**Women in migration – final report**

**23 June 2022**

**Speakers:** Ivana Perlić Glamočak (coordinator, EMN NCP Croatia), Žarko Katić (State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior Croatia), Bahrija Sejfić (deputy director, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia), Simona Ardovino (Migration Management Response Unit, DG HOME, European Commission), Karolina Marcjanik (Head of Training and Learning Management Unit, EUAA), Anna Rich (UNHCR), Suzana Borko (deputy director, Caritas Croatia), Magnus Ovilius (Head of Sector Forecasting, Preparedness and Policy Monitoring, Chair of the EMN, DG HOME, European Commission), Marianne Höhl (Head of Integration Coordination of the Federal Chancellery of Austria), Ayten Pacariz (operational manager, *Nacbarinnen in Wien*), Asha Osman (social assistant for families, *Nachbarinnen in Wien*), Christine Mühlbach (Head of section, German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth), Simony Papakosta (operational manager, *Limassol:one city; the whole world),* Romano Kristić (Osijek City), Ivan Vidiš (State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy).

**Moderator:** Marina Mandić (Ministry of the Interior Croatia)

**EMN NCP Hrvatska**: Ivana Perlić Glamočak, Gordana Valenta, Jurica Dugandžić, Dorja Nježić

*On June 23, 2022, a conference on the topic of women in migration was organized by the European Migration Network of the National Contact Point for the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of the Interior. The aim of the conference was to further raise awareness about women in migration and their role in integration into the new society, the challenges they face, to present the EU framework and national policies and strategies of Member States in the field of integration of migrant women, to exchange ideas and good practices , through the testimonies of migrant women themselves, an active role they should play in policy-making and decision-making processes, in order to enable their more successful and equal inclusion in society.*

Welcoming speech was given by the coordinator of EMN Croatia, Mrs Ivana Perlić Glamočak, who introduced the participants to the organization and work of the European Migration Network and the work of EMN Croatia, which was taken over by the Ministry of the Interior on January 1, 2019.

The introductory speech was held by the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, Mr Žarko Katić, who emphasized the importance of the discussion on the topic of migration, especially on the topic of women in migration. The initiative to hold a conference entirely dedicated to women in migration was prompted for several reasons. In most European countries, the share of women among migrants is high, while in others it is slightly lower. Women migrate to Europe for a variety of reasons, but what do we really know about these women on the move. Mr Katic stated that the migration is an extremely complex phenomenon on a global level conditioned by socio-economic factors, security conditions, but also the personal experiences of migrants who embark on a dangerous journey into the unknown with the help of extensive smuggling networks, in search of better living conditions and opportunities. He also added that although migrant women are a large and diverse group, their potential is often underutilized and neglected in migratory flows, while the challenges they face are underestimated and insufficiently recognized. He pointed out that the process of working with migrant women and their active involvement in the process of inclusion in society must begin as early as possible in their arrival in the Republic of Croatia, where it is crucial to ensure language learning for more successful inclusion in economic, cultural and social life. Special emphasis was placed on information campaigns that strengthen the position of migrant women in society, the private and public sectors. Inclusion in the labor market is also a crucial part of the comprehensive process of empowering migrant women and their successful integration. Finally, Mr. Katić, State Secretary, sent a message to all participants with the hope of continuing activities and joint efforts to empower women in migration and their more successful inclusion in Croatian society.

As part of the conference, numerous presentations were held through three panels, from women involved in the creation of migration policies to migrant women themselves, who gave an overview of the topic of women's empowerment in migration and their more successful inclusion in society.

**PANEL I: Women on the move - Migrant women in the EU**

In the first panel, **Mrs Bahrija Sejfić** (Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia) explained in detail the coordinating role of the Office in the process of integration of persons with international protection, and said more about cooperation with other state administration bodies, regional and local authorities, but also the non-governmental sector. She stressed that the mission of the Office is effective, coordinated and systematic implementation of national programs, plans, strategies, action plans, the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities and international documents as well as public awareness and prevention of hate crimes aimed at improving human rights and rights of national minorities. Also, the Office has established an Advisory Group of third-country nationals and persons of migrant origin consisting of fifteen members (among them 4 women). The group was established as part of the INCLuDE project - Interdepartmental Cooperation in Empowering Third-Country Nationals, and members were appointed until the end of the project, until the end of 2022. The aim of establishing this group is to empower third-country nationals through education on universal human rights, their own rights and obligations and to strengthen their perspective in political debate and contribute to improving integration policies by making recommendations to decision makers at all relevant levels and finally involving them in creating, implementation and evaluation of integration policies and strategies.

The next speaker was **Mrs Simona Ardovino** (European Commission). Mrs Mandić asked Mrs Ardovino how the European Commission views the issue of women in migration and what challenges Member States face. Mrs Ardovino said women in migration often find themselves in vulnerable situations - with children, pregnant - and this should always be taken into account. She stressed that the view of women in migration is much broader - the desire is to ensure that every woman controls her journey once she settles in a particular country. That is why the European Union operates on three levels when dealing with migration challenges. The first level is legal - these are laws that are enacted at EU level and serve as a framework and guidelines for countries that apply them in their respective contexts. The second level is operational. Each Member State adopts its own Action Plans and programs tailored to its needs. The last level is funding - the EU funds various projects to raise awareness on the topic of migration (eg AMIF). She mentioned the dangers of human trafficking, whose victims are most often vulnerable groups - women and children. Women must be informed of the dangers in their migration path. This information must be communicated to them in a proper manner, preferably through cultural mediators, in their mother tongue.

**Mrs Karolina Marcjanik** (European Union Agency for Asylum) briefly explained the role of the European Union Agency for Asylum, which acts as a resource for Member States in the field of international protection, with the possibility of providing practical, legal, technical, advisory and operational assistance in many forms. The Agency does not replace national asylum or reception authorities, which are ultimately fully responsible for their procedures and systems. In the new mandate, the Agency has 500 experts in Member States, holds many trainings, has various technical tools, and works intensively with civil society organizations - all with the aim of improving the integration of third-country nationals in the countries they come to. Mrs Mandić asked her what the Agency's opinion was on requests for international protection based on gender reasons. Mrs Marcjanik explained that they have special experts dealing with these issues. They go through specific trainings that train them to know how to deal with various challenges. Through training and education, they try to understand gender roles, cultural norms and systems of other societies, thus creating places for reflection and awareness raising. She pointed out that they also hold special trainings for working with vulnerable groups, especially victims of human trafficking.

**Mrs Anna Rich (UNHCR, Croatia)** stated that because migrant women are a very diverse group, they have more difficulties in integration. When asked by Mrs Mandic how these difficulties in integration could be overcome, she answered that women often take care of older family members in addition to their children at home. She gave the example of displaced persons from Ukraine; most are women, children and the elderly. These women have trouble finding a suitable job that would also allow them to take care of the family. Mrs Rich stressed the importance of flexibility of working hours for women who are in such a situation. They should also have the opportunity to work from home, or even the opportunity to open their own smaller shop or business so that they can regulate their own working hours. The key to integrating refugee women is to ensure intangible rights, the right to a home, health care and education, she stressed.

**Mrs Suzana Borko** (Caritas Croatia) emphasized a highly personalized approach as the key to faster integration. The issue of migration has become very popular in the past ten years. She commented on the situation with displaced persons from Ukraine, and praised the approach of Croatia and Croatian citizens, who very cordially offered help, mostly in the form of accommodation. At first, most people thought that the situation in Ukraine would return to normal quickly and that displaced people would return home, but now we see that this will not be the case. Croatia may not be the first country they wanted to be in, but this safe society, quality education, culture, customs and food are quite similar to theirs, and are acceptable to them. She stressed in particular that although the current situation with Ukraine is current, it does not mean that other groups have been neglected.

**PANEL II: Focus on the integration of migrant women; EU Framework and National Policies and Strategies of the Member States**

Although the national governments of the Member States are responsible for creating and implementing integration policies, the European Union has a key role to play in supporting its Member States. In the second panel, Mr. Magnus Ovilius (European Commission) spoke on the implementation of the European Commission's Action Plan for Integration for the period from 2021 to 2027 and gave an overview of the EMN study *Integration of migrant women in the EU:*

**Mr Magnus Ovilius** stated that, in most European countries, the female share of migrants remains consistently high. Women migrate to Europe for a variety of reasons and over half of all migrants in the OECD and EU countries are women. Available data show that in 2020, there were an estimated 1.9 million immigrants to the EU from non-EU countries and as regards gender distribution of immigrants to the EU Member States in 2020, there were slightly more men than women (55 % compared with 45 %). The Member State reporting the highest share of male immigrants was Croatia (75 %); by contrast, the highest share of female immigrants was reported in Cyprus (54 %).

Mr Ovilius explained that the main emphases of the Action Plan were on education and training, improving employment opportunities and skills recognition, access to health care and adequate accommodation. Given the importance of this topic, the EMN will publish a study *Integration of migrant women in the EU: policies and measures* that will show whether and to what extent, EU Member States have taken into account the special position of women in their integration policies and measures.

Examples of national integration policies and strategies targeting migrant women were first given by Mrs Marianne Höhl (Austria) and Mrs Christine Mühlbach (Germany) with the Strong in Workplace project.

**Mrs Marianne Höhl** explained that, in cooperation with the Austrian Integration Fund, they offer a range of counseling, events and courses - for both men and women - with a focus on, among other things, equality, self-determination, non-violence in the family, striking a balance between business and private life, educational opportunities, health care and the Austrian legal system.

**Mrs Christine Mühlbach** presented the German project *Strong in the Workplace* whose focus is that women, even though they are mothers and take care of the family, can fully dedicate themselves to the permanent job for which they are qualified. So far, 17,500 migrant women who are also mothers have participated in the project. About 32% of the women who participated in the project received permanent employment, specialized training or are self-employed. The main conclusion of the project is that the key to successful integration is cooperation with local authorities, long-term support for women and language learning.

Examples of good project practice were shared with the participants by **Mrs Ayten Pacariz** and **Mrs Asha Osman**, with the *Nachbarinnen in Wien* project.

The pilot phase of the Nachbarinnen in Wien project began in 2009 with Renate Schnee (social worker) and Dr Christine Scholten (cardiologist). Two women have noticed through their work that migrant women, and especially refugees, are not "free" to express their problems and needs. They started collecting data from their surroundings and came to the conclusion that they needed the help of other migrants and refugees. They recognized the fact that women would trust only women from their homelands and from the same cultural background. The project started with a five-month training course for social workers called NACHBARINNEN (neighbors). Candidates were required to have a good knowledge of the German language and to have strong empowerment skills. They were trained on the topics of communication, health, financial security, parenting and education. Nachbarinnen are women who do the outreach work. They experienced migration, and managed to overcome obstacles of integration. They provide professional social assistance in their mother tongues Arabic, Somali, Dari / Farsi, Chechen, Russian and Turkish. This is a great example of a project to empower women by supporting each other; women to women throughout the integration path.

**Mrs Simony Papakosta** (Cyprus) presented the project *Limassol: one city; the whole world*. It is a project in which almost 62% of women participated, and which includes a wide range of activities aimed at strengthening the capacity for social integration, cohesion, socialization of third-country nationals and the prevention of social exclusion and discrimination.

Since the integration is carried out at the local level, we wanted to present the activities of the local level in the Republic of Croatia. The representative of the City of Osijek, **Mr Romano Kristić**, introduced the participants to the activities of the City of Osijek in the field of integration. He pointed out the *Slavonian Heart for Families of Ukraine* project, on whose official website you can find important information that is helpful to displaced persons from Ukraine. The challenge in the integration of displaced persons from Ukraine is the integration into the labor market due to the recognition of qualifications. A big challenge they are facing now, is the nostrification of diplomas for regulated professions. Nostrification, due to the extensive translation, takes a long time, and it is necessary to hire the Embassy of Ukraine because it is part of their documentation in Ukraine. If this procedure were simplified, it would be very good for highly qualified workers from Ukraine, not only for humanitarian reasons, but it would be of great benefit to Osijek and the county due to the shortage of certain specializations.

At the end of the panel, **Mrs Mathilde Mandonnet** (France) also commented on the French national strategy in the field of women's integration. The purpose of the integration policy is to support all foreign nationals who have been admitted to France for the first time and who intend to settle in the country in the long term to achieve social and economic autonomy. This also includes their good knowledge of fundamental rights, such as those related to health. However, some groups need more support, and this is especially the case for many migrant women. She mentioned that migrant women most often come with small children, which makes it difficult for them to find a permanent job. Therefore, it is necessary to provide these women with flexible working hours and care for children (kindergartens and schools).

**PANEL III: Who are the women on the move? Experiences of migrant women in Croatia**

The third panel gave an opportunity to migrant women in the Republic of Croatia to acquaint the public with the experiences, challenges they face, expectations they have and suggestions of needs and activities that would enable more successful and equal inclusion in Croatian society. The key to the success of women's integration is certainly enabling women to participate in policy-making and decision-making processes, as well as integrating their needs into policies and solutions. The panelists came from different countries and with different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles.

**Bzhar**, originally from Iraq, currently attends a self-arranged Croatian language course, is a teacher by profession, and participates in the filming of the documentary Offside-inside, which is a story about asylum seekers and football on the occasion of the 2022 World Cup organized by HRT and the Center for Dialogue Culture. She says that she fits in very well with Croatian society, and that one day, when she has mastered the Croatian language enough, she would like to teach foreigners Croatian.

**Yana**,a displaced person from Ukraine with granted temporary protection, spoke about recent events in Ukraine and how more than six million Ukrainians have left their country since the start of the war on February 24. The largest part of the displaced population consists of women and children. The events in Ukraine have resulted in EU member states opening their doors and helping displaced persons according to their capabilities. She stated that she was very well received by Croatian society and that she felt comfortable in Croatia because of the cultural similarities. She thanked for this opportunity to talk about integration, and for all the support provided to the people of Ukraine.

**Evin**, a citizen of the Republic of Turkey, a volunteer on a project within the Udruga Zagor, came from Istanbul, a city of more than 15 million people, to Zabok. She explained that in Croatia she is a journalist, follows all current events and activities through photographs, videos and written reports that she edits herself and publishes online. Evin said that she did well in Croatia, the only major change for her was that she came from a large and busy environment to a quieter town. However, she pointed out that she liked the change and that it was well received in Croatia.

**Ruqayya,** a citizen of South Africa, shared her experience of integration into Croatian society. She emphasized that by participating in associations and communicating with native speakers, she learned Croatian very well and that this is very important during integration.

The closing speech was held by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Mr. Ivan Vidiš, in which, among other things, he emphasized the timely provision of all information to persons coming to the Republic of Croatia. He also stressed the importance of long-term integration, which is achieved by finding a job that meets the qualifications of a foreigner coming to the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy is making great efforts to facilitate the procedure of nostrification of diplomas, and to provide quality Croatian language courses to all who come to Croatia.

Mrs Mandić thanked everyone for the exceptional discussion and emphasized that this conference provided an insight into the complexity of the process of women's integration. It is extremely important to continue activities and joint efforts in empowering women in migration and their more successful inclusion in Croatian society.

The conference brought together a number of participants live and online, including representatives of ministries and other relevant state administration bodies, academia, representatives of international organizations and NGOs, experts and participants from other Member States and provided an opportunity to learn about specific challenges and challenges. to meet migrant women in the Republic of Croatia and to get acquainted with policies, concrete projects and activities in the field of integration that are targeted at migrant women.

The conference was covered by the media and was broadcasted in the central informational programme of the Croatian Radiotelevision (HRT), on June 23, 2022.

**Report made by:** Dorja Nježić