So, I reshaped my destiny by training and studying."* – Anonymous woman 2

The participant's age ranges between 28 to 46 and their home countries are Turkey, Romania, Syria, and Chile. Below is described the type of vulnerabilities referred to by the interviewed women

**Type(s) of vulnerability:**
**(As judged by the interviewer at the end of the interview)**
5 responses



- Education
- Language
- Economic
- Lack of Information
- Dependent
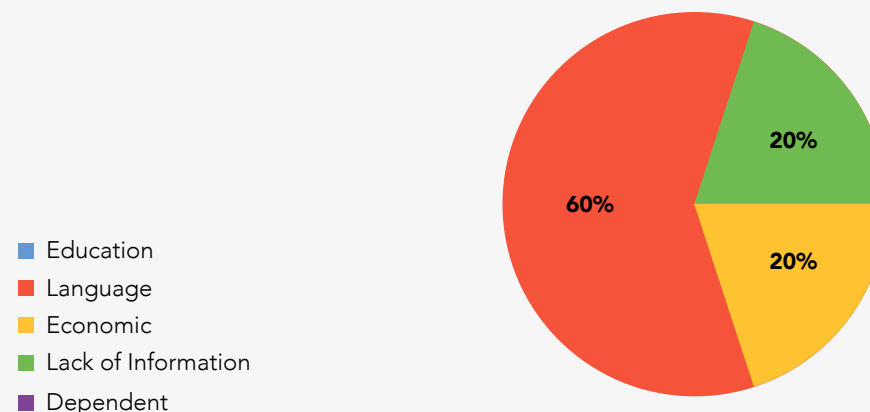
The participants referred to the biggest struggle (by 60%) as learning the language. In their stories, they describe the long and hard way toward employment depending mainly on the level of their Swedish language. Some of them enrolled in all the levels of SFI (Swedish for migrants), and others in the further steps in "Grund "(Secondary level) and University. In addition, with 20% each, the lack of information and their economic situation were also revealed as vulnerabilities. This is explained by the missed opportunities due to the lack of knowledge on relevant information and how to navigate within the social security system and the state institutions that could have potentially helped them in the various difficulties and struggles they had. Furthermore, the economic situation is a vulnerability directly related to the cause of migration and their status as students or partners depending economically on others (family or partners), the system, or small income as a student.

**What education level did you arrive with?**
**(Highest educational level and country where done)**
5 responses
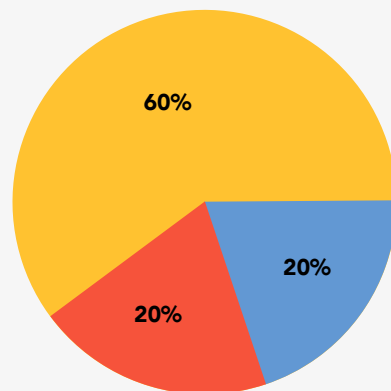


- Basic schooling (8-10 years)
- Additional schooling (describe)
- University or similar (describe)

The biggest percentage shows that the participants have high education levels from their countries, most of them with a master's degree. But that is not the key to the success of integration, as revealed by other women with basic schooling that have successful stories of acquiring skills and knowledge that helped them to integrate faster into the Swedish society, either by opening a business or expanding their social networks and integrating with the society of arrival much easier and deeper.

The key actions that stayed at the base of their success, as understood from their stories are:
- Make as many friends and acquaintances as possible, expand their network and rebuild their social capital.
- Take the process of education seriously and finish their studies in Sweden.
- Participate in Swedish cafe meetings and practice the language with the locals, talk as much as possible "*even if making mistakes, as there will always be someone to correct you*".
- Be open to job opportunities outside your domain, as you may reinvent yourself and find a new identity.

# The perceptions and needs of women who want to "Move Up"
(Foreign-born women that feel the need to improve their education)

The third set of questions was focused on the foreign-born women that wanted to move up in their process of integration. For this target group, it was difficult to do the interviews online, and therefore we had to adapt. The age range of the participants was 27 to 47. We gathered the women and transformed the questionnaire into a focus group to discover how they plan to fulfill their dream in Sweden, regarding social integration.

When we talked about the obstacles they meet in their process of integration in Sweden, they listed:
- The lack of information in their native languages.
- The structure of the SFI training course is unclear and can demotivate the participants to learn the language.
- The state's institutions are not open-minded to treating the issues in a holistic, human way.
- The diploma evaluation takes a lot of time, and you need to take it all over again from the beginning of your studies.
- You become too tired to fight any longer.

We continued to talk about the opportunities foreign-born women have in Sweden and where they could see themselves five years from now. The group had 2 cooks in their home countries, a psychologist, a biologist, and a business owner. All of them had been in Sweden for 2 to 10 years. When talking about their dream, they all wanted to become better so they could reach at least the same level in their development as the one they had in their own countries.

The psychologist described the whole process she had to go through from validating her studies, learning Swedish to an academic level, and having some practice in institutions to get the experience of the

Swedish way of working with children. While she was describing how much it takes and how hard it is, and how feeling hopeless she felt; together with the other participants, the evolution was drawn by years in her example, showing how many steps she already made towards her dream. When looking at the exercise, a smile, and realization of how much was done promoted closure with a feeling of relaxation.
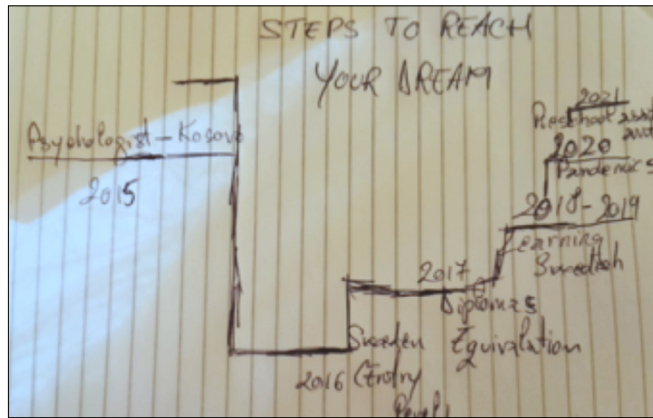


**Figure 12:** Picture of a participant's steps to achieve a dream.

The needs expressed by the participants were:
• Better networking
• Finding more practice places to gain working Swedish experience
• Upgrading their studies
• Improving their Swedish language level.

The participants were thorough in describing their paths to reach the level where they are right now, leaving a statement of realistic and well-thought plans, showing there is a broad understanding of the steps needed to accomplish their respective dreams.

The data collected from the three sources reaffirm the same needs and categories which are key to the social integration of foreign-born women. Regardless of the stage in which women are, the Swedish language is the key factor to enter and achieve personal, professional, and social goals that are followed by an improvement in their economy and fulfillment of their dreams.

# PORTUGAL

## Demographics

The Nationality Law of 2006[52] represented a massive step in the Portuguese judicial regime[53]. As a result, second-generation migrants gained easier access to citizenship. Since then, the number of foreign-born residing in Portugal has been steadily increasing.

In 2007, Portugal had 10,617,575 inhabitants of whom 332,137, or 3.13%, were foreign-born with residency status (51,7% female, 48,3% male)[54]. In 2014[55], 45.4% of the foreign-born population was coming from Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil (22.1%), Cape Verde (10.4%), and Angola (5%). Therefore, the most spoken language by foreign-born in Portugal is Portuguese. In 2017[56], Portugal received 40,000 new foreign-born on a long-term or permanent basis (including changes of status and free mobility), 20.6% more than in 2016. This figure comprises 39.5% foreign-born benefiting from free mobility, 19.2% for work-related reasons, 35.4% for family members (including accompanying family) and, 1.3% came for humanitarian reasons. In that year, Portugal had 416,682 legal residents of foreign origin, of which 203,753 (49%) were identified as male and 212,929 (51%) as female. In 2018, the number of new immigrants was 67,000[57]. Brazil, Italy, and France were the top three nationalities of newcomers in 2018. Among the top 15 countries of origin, Brazil registered the strongest increase

52 Portugal, Nationality Law, Organic Law No. 2/2006. Available at: http://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=735&tabela=leis
53 Claire Healy, *Cidadania Portuguesa: A Nova Lei da Nacionalidade de 2006* (Lisbon, Alto-Comissariado Para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, 2011). Available at: https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/177157/Estudo45_WEB.pdf/258cd874-463a-4bfd-b928-036878fc7999
54 Instituto Nacional de Estatística, *População Estrangeira em Portugal* (Lisbon, 2007).
55 European Commission, "Portugal: Spotlights on Female (Brazilian) Immigrants, Portugal's Largest Foreign Group", 2 December 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/portugal-spotlights-female-brazilian-immigrants-portugals-largest-foreign-group_en
56 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Portugal", in International Migration Outlook 2019 (OECD Publishing, 2019). Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/64450159-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/64450159-en
57 Ibid.

(17,000), and Romania had the largest decrease (-300), in inflows to Portugal compared to the previous year.

A record number of 180 000 Portuguese citizenship applications were granted in 2019[58] following the 2019 amendment to the Portuguese immigration law that, among other things, facilitated the regularization of those in the labour market, and extended the access to nationality and naturalisation to persons born on the national territory if one of their parents had been a resident in the country for two years. In 2019, the number of new residents more than doubled in relation to 2017. From 61,413 in 2017 to 129,155 by 2019 ( or 110.3% growth), which the SEF attributes to "the growth of new securities issued to citizens of Brazilian nationality (37.8% of the total), as well as the European Union (27.6%)".

The year 2020 represented a slight decrease in the immigration flow (118,000 or -8.5%) when compared with 2019, arguably due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, immigration still increased for the fifth consecutive year, up 12.2% compared to 2019. In 2020, the 662,095 foreign-born legally residing in Portugal (49.2% female) represent the highest number since the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) was established in 1979. [59]These are the findings presented in the Immigration, Border and, Asylum Report (RIFA 2020[60]).

According to UNICEF[61], who published a document about migration profiles, if all foreign-born (residents or not) in Portugal were considered, the total number would be 893.947 (in 2013), more than half were female (476.627 or 53%) and the most represented age group were people between 35 and 39 years old (140,345 or 15%).



**Total number of Foreign-born residing in Portugal by year**

**Figure 13:** Total number of foreign-born residing in Portugal by year. *Source: Portuguese Immigration and Border Services (SEF) (2020). Relatório de imigração, fronteiras e asilo.*

Brazilians are the most represented nationality (27.8%), followed by foreign-born from the United Kingdom (7%) and Cape Verde (5.5%). Next are Romania (4.5%), Ukraine and Italy (4.3% each), China (3.9%), France (3.8%), and India and Angola (each with 3.7%).[62]

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[58] European Commission, "Portugal: Record Number of Citizenships Granted in 2019" 2 December 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/portugal-record-number-citizen-ships-granted-2019_en.

[59] Serviços de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2020* (Oeiras, 2021). Available at: https://sefstat.sef.pt/Docs/Rifa2020.pdf

[60] Ibid.

[61] United Nations, DESA-Population Division and UNICEF. Migration Profiles – Common Set of Indicators (2014) Available at: https://esa.un.org/miggmgprofiles/indicators/files/Portugal.pdf

[62] SEF/GEPF, *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2020.*
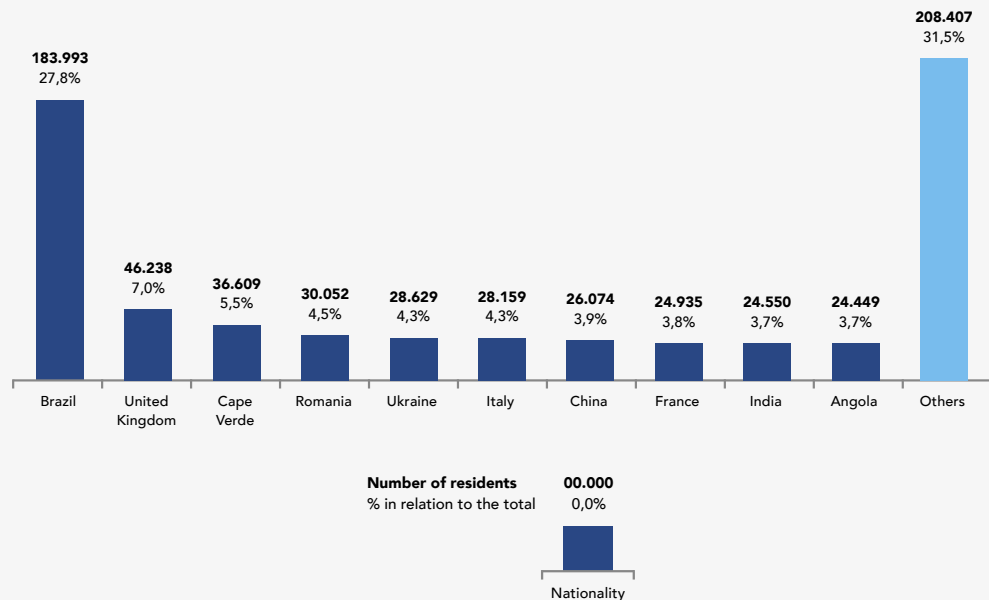
## Most represented nationalities



**Figure 14:** Most represented nationalities in Portugal. *Source: Portuguese Immigration and Border Services (SEF), Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2020 (Oeiras, 2021).*

Overall, foreign-born are younger than Portuguese nationals[63]. Foreign-born women are slightly younger than foreign-born men, and much younger than Portuguese women. 60% of foreign-born women are aged between 20-49 years old, whereas only 36.1% of Portuguese women are part of that group[64].

## Age distribution of Foreign-born compared to Portuguese Nationals



**Figure 15:** Age distribution of foreign-born compared to Portuguese Nationals. *Source:* Catarina Reis Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020: Relatório Estatístico Anual. (Lisbon, Observatório das Migrações, ACM, I.P, 2020).*
*Note:* Men (blue); Women (red); Portuguese nationals (filled); Foreign-born (blank).

Female immigration is no longer associated, as in the past, with a "family" journey and project in which men first emigrated and, later, their wives and children, through family reunification. Essentially since the end of the last century, the observation of migratory flows has shown the growing number of women who migrate by their own autonomous decision (Wall et al., 2008; Marques and Góis, 2012).

It is observed that Brazilian nationality continues to be the one with the highest relative importance of females (56.9% in 2019) in the total number of residents of this nationality, although there

[63] Ibid.
[64] Catarina Reis Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020: Relatório Estatístico Anual.* (Lisbon, Observatório das Migrações, ACM, I.P., 2020).

is a slight decrease in representation in recent years (from 61.5% in 2017 to 59.4% in 2018). Among nationals of Angola, Ukraine, and Cape Verde, women are also of greater relative importance (Angolan women represent 55.5% of all residents of this nationality, Ukrainians 54.2%, and Cape Verdeans 53.4%)[65].

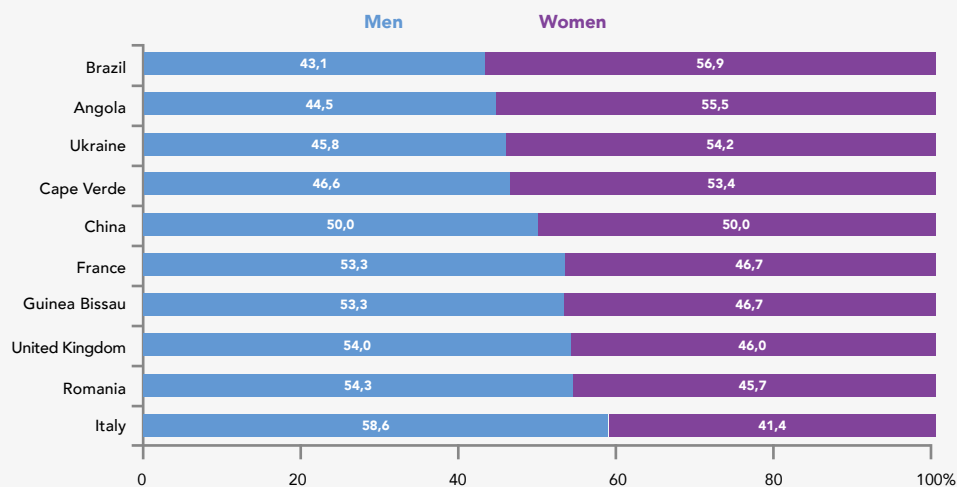**Distribution, by gender, of the ten main foreign-born nationalities in Portugal, in 2019**



**Figure 16:** Distribution, by gender, of the ten main foreign-born nationalities in Portugal, in 2019. *Source:* Oliveira, I*ndicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020*
*Note:* Foreign-born men (blue); Foreign-born women (purple).

# Educational Background

Between 2011 and 2018, there was an increase in the number of for-eign-born workers with secondary and higher education and a decrease in the number of those with lower education[66]. Foreign-born workers with first stage primary education dropped by 23.3% and represented 11% of the total number. Conversely, the number with secondary edu-cation increased by 64.8% (30.5% of the total number), and those with higher education increased by 74% (42.1% of the total number)[67].

[65] Ibid
[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid

As the graph below shows, foreign-born workers from Portuguese-speaking African countries have the lowest level of formal education. In contrast, those from the European Union and East Europe have the highest. Among Non-EU nationals, foreign-borns from Cape Verde concentrate the highest proportion of low-educated workers (29.5%), followed by Guiné-Bissau (29.2%). In this same group, Brazilians and Ukrainians concentrate the highest proportion of workers with secondary and higher education (46.1% and 38.8%, respectively). Complete primary education is the most represented education level among Asian-born workers, 45.9% of Chinese workers, 38.7% of Nepalese workers, and 38.5% of Indian workers[68].

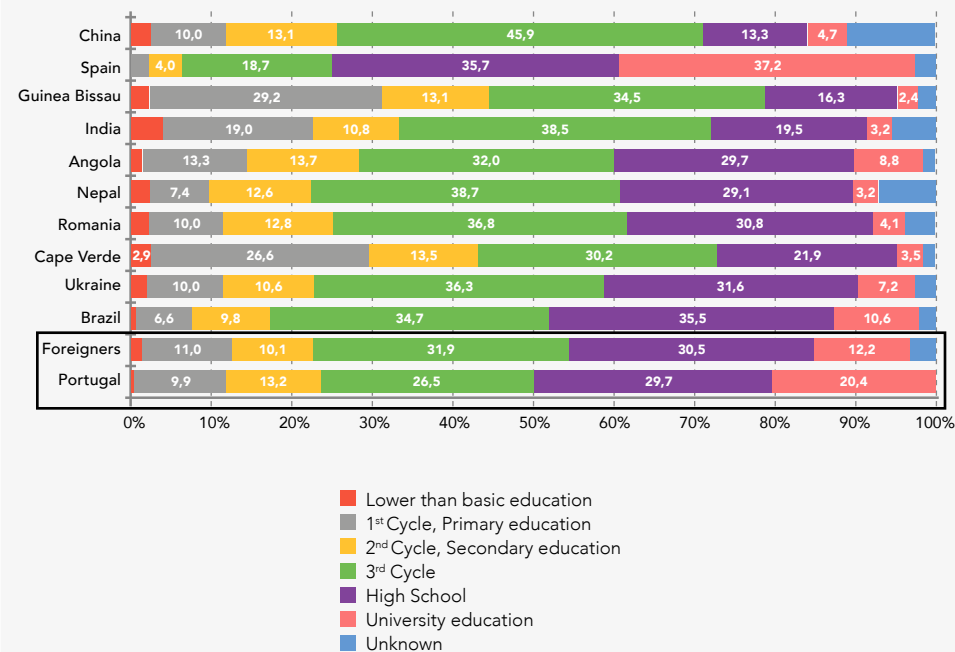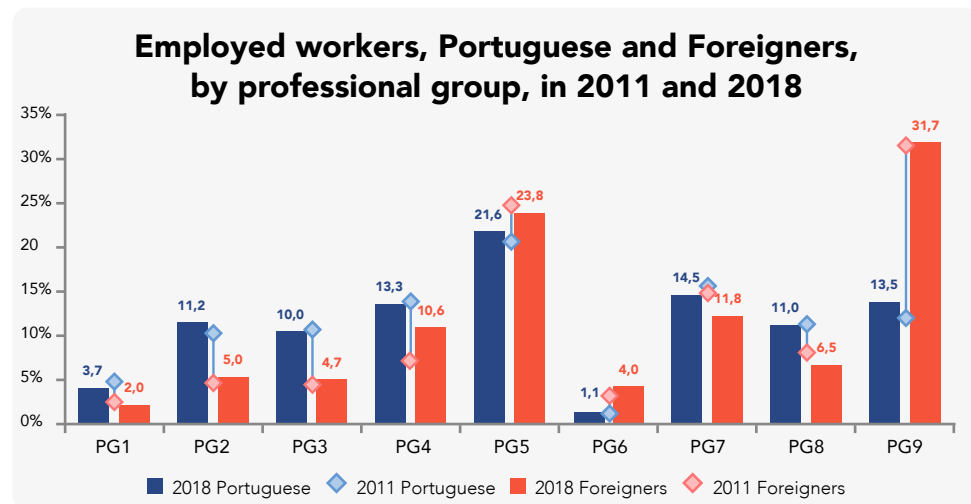**Foreign-born workers by nationality and education level, in 2018 (Portugal)**



**Figure 17:** Foreign-born workers by nationality and education level, in 2018 (Portugal).
*Source:* Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020*

[68] Ibid

If education level and gender are considered, some relevant factors emerge. The majority of foreign-born women workers have secondary or post-secondary education (31.5% in 2018), whereas men are more represented in the complete primary education level (34.1% in 2018)[69]. Compared to foreign-born men, foreign-born women are more present in the extremes. 16.2% have up to the first stage of primary education (4% more than men) and 45.8% have secondary, post-secondary, or higher education (5.66% more than men)[70].

# Employment and Work

Foreign-born workers are more present in less attractive jobs in the Portuguese job market. They are disproportionately present in unskilled, dangerous jobs and face more harsh work conditions. Figure 18 below shows that 31.7% of foreign workers are employed in unskilled jobs, and 23% work in Personal services, protection, safety, and sales. Workers from Guiné-Bissau (58.4%), Nepal (54.9%), Cape Verde (51.2%), and India (47.1%) are mostly associated with unqualified work. Whereas Chinese workers (63.2%) are often associated with personal services and sales[71].

**Employed workers, Portuguese and Foreigners, by professional group, in 2011 and 2018**

Legend: ■ 2018 Portuguese  ◇ 2011 Portuguese  ■ 2018 Foreigners  ◇ 2011 Foreigners

[69] Ibid
[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid

**Figure 18:** Employed workers, Portuguese and Foreigners, by professional group, in 2011 and 2018 (in %). *Source:* Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020 Abbreviations:* PG1 - Law and executive organs, directors and executive managers; PG2 – Experts in intellectual and scientific activities; PG3 - Technicians and middle-level professions; PG4 - Administrative work; PG5 - Personal services, protection, safety and sales; PG6 - Agriculture and qualified jobs in agriculture, fishing and forest; PG 7 - Qualified industry and construction workers; PG8 - Machinery operation and assembly workers; PG9 - Unqualified workers.

For the same reason, foreign-born people also face a greater risk of unemployment. They are more affected by employment fluctuation than nationals, often required during growth periods and released during market stagnation. The high number of foreign-born in low qualification and low-paid jobs explains workers from PG5 and PG9 represent 64% of the unemployment rate among foreign-born in Portugal[72]. As the figure 19 below explains, foreign-born people from outside the EU are particularly more susceptible.

**The unemployment rate in Portugal, according to nationality, between 2001 and 2009**

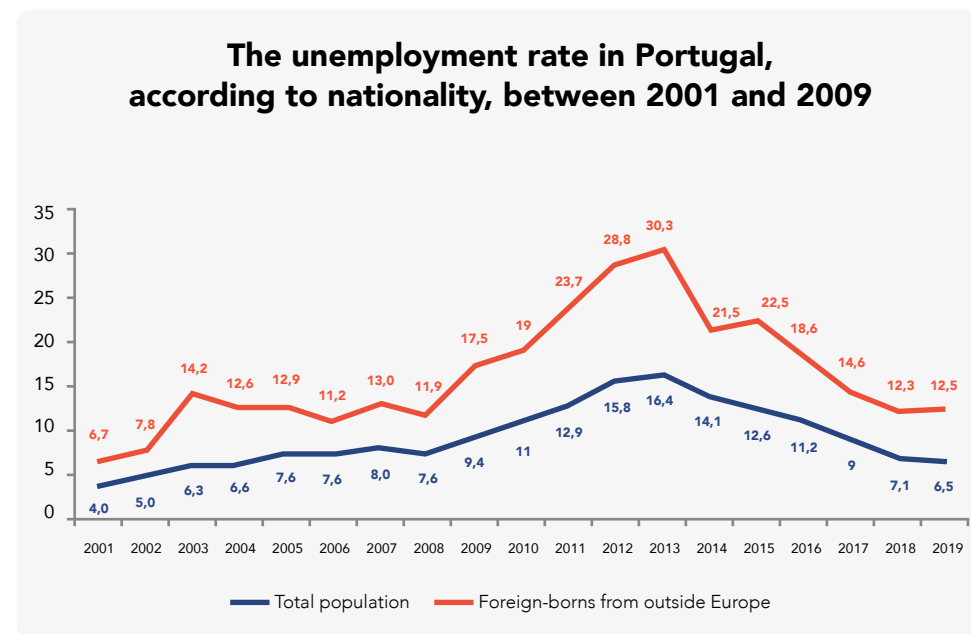Legend: — Total population  — Foreign-borns from outside Europe

**Figure 19:** The unemployment rate in Portugal, according to nationality, between 2001 and 2009. *Source:* Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020*

[72] Ibid

Unsurprisingly, official data from the Portuguese Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security[73] shows a massive increase in the unemployment number of foreign-born following the Corona-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.
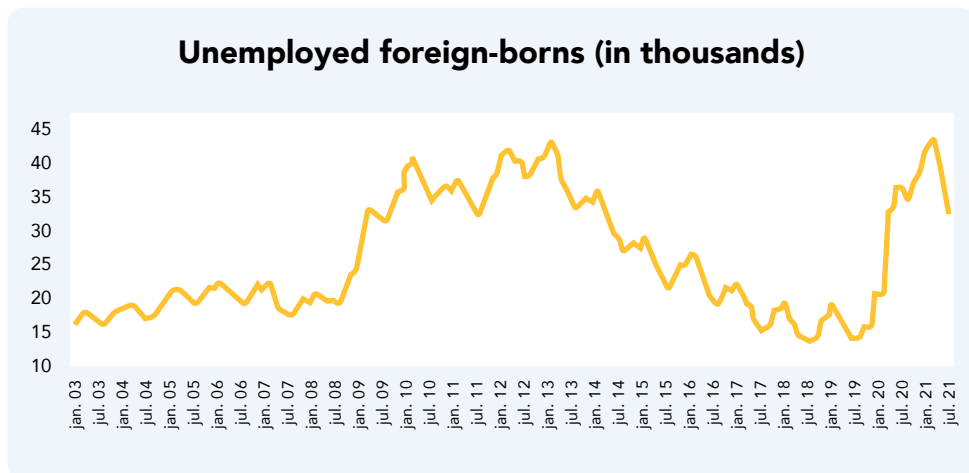


**Figure 20:** Unemployed foreign-borns (in thousands). *Source: Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento (GEP) (2021). Boletim Estatístico – agosto de 2021.*

Foreign-born women are largely employed in informal and unregulated services, such as work in services, hotel industry, care for elderly and disabled groups[74]. Furthermore, women are also at a greater risk of unemployment. Excluding 2020, since 2011, unemployment rates among foreign-born have been steadily decreasing for both genders, but at different rates. It has decreased more among men (-67%) than among women (-43%)[75].



**Figure 21:** Unemployed foreign-borns, by gender, between 2011 and 2019. *Source:* OLIVEIRA, Catarina Reis (2020), op. cit.

# Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Integration

According to a study by Miranda (2020)[76], most women report living in conditions of marginalization, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, and sexual harassment, as well as exploitation at work (long hours, poor working conditions). Furthermore, foreign-born women are disproportionately affected by gender violence[77] and have their capacities and potentialities questioned under damaging stereotypes in the media and press[78]. It is crucial to recognize that foreign-born women face vulnerabilities beyond gender, frequently being the target of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination that results in subtle forms of exclusion. [79]Of course, this mosaic of vulnerabilities affects different foreign-born women differently. For example,

[73] Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento, *Boletim Estatístico – agosto de 2021* (Lisbon, 2021). Available at: http://www.gep.mtsss.gov.pt/documents/10182/10925/beago2021.pdf/61f9eb5f-52ec-48dd-940b-ba8071759b56

[74] Joana Miranda, *Mulheres imigrantes em Portugal. Memórias, dificuldades de integração e projectos de vida.* (Lisbon, Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, 2009).

[75] Oliveira, *Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020.*

[76] Miranda, *Mulheres imigrantes em Portugal.*

[77] The Human Rights Council, *The Impact of Migration on Migrant Women and Girls: A Gender Perspective Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants* A/HRC/41/38. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1910791.pdf

[78] Clara Almeida Santos, Imagens de Mulheres Imigrantes na Imprensa Portuguesa. Análise do ano 2003. (Lisbon, Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, 2007).

[79] Ana Sofia Neves and others, *Mulheres Imigrantes Em Portugal: Uma Análise De Gênero* (Campinas, Estudos de Psicologia, 2016)

women from Ukraine perceive more difficulty to integrate, women from Cape Verde face more racism and discrimination, and women from Brazil often are the target of sexual harassment and prejudice.

Data from the International Trade Union Confederation (2018) show an average difference of 9% in salary between men and women in Portugal[80]. A discrepancy of 33.5% between genders can be found in the case of foreign-born workers[81]. Moreover, the insertion of foreign-borns in the job market does not reflect their qualification or professional expertise[82]. Although the legal regime establishes the foreign academic recognition regime, there are still numerous cases of undifferentiated qualifications (this situation is particularly evident for Ukrainian women)[83]. As a matter of fact, in 2018, 11.4% of foreign-born people with high education were employed in unqualified jobs, compared to 3.7% of Portuguese nationals[84].

# National Integration Strategies

The guarantee of equal rights, opportunities, and security encourage the public to see integration as an opportunity of mutual growth and treat foreign-borns as equals, neighbours, and potential citizens. To integrate or foster the social inclusion of these populations, Portugal published its first Plan for Integration of Migrants in 2007[85]. The document covered 3 years and was organised around 7 key principles and 5 transversal axes: legislation, service provision, research, public opinion, and empowerment of communities. The Plan was updated in 2010[86] to remain applicable until 2013. It increased the prominence of good relations between foreign-born communities and the majority population.

Since 2015, integration priorities have been included in the general Strategic Plan for Migration[87], which covers a 5-year period. It emphasises strengthening the quality of services provided to foreigners, foresees responding to integration challenges transversally, and implements 106 measures assessed through 201 indicators. Portugal guarantees equal treatment and targeted support both for Portuguese and non-EU citizens. In the long term, these policies are associated with fairer labour market outcomes, as foreign-borns benefit from better jobs, skills, and public acceptance[88]. When foreign-borns reach the regularisation and acquisition of residency, they have access to several rights. The obvious improvement of housing is verified and the same occurs in the work-life (better payment, improved schedules and conditions, and more solidary employers). The main sectors are restaurants, industrial and domestic.

The National Strategic Plan for Migration[89] promotes voluntary Introductory Courses which are generally implemented by governmental bodies all over the country. At the national level, there are linguistic support programmes Portuguese for All[90] and Portuguese as Foreign Language but also projects targeting young people[91] (Escolhas – Choices – Programme[92]) and adults (Promoting migrant Entrepreneurship[93]), mentoring migrants[94] and promoting

80 International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC Economic and Social Policy Brief: Gender Gaps in Social Protection (Brussels, 2018). Available at: https://www.ituc-csi.org/brief-wage-gap
81 Oliveira, Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020
82 Ibid
83 Miranda, Mulheres imigrantes em Portugal.
84 Oliveira, Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020
85 Portugal, Council of Ministers Resolution n.º 63-A/2007. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/council-ministers-resolution-no-63-a2007-0_en
86 Portugal, Council of Ministers Resolution n.º 74//2010. Available at: https://dre.pt/dre/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/74-2010-341856

87 European Commission, "Portugal: Strategic plan for migrations 2015-2020 approved", 30 November 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/portugal-strategic-plan-migrations-2015-2020-approved_en
88 Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, I.P., Relatório de Execução – 2017/2018. Available at: https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/222357/Relatorio_de_Execucao_PEM_2017_2018.pdf/656ad2c0-49e5-423d-98da-f791737766bc
89 Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, I.P., Strategic Plan for Migration (2020). Available at: https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/222357/PEM_ACM_final.pdf/9ffb3799-7389-4820-83ba-6dcfe22c13fb
90 For more information regarding the Portuguese for All programme, see: http://www.acm.gov.pt/-/programa-ppt-portugues-para-todos
91 For more information regarding the PLNM programme, see: http://www.dge.mec.pt/portugues-lingua-nao-materna#inf
92 For more information regarding the Choices programme, see: http://www.programaescolhas.pt/apresentacao
93 For more information regarding the promotion of migrant entrepreneurship, see: http://www.acm.gov.pt/-/programa-de-empreendedorismo-imigrante-pe-1
94 For more information regarding migrant mentorship, see: http://www.acm.gov.pt/-/programa-de-mentores-para-imigrantes

Intercultural Mediation.[95] They mainly focus on: language courses, civic education, and vocational training.

There are also several activities organised at the local or regional levels. These are set based on the National Integration Plans or result from independent initiatives implemented by public or private social actors. They promote a wide range of objectives: from social interaction and intercultural dialogue to health issues awareness and labour orientation. Attendance to all is free of charge and voluntary. However, passing a language test – Level A2 – (or presenting a certificate of basic Portuguese language proficiency issued by one of the certified institutions) is required for those applying for citizenship or permanent residence[96].

Recently, the main steps taken by Portugal to facilitate foreign-born integration were the approval of the National Implementation Plan of the Global Compact for Migration[97], which is the Portuguese implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration approved by the UN in 2018[98], becoming one of the first countries in the world to do so. Furthermore, Portugal joined the Voluntary Resettlement Program coordinated by UNHCR and the European Commission, reaching 308 people by August 2019. Neither the children of refugees and exiled nor the children of irregular residents can be refused a school place unless the school has no more physical space. In these cases, it is required to refer the pupils to another educational establishment in the area. Pupils from pre-school to the ninth year registered in the public education system whose mother tongue is not Portuguese (even if Portuguese is the official language of their country of origin) may benefit from

support measures. These children attend Portuguese lessons along with others but may receive extra tuition in the language if necessary.

As pivotal as these projects have been to the more successful integration of foreign-borns over the last years, some shortcomings require attention when upskilling paths for foreign-born women are involved. More specifically, the national programs for language learning focus on immediate integration and employment and fail to target people who want to pursue higher education. The Portuguese For All programme only offered courses up to the B2 level[99], which might prove restrictive. Furthermore, foreign-born women are underrepresented in the courses. In 2019, women who completed the programme represented 39.3% of the total number, while women represented 49.8% of the total foreign-born population[100]. The Portuguese For All programme was recently updated following the aforementioned National Implementation Plan of the Global Compact for Migration in 2020. Under the new name "Portuguese Host Language", the programme seeks to further adjust to foreign-born's needs by offering more flexible hours, adapting the content to particular linguistic levels, and connecting language learning with nostrification processes[101]. These changes are positive, and we hope they may be proven fruitful. Nevertheless, the language classes are still limited to the B2 level.

According to data from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Mipex)[102], currently, Portugal appears in the "top ten" most sought-after migration destinations alongside the Nordic states and countries that are more traditional destinations of choice for foreign-borns, far ahead of other "new" destination countries such as Italy and Spain.

[95] For more information regarding Intercultural Mediation, see: http://www.acm.gov.pt/-/proje-to-de-mediacao-intercultural-em-servicos-publicos-misp

[96] For more information regarding language requirements for residency and citizenship in the EU, see: https://rm.coe.int/linguistic-integration-of-adult-migrants-requirements-and-learning-opp/16809b93cb

[97] Portugal, Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 141/2019.  Available at: https://portaldiplomati-co.mne.gov.pt/images/noticias/2020/PDF/Tradução_Resolução_CM_141-2019_-_Plano_Nacional_de_Implementação_do_Pacto_Global_das_Migrações.Final_Limpa_002_002.pdf

[98] The United Nations, *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (2018) is available in: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/244/47/PDF/N1824447.pdf?OpenElement

[99] Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, Brochure. Available in: https://www.acm.gov.pt/docu-ments/10181/27754/Brochura+ACM/3099c1c8-d233-4309-9ed8-567d3520a5ff

[100] Oliveira, Indicadores de Integração de Imigrantes 2020

[101] Rita Monteiro, "A aprendizagem da língua de acolhimento por imigrantes". Boletim Estatístico OM No. 7 in *Imigração em Números*, Catarina Reis Oliveira, ed. (Lisboa, Observatório das Migrações, 2021). Available at: http://www.om.acm.gov.pt/publicacoes-om/colecao-imigracao-em-numeros/bole-tins-estatisticos

[102] For more information regarding the Portuguese data in the Mipex report, see: https://www.mipex.eu/portugal

The report states that compared with all other developed countries, Portugal's integration policies in 2019 were above average in all policy areas, except for access to health. Notable findings included the following:

- Concerning tackling the problem of discrimination Portugal attained the highest possible score of 100 points, praised for its strong policies and enforcement mechanisms that are 'slowly raising levels of public awareness';

- Concerning citizenship – of both new foreign-borns and descendants of Portuguese citizens – Portugal scored 86 points, which was an increase of 13 on its score from 2015.

- As far as family reunification is concerned Portugal scored 87 points and is deemed to have one of the most favourable policies for reunification worldwide, alongside Canada and Brazil.

## Qualitative research for needs analysis, Portugal

We interviewed 3 technicians, two are Portuguese teachers for foreigners (level A and B), and one is a social inclusion technician for migrants. They have been working with foreign-borns for 4-5 years (Portuguese teachers), and 13/14 years (social inclusion technician). The interviews were held by ZOOM due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

All the technicians interviewed have more than 20 years of professional experience, thus accumulating, together, more than 60 years of experience. The Portuguese teachers work at The Secondary Poeta Joaquim Serra School, and teach Portuguese as a welcoming language to aid the social insertion of foreign-borns. The inclusion of foreign-borns, through the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), provides training in various areas, responding to the needs identified by the employment office when women go looking for

work. Their qualifications, skills and competencies are recognized and analysed in order to develop training projects that would support the achievement of their work-related goals. All this is in cooperation with all JRS offices and departments, such as the social, employment, and health departments, among others.

According to the information obtained from the interviews, the main barriers that foreing-born women face are economic/financial, linguistic, and educational. Furthermore, they mention the difficulty of integrating to another culture, dealing with their own legalisation process, and even finding a home.

Within all difficulties, there is not one that can be said to be easy to overcome. However, according to the interviewees, after the language barrier is overcome, everything becomes easier and the integration process flows more naturally. That is because knowledge of the language fosters better and more meaningful contact opportunities with people from the host country or who are already integrated into the host culture themselves. After making this connection, one may more easily adapt to the new cultural environment.

This language barrier, however, is often hard to overcome. As soon as foreign-born women arrive in the country, they are confronted with not being able to properly communicate with the locals and local authorities. From the beginning, they are the target of discriminatory behavior, and the fact that they do not know the language makes it even more difficult to have their qualifications recognized, to legalize their immigration status, and to find housing and work. Even if they have a university degree and immense experience in a specific field, to have their experience and education recognized is always difficult for those who cannot fully explain their background or know where to seek help.

The suggestions given by the technicians interviewed were quite vast, such as learning the language in a real, practical, and informal

context (support is needed for faster, more systematic, and consistent language learning) because it is in these informal contexts that certain prejudices are deconstructed (both of others and of one's own), and the bonds are established among each other, making them feel integrated into a community. They also suggested having the level C in schools, not only in universities, because it reaches more people. Another issue for foreign-born women is to ensure sustainability or get scholarships covering the rental of a room, food and studies. When they arrive in the host country, immediate needs take priority over long-term plans (such as the studies, for example). With their survival at stake, they usually follow the plan of finding a job and not going through with their studies, even though they would want to do it. Therefore, it is urgent to set up a support network to help people in their integration, to develop more efficient and less time-consuming ways of legalisation of foreign-borns, and to increase possibilities for recognition of previous qualifications to obtain equivalences in their studies. It is also necessary to create an information bank/platform that integrates the necessary information available in a simplified and coherent way, with easy access. This bank would allow greater flexibility and integration in the host country, as it would provide knowledge of the processes involved in the country, whether in the area of work, education, social security, or housing. Furthermore, they argued for the possibility of having an "*ambassador*" who accompanies the target group during the integration process, and who serves as an intermediary between the people and the new culture in front of them in various situations that arise. This person should be paid and willing to accept this responsibility.

According to them, there must be a balance between formal and informal learning. They state that society's focus has been very much on the formal, but the informal is more appealing to language learning as to the perception of the usefulness of this knowledge. And foreign-borns show a higher desire and curiosity to have a more advanced oral proficiency when the learning process integrates the informal methods.

We also interviewed foreing-born women from our Target Group 1, aged between 27 and 54. Three women are from target TG1a, and five women are from TG1b. The countries of origin are South Sudan, Romania, Ukraine, Italy, China, and Brazil. Some women have been living in Portugal for about two years, while others have been here for over thirty years. All women interviewed reported that both language and some lack of information regarding how to legalise their immigration status, get a job, or get higher education were the most significant hindrances to their integration in Portugal. Also, financial issues represent a big obstacle to the pursuit of higher educational aims. A factor that helps them immensely, and is becoming more pronounced as the years go by, is the support of other foreign-borns from similar origins and who have been in Portugal already for some years – this contact is also made easier through the use of social media.

Usually, when they arrive in Portugal, their main priority is to get a job so that they can survive. Afterward, they learn basic Portuguese in order to find a better job. They can learn Portuguese by talking to natives, watching Portuguese programs, reading Portuguese newspapers and magazines, watching movies with Portuguese subtitles, and engaging in Portuguese classes. Most of them have come with young children or they were born in Portugal soon after settling. Therefore their priority is to raise the family; after this, they can go back to their dreams and get higher education. All women seemed very determined, with clear goals, and confident they will achieve what they want, step by step.

Considering the TG1b, all women had completed higher education and continued their training in Portugal. Some completed their basic and higher education in Portugal; others did basic schooling in Portugal, left for college, and returned to Portugal to do a master's degree or post-graduation; and there were those who have completed their entire school journey in another country, entered higher education in another country, and then came to Portugal

and completed their academic career with a master's or bachelor degree. A piece of good advice they leave to others: never stop; continue to work and get training. Education is never lost, and it is possible to be working and studying at the same time, which is important because the living costs in Portugal are higher than in their countries of origin.

Their greatest difficulties in accessing higher education after mastering the language are the lack of information on how it can be done and the lack of persistence of candidates in gathering all the necessary documents. They mentioned the general idea that it was impossible to have equivalences to access to higher education, due to the difficulties in relation to the information on access to higher education and the difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation, as well as financial difficulties. However they later realised it is generally quite easy to get into higher education in Portugal.

Furthermore, the interviewees stated there have been noticeable improvements in access to higher education in Portugal for immigrants, while reinforcing that it is easier if they are from Portuguese-speaking countries. Other factors that facilitate access to higher education are  their own countries' Consulates, through the validation of documents required by Universities, and the program for those older than 23 for accessing higher education that was established by the Portuguese Ministry of Education. They all consider that they were very welcome in college and believe that there is a great integration of international students in Portuguese colleges, facilitated by the Bologna process and all the integration and accessibility programs provided by the universities. They mentioned several support offices and the invaluable help offered by former students in their university admission and integration. There are several departments of academic support, especially after being enrolled. Also,  they found a lot of information available for accessing the Universities on the universities' websites, and there were always those who would help in the application processes. Overall, they found a lot of information available in several languages. Furthermore, the possibility of studying during post-work hours was very appreciated.

Almost all women interviewed in TG1b had done an internship in AidLearn. The others responded to diverse emails that AidLearn sent to universities requesting collaboration in searching for foreign-born women who attend or have completed higher education in Portugal.

# SOLUTIONS & THE UPSIM CONCEPT

## Connecting findings to learning engagement

This section pertains to describing the conceptual framework for the empowerment of women with minority migrant backgrounds, to the extent that they find themselves motivated and equipped to set off on their personal upskilling journey. Understanding the theoretical framework behind the UPSIM approach will help professionals who intend to become UPSIM mentors strengthen their understanding of the tools and processes developed for this purpose.

The **course handbook** provides more detailed information regarding the tools, what they do and how they can be used. In this publication we will look into the different systems in which adult learners navigate, making connections with results from the UPSIM qualitative surveys made in Guadeloupe (France), Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, and the Czech Republic.

This publication introduces a conceptual framework for the UPSIM approach, adapted through a thorough investigation of the demographics of our target groups. The framework aims to augment traditional perspectives and to analyse major challenges to the development of self-directed learning competence in women with migrant backgrounds to avoid situations, where career and educational goals fail. As an added value to such achievements we also help to combat the financial isolation of minority women, keeping them from accessing different layers of society, resulting in a lack of diversity in higher and more influential sectors, such as policymakers and infrastructure.

First and foremost, we will here provide our recommendations regarding self-directed learner engagement. Analogously, learners could be seen as active agents whose subjective interpretations of the different learning situations largely determine the goals they choose. These situational interpretations are, however, dependent on:
A) their motivational beliefs
B) how they perceive themselves.

According to goal-orientation theory, both environmental and personal factors are seen as necessary components of motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Goal orientations which, in our case, relate to the self-directed learner's preferences for certain types of desired end-states (Niemivirta, 1998a, 2002a), provide an organising framework through which a variety of cognitive and affective responses to achievement situations can be interpreted (cf. Ames, 1992). Personal judgments that are likely to influence the self-directed learner's goal choice and their subsequent action are:
A) self-efficacy beliefs,
B) task value,
C) and anticipated interest. (Bandura mm) (p. 35)

Such beliefs have been found to be highly influential in predicting actual behaviour and task performance (cf. Pajares, 1996), and therefore the UPSIM concept places an important focus on these aspects.

## Facilitating learner engagement in a non-formal context

Understanding learner engagement, when mentoring individuals who may not necessarily have a lot of experience in formal learning contexts, is important for the UPSIM concept. Most research about learning has been in relation to students in formal education, however, the UPSIM consortium believes that it is possible to draw parallels between empirical research and findings in this area to a non-formal, self-directed adult learning context.

This chapter first proposes a definition of learner engagement and provides an exploration of positive learner engagement indicators. Mentoring and learning targets are further explored in their relation to fostering learner engagement. The UPSIM model takes into consideration the influences that the macro, exo, meso and micro levels have on adult learner engagement, with a particular focus on the microsystem – the women's immediate learning environment.

Learner engagement doesn't take place in a vacuum, it is rather something which is impacted and influenced by a broad range of contextual factors. We must therefore take this into consideration when exploring learner engagement[103]. For example, the model differentiates between sociocultural influences, such as the political and social environment; structural influences, such as the educational context and student background; and psychosocial influences, such as the teaching environment, teacher-student relationships, and student motivation. By considering the wider sociopolitical context that influences learner engagement, a more holistic and clearer understanding can be gained.[104] With this knowledge, UPSIM mentors are able to gain insight into how to build engagement, and ultimately improve the outcomes for the women they are helping. To ensure this clearer understanding, we will now look at a systemic model of the environments of foreign-born women, based on the UPSIM consortium's experience and results from our qualitative interviews with target groups.

Bronfenbrenner and colleagues (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994) developed a bioecological model of external influences affecting families and child development, used to guide a range of research on child learning and parent engagement.[105] This model has been particularly useful in educational practice, as it provides a conceptual framework for understanding how multiple settings and actors influence students at the same time. This model is also interesting in the context of adult learning, also in a non-formal learning context, as is the UPSIM project. By creating the learning to learn Arenas, we place it in the hands of the learner, to select the learning that needs to take place, and to locate the specific areas in society, where this learning can take place. This creates a much more societal context for language learning and also promotes intercultural meetings.

The self-directed learner sits at the centre of the microsystem, which is situated within a system of intertwined environments. (see diagram below). The **microsystem** encompasses an individual's immediate setting, e.g. at home or in "learning in the wild arenas" (which will be described further down in this publication).

The **mesosystem** level represents the interactions between microsystems, as well as between the micro and exosystems.

The **exosystem** includes the wider social structures that impact the women in our target group, this can be the educational institutions they have attended, the media, the government, the world of work and social services.

The **macrosystem** encompasses the wider economic, social, legal, political and educational systems in which the other systems are located. Keeping in mind foreign-born women's interconnected dimensions allows us to visualise more easily the fluid relationship between the external influences and learning engagement.

[103] Appleton, JJ, Christenson, SL and Furlong, MJ. "Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct". (Psychology in the Schools, 2008) 45(5): 369–386. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303). In higher education, Kahu, ER. Framing student engagement in higher education. Studies in Higher Education, (2013) 38(5): 758–773. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.598505
[104] Ibid

[105] For more information see Ansong, D, Okumu, M, Bowen, GL, Walker, AM and Eisensmith, SR.. The role of parent, classmate, and teacher support in student engagement: Evidence from Ghana. (International Journal of Educational Development, 2017) 54: 51–58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.03.010; and Heatly, MC and Votruba-Drzal, E. Developmental precursors of engagement and motivation in fifth grade: Linkages with parent- and teacher-child relationships. (Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology,2018)60: 144–156. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2018.09.003)
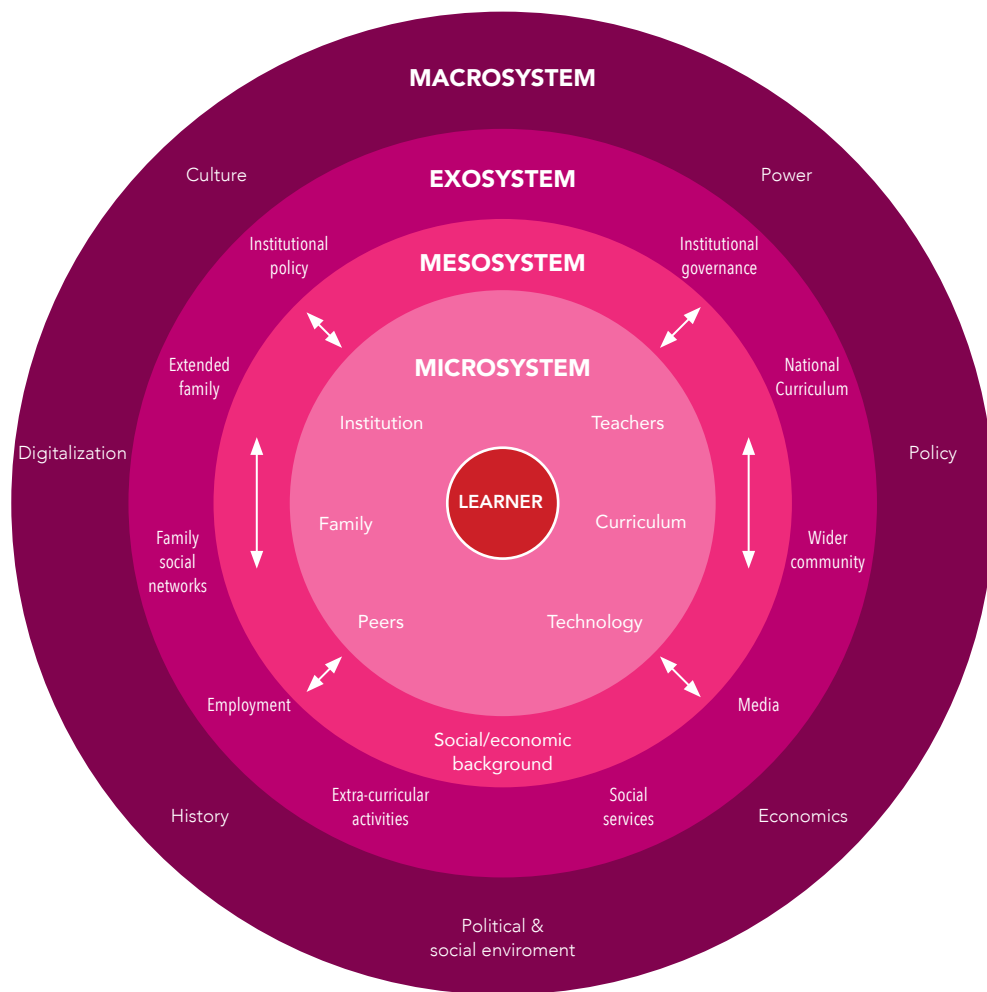
**Figure 22:** Bioecological model of influences on student engagement, based on Bond (2019) and adapted from Bronfenbrenner and colleagues *(Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994).*

The UPSIM mentor needs to understand the characteristics of foreign-born women and the models we use to guide our theory and practice, in order to avoid seeing their attributes as isolated elements. The consequences of reducing an entire organism to a partial view that varies depending on the lens in use, is not helpful.

A broad selection of structural and psychosocial influences affects the learning environment, learning processes, learner engagement, and subsequent outcomes at all levels of the bioecological model. To ensure learning engagement, we need to keep in mind that our target group consists of adults who are also foreign to the culture/ environment in which they reside. These women have throughout their lives acquired different micro-, meso- and macrosystems and therefore we need to consider these when helping them adapt to the new systems. The tools in the resource section of the project learning platform take these into consideration, as they are adapted to guide the women through the processes of learning and adapting to their surroundings. This is achieved through the development of the learning-to-learn competence and by showing the way to the learning arenas, tools and possibilities available to them.

## Dimensions of learning engagement

When a person develops cognitive engagement, this changes their affective engagement, which in turn, affects a person's behavioural engagement. Table 5 below illustrates how this works in an UPSIM context. One of the first focus areas in the learning process is the foundation of valuing. This process is based on the internalisation of a set of specified values, which are expressed in the learner's behaviour and are often identifiable. In other words, we help the mentee find out what worth she attaches to her upskilling goals/ dreams.

## UPSIM's dimensions of learning engagement

| Cognitive engagement | Affective engagement | Behavioural engagement |
|---|---|---|
| Valuing | Ranges from simple acceptance to a more complex state of commitment | Demonstrate belief in the democratic process. Sensitive towards value diversity. Show the ability to solve problems. Propose a plan to social improvement and follow through with commitment. Inform on matters that one feels strongly about |
| Purposeful | Enthusiasm | Effort |
| Integrating ideas | Sense of belonging | Attention/focus |
| Critical thinking | Satisfaction | Developing agency |
| Setting learning goals | Curiosity | Attendance |
| Self-regulation | See relevance | Attempting |
| Operational reasoning | Interest | Planning and completing tasks |
| Trying to understand | Sense of wellbeing | Positive conduct |
| Reflection | Vitality/zest | Action/initiation |
| Focus/concentration | Feeling appreciated | Confidence |
| Deep learning | Manages expectations | Participation/involvement |
| Learning in the Arenas | Enjoyment | Asking mentors, networks and/ or peers for help |
| Justifying decisions | Pride | Assuming responsibility |
| Understanding | Excitement | Identifying opportunities/challenges |
| Doing extra to learn more | Desire to do well | Developing multidisciplinary skills |
| Follow through/care/ thoroughness | Positive interactions with peers | Supporting and encouraging peers |
| Positive self-perceptions and self-efficacy | Sense of connectedness to study topic | Interaction (peers, teachers, mentors, content, technology) |
| Preference for challenging tasks | Challenging tasks lead to a feeling of accomplishment | Taking on and seeking out challenges that are within my abilities |
| Teaching self and peers | Positive attitude about learning/ values learning | Study habits/accessing resources |
| Use of sophisticated learning strategies | Time on task/staying on task/persistence | Planning and spacing study time, retrieval practice, elaboration, interleaving, concrete examples for abstract ideas, dual coding |
| Positive perceptions of mentor and peer support | Awareness, willingness to hear, attention. | Listen to others with respect. Participate in discussions. Question new ideals, concepts, models, etc. in order to fully understand them. |

**Table 5:** UPSIM's dimensions of learning engagement
*Adapted from Bond, M, Buntins, K, Bedenlier, S, Zawacki-Richter, O, and Kerres, M. (Manuscript in preparation). Mapping research in student engagement and educational technology in higher education.

A study on strategies and good practices for the EMPL commission, on the topic of what can be helpful in overcoming integration barriers, recommends development of social networks and mentoring. The study states that social networks, including contacts via friends, relatives and existing employees are deemed to be very important for job search. Newly arrived foreign-borns tend to have fewer networks that are relevant to the labour market than do native-born. Thus, the heavy reliance of the job-matching process on informal networks can limit access to jobs by (humanitarian) foreign-borns and put them at a significant disadvantage in the labour market.

Mentoring is one possibility recommended by nearly all studies to overcome such hurdles.

Mentors are supporting refugees in looking for work and giving advice on social matters as well as providing access to networks and thus bridging cultural gaps. Imagine what they could achieve if they had free access to quality and useful tools, which can help create a foundation for success from the beginning? Former refugees themselves can also be mentors. These same principles must also apply when it comes to education pathways and upskilling, and this is how the UPSIM concept is designed. It also takes into account what our target groups really need, based on existing data, recommendations as well as the results from qualitative research.

# Why Self-Directed Learning?

According to Knowles[106], people who take the initiative in learning learn more and learn better than people who are passively being taught. They have a higher tendency to be purposefully motivated and to apply the knowledge they have learned in their daily lives. One of the main observations and motivations behind the UPSIM project is to try to address the low numbers of women with migrant backgrounds in the different layers of the European labour market. One of the UPSIM consortium's hypotheses is that the efforts to activate women to work often go against their own ideas and expectations, sometimes influenced by different cultural identities. When the individual is not intrinsically motivated, but merely being activated, and if we believe that learning is a lifelong task linked to everything we do, including work, then it is easy to assume that this is not a sustainable approach. We, therefore, need to provide a framework of tools and resources to support a more sustainable way of integration. We don't want to put anyone in a category, we want to give individuals the tools that will enable them to choose their own direction, potentially resulting in self-satisfaction when the goal is obtained. Self-directed learners feel good about themselves as learners, and self-directed learners will be able to develop the competencies needed to fit into a new workplace or to gain the education they need to get the job that will give them satisfaction. They also often feel that they can successfully make decisions that are related to their learning needs, and they see themselves developing autonomy with respect to these decisions.

Moreover, a central argument for self-directed learning is that it has the potential to improve the quality of learning outcomes both in the short and in the long term[107], and it is also an essential skill to be acquired for the promotion of life-long learning. The 21st century labour market needs, due to societal and technological developments, have increased rather than diminished the need for self-directed citizens.[108] The labour force therefore needs to be adaptable to adapt to these, as the developments require unique skills and abilities. The younger generations in northern and central Europe will have been exposed to education that is making the shift between teacher centred to learner centred teaching, but many women arriving from countries with limited access, or different approaches, to education, may find these types of work or study environments challenging and difficult to overcome. This will almost always be the case, for people who have not been trained to develop their own self-directed learning competencies.

# Learning languages in the wild and understanding the language & L2L tool

The project has focused on new ways of supporting foreign-born women learning their hosts' language in informal ways. Inspired by the Swedish "Spraakskap[109]" project, which arose out of the observation that those who are interested in learning Swedish while in Sweden, often struggle to tap into the most powerful learning resource available: everyday interactions with Swedish speakers. With this as the departure point, the Språkskap project created new ways of supporting language learning in everyday interactions. Like the "Spraakskap" project, we see a future in which the responsibility of second language learning is not something that only takes place in formal school settings, but also can take place in everyday life, including a whole host of players, as well as physical and digital artefacts.

This section of the UPSIM project specifically focuses on a language learning tool's vision which calls into action four main players:

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[106] M. S. Knowles, *Self-directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*, (New York, Association Press, 1975)

[107] D. R. Garrison, *Self-directed learning: toward a comprehensive model* (Adult Education Quarterly, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 18–33, 1997)

[108] G. Manning, *Self-directed learning: a key component of adult learning theory* (Journal of the Washington Institute of China Studies, vol. 2, no. 2, 2007)
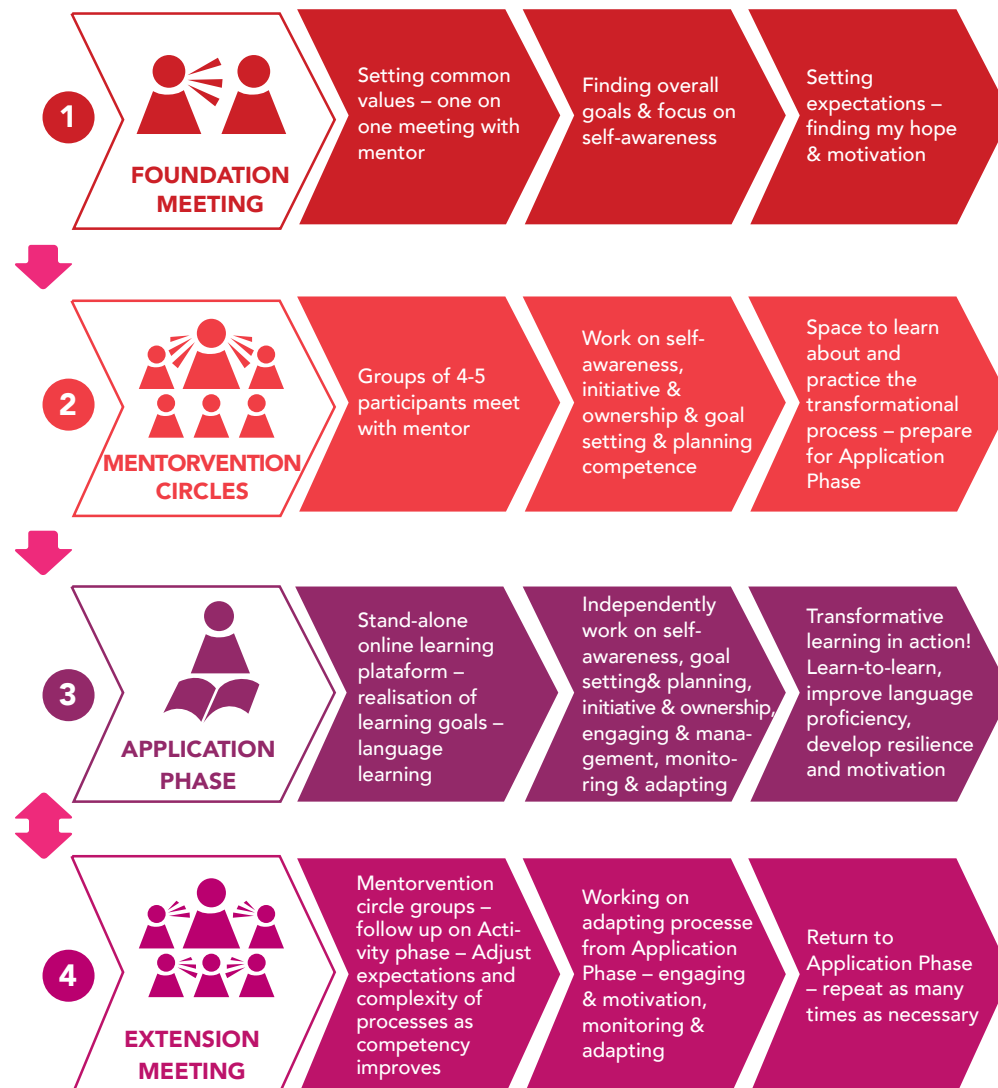
[109] Brendon Clark; Karl Lidemalm, *Språkskap: Swedish as a Social Language* (Ergonomidesign, 2011)

Language learners, everyday citizens, language educators and private and public service providers. By inviting the learner to take control of their own non-formal learning, and by giving them the resources necessary to do so efficiently, we empower them to seek out the potential players and to explore new ways of supporting their language learning. This action helps the learner go from passive recipient of learning, which is limited by what i.e. a teacher sees as important, to becoming an active learner » Citizens and mentors go from just being mentor or language speaker to language coach » Language Educations gain the opportunity of going from teaching language to supporting learners in daily practice » Private and Public Service Providers go from providing core services to providing an arena for language learning.

By re-focusing the traditional model for how language can be taught and learned, we have developed a suite of resources to support self-directed language learning.

This section can also stand alone as **an independent language tool** for any person who is not taking part in an UPSIM mentorvention, but is also intended to be used as part of the **Application phase, one of the four phases** in the UPSIM **mentorvention cycle**.
The detailed description of the UPSIM Mentorvention Cycle can be found in the **Successful Integration manual (Course Manual /IO2)**.

## Overview of the Mentoring Cycle

**1 — FOUNDATION MEETING**
- Setting common values – one on one meeting with mentor
- Finding overall goals & focus on self-awareness
- Setting expectations – finding my hope & motivation

**2 — MENTORVENTION CIRCLES**
- Groups of 4-5 participants meet with mentor
- Work on self-awareness, initiative & ownership & goal setting & planning competence
- Space to learn about and practice the transformational process – prepare for Application Phase

**3 — APPLICATION PHASE**
- Stand-alone online learning plataform – realisation of learning goals – language learning
- Independently work on self-awareness, goal setting& planning, initiative & ownership, engaging & management, monitoring & adapting
- Transformative learning in action! Learn-to-learn, improve language proficiency, develop resilience and motivation

**4 — EXTENSION MEETING**
- Mentorvention circle groups – follow up on Activity phase – Adjust expectations and complexity of processes as competency improves
- Working on adapting processe from Application Phase – engaging & motivation, monitoring & adapting
- Return to Application Phase – repeat as many times as necessary

The Application phase relates to the independent development of self-directed learning, with the main focus being on a combination of language learning and the learning-to-learn dimensions. The platform and its resources includes the following dimensions and elements (subcategories) from the learning-to-learn dimension:

### SELF-AWARENESS

• What am I able to do?
• What do I need to get better at?

### GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

• What would I like to achieve?
• Setting my learning goals
• Planning my self-learning agenda

### INITIATIVE & OWNERSHIP

• Understanding my limitations, my possibilities
• Taking responsibility for my own learning
• Finding driving questions and analogies
• Seeking input from others

### ENGAGING & MANAGEMENT

• Understanding my learning strategies and how they affect my learning
• Select & seek out resources available to me
• Check my own progress

### MONITORING & ADAPTING

• How did my approach change what I did?
• Work on tasks with encouragement from others
• Adapting what I do for future learning

# Theories behind the language tool

The UPSIM consortium has developed the tools for the UPSIM approach, on theoretical perspectives of self-directed learning. The concept of mentoring for self-directed learning has its roots in humanist philosophy, from where the concept of adult learning mainly derives, and the consortium has tried to adapt to adult learner needs by looking for alternatives to traditional pedagogical approaches. By conceptualising the development of self-learning competence in adults, in a language learning context, individuals become empowered as lifelong learners, rather than being dependent on others to motivate and lead them through formally designed courses in a traditional teacher centred setting. We take this approach as we view each human as unique, and this uniqueness needs to be met with an individualised approach to learning. Self-directed learning is the process and the product of learning, and an adult learner typically depends on intrinsic motivation, which is often connected to some sort of self-actualization and a wish to fulfil their full potential.

In the UPSIM learning concept, there is no teacher. There is no classroom, in the traditional sense, either. The mentors act as facilitators of the foreign-born women's processes, and with the mentoring resources and the language tool as scaffolding, the women are invited to take responsibility for their own learning. The UPSIM concept is shaped around the belief that human beings have the power to self-develop, if they are in the right environment and are given some cues and support along the way.

Inspired by progressivists John Dewey, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Alexander Neill, the language tool is designed to nudge the user to follow processes, which in many cases can be transferred to other learning scenarios. So even if our resources are focused on language learning, the same processes can be transferred to other areas, be that in a work context, professional development, or further education.

The users on the UPSIM language and learning to learn platform are exposed to the following:

### Discovery

• The language tool provides the user with opportunities to seek out learning opportunities "in the wild" and to create learning networks with people who can support and aid them through their learning.
• Self-direction in locating resources that can be helpful in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

### Scaffolding

• Scaffolding refers to a method in which a facilitator of learning offers a particular kind of support to learners as they acquire and develop a new concept or skill. In the scaffolding model, a facilitator may share new information or demonstrate how to solve a problem i.e. through the use of a tool.
• With reference to Vygotsky and the concept of scaffolding, the role of the platform, the mentor, the co-mentees from the circles is to promote an environment conducive to self-directed learning.
• The platform includes tips and tools that can help the user develop healthy habits for learning. Habits which in time will be internalised, used, and further adapted in other situations.

### Democracy

• Having the ability to influence own learning and goals
• Taking responsibility for own learning and actions
• The tool has the potential of developing democratic citizenship skills. According to Manning[110] "One potential characteristic of self-directed learners is striving for the democratic ideal," and "people whose lives are affected by a decision must be a part of the process of arriving at that decision."

[110] G. Manning, *Self-directed learning: a key component of adult learning theory*

### Self-management

• The ability to self-manage empowers the user to select and adjust their processes and time
• This includes managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations

### Curiosity

• According to Piaget, curiosity is the key to acquiring knowledge. We therefore want to inspire the user to learn something new in a meaningful way
• Piaget's constructivist theory of development is the idea that more advanced forms of cognition are constructed by the individual through a process of "self-directed" or "self-regulated" activity.[111]

### Critical awareness

• Garrison[112] states that critical thinking is not purely a cognitive or reflective process because the use of "critical" changes the meaning. Critical means to judge and not take things for granted.
• In accordance with Mezirow[113], the language tool is key to the dimension of self-directedness as it supports the user's ability to develop a critical awareness of meaning and self-knowledge.
• A critical and self-reflective attitude is a fundamental element of self-direction and is necessary when it comes to personal responsibility for one's own opinions and actions.
• Gelpi[114] states that self-directed learning, from a social point of

[111] Ho D. Kuhn and V. Ho, *Self-directed activity and cognitive development* (Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 119–133, 1980).
[112] D. R. Garrison, *Critical thinking and self-directed learning in adult education: an analysis of responsibility and control issues* (Adult Education Quarterly, vol. 42, no. 3, 1992. p. 138)
[113] J. Mezirow, "A critical theory of self-directed learning," in *Self-directed Learning: From Theory to Practice. New Directions for Continuing Education*, S. Brookfield, Ed., (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1985)
[114] E. Gelpi, *A Future for Lifelong Education*, (Department of Adult and Higher Education, The University of Manchester, 1979)

view, can empower women from minority communities to become independent life-long learners with an added value, that this for example also makes it difficult for "oppressive powers" to gain or keep control.

### Volition

• Is relevant in a self-directed learning context, and is often characterised as a dynamic system of psychological control processes that protect concentration and directed effort in the face of personal and environmental distractions. The ability to stay task-focused and ward off distractions is an important factor in ensuring that learners in all types of situations stay on track.

• Decreased motivation or negative emotions can be dealt with by applying action control strategies, and it requires a great deal of persistence and effort that is *volitional.*

## CONCLUSIONS

For the UPSIM concept to be efficient, it is important that the participant has a clear understanding of what it takes to start the process and successfully achieve the next step. We need to ensure that the mentors involved in the recruitment and coaching have set up clear and realistic expectations from the beginning. Providing support at this stage will help to prepare the women for the challenges to come and develop their capacity of becoming self-motivated and resilient. From the very start, we need to illustrate what it will take to succeed in relation to:

• study skills;
• academic language levels;
• practicalities;
• abilities;
• responsibilities.

To avoid missing the mark, we must try not to sell the idea of higher education like candy. We will need to define what the individual can attain with a little bit of help. To achieve this, we should provide a clear definition of what the women in our target group, residing in the partner countries, will need to have as a minimum in order to qualify as a participant in the UPSIM mentoring program. We will start by finding out which are the important questions we need to ask, in order to help set realistic goals in line with the target group's capacity and intellectual maturity.

Each country presents a different challenge, this is due to the different pre-existing conditions, the diversity of the host country, and the origin of the foreign-born. However, it should be noted that there are also similarities and identical themes. The paths that people are encouraged to follow are common, such as learning the language, and the need to access key information to live in the host country, find a job or study.

The analysis opened with a cross-section of the participants in a description of the cultural and social contexts in which foreign-borns move. The cultural context highly influences how migration is perceived. Different host countries apply different words to make the very concept of migration less divisive. Terms like "migrant" may be replaced with "foreign-born", or eliminated as in the case of "minority" in Guadeloupe.

The UPSIM project was born from this primary sensitivity towards language, starting from the way of speaking, precisely because language is the first barrier that foreign-born people have to face. This is a fact found in almost every analysis in all partner countries.

In the specific case of Guadeloupe, language does not seem to be the primary problem, and it is possible to deduce that the reason lies in the fact that many of the foreign-born already speak French, the local language, or Creole. On the other hand, school preparation is lacking, and it is the real urgency to be taken into consideration and solved, going to help these people, through aid for social development, precisely in the places where they reside, but taking also into account the already existing social and family structures. It should be kept in mind that the majority do not own a computer, so teaching must be designed using more adequate means, such as a smartphone, which is common instead. Also, getting a job is considered a consolidated goal to aim for, due to the desire to be economically independent.

In Denmark, the number of foreign-borns and descendants has increased lately and their conditions are significantly worse than those of the Danes. Among the descendants, things improve because they have been able to use the Danish school service, but there are no clear distinctions between women and men. Finding work is more difficult for foreign-born who come from non-Western countries also because they have lower qualifications and find lower-wage jobs. To help improve the skills of foreign-born, the Danish government has promoted initiatives that help foreign-borns overcome the language barrier and learn about Danish culture and rules.

It should also be noted that foreign-born women must also be supported in the family by providing information on the growth path, helping family members to accept changes and avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings. In line with this idea of a personalised path, cultural mentoring has been a successful integration initiative alongside the presentation of positive examples, such as role models.

In the Czech Republic, they use the word foreigners, as the word immigrant is not used. There is a distinction between female and male foreigners. The general trend is for women to migrate for family reasons and men for work reasons. Women also have the difficulty of not having their studies in their country of origin recognized. The previous school qualification recognition process is stressful, both for economic and psychological reasons, and leads foreign-born women to accept low-skilled jobs. Therefore, increasing inequalities in terms of wages. The difference between foreign-born men and women can therefore become significant because national rules do not help the regularisation of the visa, creating situations of paralysis by pushing foreign-born women to accept irregular jobs. This, accompanied by the difficulty of learning the language and a lack of information, both in terms of study and work, causes a sense of further isolation.

In Sweden, the research shows an immigration trend in which foreign-born women work in the lowest-paid areas and are specialised in only some types of work, but also in sectors where the work is considered middle-skilled. There are social programs to help foreign-born women find work, but it is not enough. The strategies implemented by the Swedish employment institutions have structural weaknesses as they do not adapt to the needs of the foreign-born, e.g., they are too long for those who already have advanced skills. Furthermore, it is difficult to find information about vacancies. In addition, Sweden

is a country where low-skilled jobs are lacking, representing only 5% of the total. Hence, the not so far-fetched idea that these social programs serve the system more than foreign-borns.

There is also a part of foreign-borns who are illiterate, and who have psychological problems that lead to further challenges to integration. Levels of vulnerability reach extreme degrees when economic problems are added, leaving women completely dependent on family members. Therefore, fixing the linguistic barrier that emerges from research remains central as the key to change, both personally and professionally.

In Portugal, the linguistic barrier is strong as in the rest of the other countries, and foreign-born workers are employed in informal and unregulated jobs. Women, especially, are at greater risk of being unemployed. They are also victims of gender-based violence and more exposed in the media due to religious, racial and ethnic stereotypes.

Data in hand, the labor market favors the Portuguese over foreign-born, and the Portuguese government, through some strategic plans to promote integration and the quality of services implemented since 2007, has begun to collect very positive results such as combating discrimination, facilitating family reunification and citizenship.

Despite these successful operations, foreign-born women continue to have economic, linguistic and educational problems due to the fact that they encounter serious difficulties in accessing higher education courses and having their previous qualifications recognised, as well as learning the language and developing more effective ways to obtain citizenship.

UPSIM is a mentorship program in which contact with the foreign-born woman is made to stimulate a relationship of growth in which the person herself is empowered and in control of her progress.

This "soft" approach, according to the goal-orientation theory, helps foreign-born women to develop their skills based on both environmental and personal factors, avoiding unnecessary failures.

UPSIM's vision is to see each individual as unique by implementing an individualised approach to learning. The different aspects of the tools are not in themselves new, but have been combined in a new way. The ultimate goal of UPSIM is the maturation of the learner through an awareness aimed at their goals, and having access to the tools and processes necessary to achieve these.

Another idea that came to light during the qualitative interviews, was that the UPSIM project could appeal to the labour market. Certain sectors have a high concentration of foreign-borns, which typically consist of low skilled jobs. By introducing the concept to industries, such as the retail sector, the project could support companies in providing upskilling pathways within their own training structure. Within the company, there can be mentors, who help to guide employees with a migrant background, to better their command of the host country language whilst helping them along to achieve the next best steps for training on the company's career ladder.

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# ANNEX

# Summary of barriers across the partnership

In summary, the main barriers that hinder foreign-born women's access to education across the partnership include:

• Gender barriers

• Cultural identities – some women do not identify with education and employment as they see their role within the family as being different from the European ideal. In some cases, it may be the family that is holding the woman back, due to lack of understanding of the process and what it entails

• Difficulties with childcare

• Insufficient language level to pursue higher education

• Impossibility to supplement official language courses without financial support

• Limited language acquisition competence

• Lack of professional diploma

• Little or poor professional (work/study) experience.

• Financial insecurity

• Low work identity

• Lack of skills in the use of technology (Preference for smartphones rather than laptops)

• Lack of organisation and planning competence

• Lack of awareness about available resources

• Lack of knowledge about own possibilities and how to get there.

• Difficult access to information and lack of knowledge/information in the immediate family

• Non-supportive network

• Different approaches to learning or underdeveloped learning-to-learn competence Those come from insufficient study experience or experience from authoritative education systems, which cause problems when, for example, studying in Scandinavia, where the learner is expected to be independent, self-regulating, and take responsibility for their own learning.

## Summary of take-aways from the needs assessment:

• Focus on the development of organisational skills and learning to learn competence

• Focus on addressing gender roles in relation to work identity

• Family inclusion in the process is essential to demystify the western labour market values

• Evaluate academic potential from the beginning; define necessary foundations for the program participants' capacity and intellectual maturity

• Demonstrate what it takes to succeed; practicalities, skills, attitudes, abilities, and responsibilities

• Small steps; work towards the next best step on the migration path

• Recruitment focus; migrants in adult education (education bridges with basic education for adults)

• Spark anticipation for the pride of achievement and envisaging a different financial situation in the future.

• Social networks are very important for these women, and often they need to ask outside their community network to cross-check the information they received.

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