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Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Europe



WE-EMPOWER project is a transnational collaboration of seven migrant women-led and women-led organisations in Europe. The project aims to encourage and empower migrant women to participate in political and democratic life, with the overarching goal of protecting migrant women's rights. The conducted research aims to shed light on the state of migrant women's participation in political and democratic life at the EU level.

NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN EUROPE

- **Third-country nationals (non-EU citizens)** make up **5% of the population of the EU**, or 23.7 million. There are 447.2 million people living in the EU.
- If we consider mobile EU citizens, the figure above increases to **almost 10%**.
- In 2021, 2.3 million people immigrated to the EU from third countries, with **55% for men, and 45% for women**. (data from Eurostat, 2021)

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

• **Hadia Tajik**, who is of Pakistani origin, was Norway's Labour Party's deputy leader for seven years, and the first woman of a minority background to be named the most powerful woman in Norway by Kapital magazine.

• **Rita Bosaho**, born in Equatorial Guinea, became the very first black member of the Spanish Senate in 2016 and is now the director of racial and ethnic diversity at Spain's equality ministry.

• The **European Network of Migrant Women** is a migrant women-led feminist, secular, non-partisan platform that advocates for the rights, freedoms and dignity of migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women and girls in Europe.

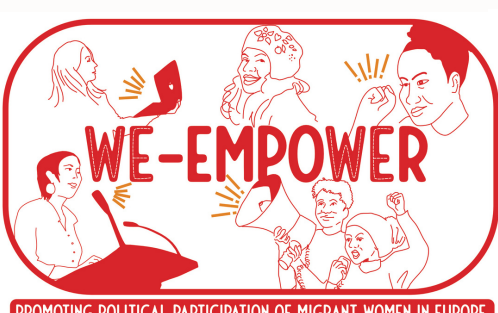
• **New Women Connectors** is a migrant women-led Pan-European platform working to promote the engagement of migrant and refugee women in policy-making processes.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **The lack of electoral rights:** Migrant women who are third-country nationals are generally not allowed to cast ballots in municipal, national, or European elections.
- **Intersectional discrimination:** Migrant women face intersectional discrimination based on their gender identity, race, ethnicity, and migrant background, and as a result, are more exposed to gender-based violence, poverty, and social exclusion.
- **Hate speech and online violence:** The alarming rate of hate speech and online violence that women politicians and public figures face in Europe deter migrant women from participation.
- **Under-represented in the media:** Migrant women also lack visibility in the media and when they are featured, representations are often limited and stereotypical. The lack of positive representation contributes to the stigmatisation of all migrant women and can further exclude them from participation.

MEASURES TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- **The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027) from the European Commission** proposes actions around integration for migrant women, which include having more migrant women have equal participation in society, but not necessarily in decision-making processes.
- The European Commission also set up an **Expert Group on the views of migration, asylum, and integration**, however, consultations as a form of participation have a limited impact on legislative proposals.
- **Having more migrant councils or consultative bodies** can be useful to include migrants in local policymaking at the city and national levels in Europe, but there is a need to ensure sustainability and gender parity within these councils.
- Overall, **there is no known actions at the EU level** to increase the representation of migrant women in politics. But there are recommendations made by the Council of Europe to improve this, through mandating **gender quotas, mentoring and training for women from under-represented groups**, like migrant women, and **collecting disaggregated data and supporting research** in this area.
- Increasing funding support for migrant women-led organisations, as it is crucial that migrant women can develop and lead spaces where they can share their expertise and influence decision-making.





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Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Italy



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NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN ITALY

- According to the official data (ISTAT, 2012), migrants living in Italy represent **7.5% of the population (4,570,317 million)**.
- In 2020, **most migrants residing in Italy were women (53.6%)**.
- Among migrants coming from Eastern Europe there is a **higher female percentage (60% Romanians and 78% Ukrainians)**, employed especially as domestic workers.
- By October 2022, 172,405 refugees from Ukraine had arrived. Most of them are women (91,788) and children (51,101)

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Mercedes Lourdes Frias, from the Dominican Republic, is the former councillor for immigration in the municipality of Empoli

Cécile Kashetu Kyenge, Italian politician and ophthalmologist, was the Minister for Integration in the 2013–14 Letta Cabinet, and Italy's first black government minister. She proposed a law that would give citizenship to the children of immigrants if they were born on Italian soil. She was elected in 2014 to the European Parliament where she was a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

Associazione Differenza Donna/Donne Migranti welcomes and hosts migrant women who arrive in Italy for family reunification or for work; they include women who are victims of violence in their country of origin, and in Italy and need to be accompanied on a long journey that requires the reconstruction of a psychophysical identity.

Associazione Stella supports migrant women's access to the labour market in Italy. It supports migrant women in creating and improving their CVs, upskill themselves and gain access to training opportunities.

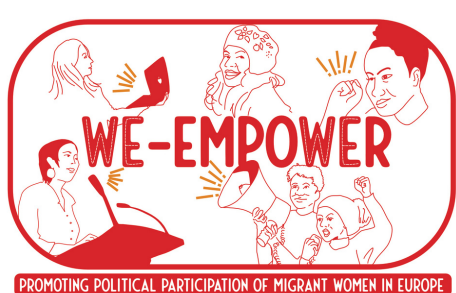
ADRI – ASSOCIAZIONE DONNE ROMENE IN ITALIA has been involved in promoting Romanian migrant women's rights, raising awareness of their important role in the economy and society. ADRI also carries out advocacy at the EU level –contributing to several European parliamentary written questions regarding the problems faced by migrant women and transnational families, and also on data collection on the children left behind.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **The increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum legal regimes** of Italy, which prevent access to a residence permits;
- **Access to the right to vote** at the local and national level that is linked to the migrants' country of origin. Third-country nationals who are not EU citizens do not have voting rights in Italy;
- Unequal gender relations and **gender-based discrimination**;
- **Lack of access to the labour market leads** to the lack of migrant women participation: In 2020, only one in two migrant women worked, and they are poorer than the European average;
- **Unfavourable treatment**: Migrant women are often employed as domestic workers, caregivers, and cleaning staff in offices and businesses. At the same time, there is a "paradoxical" exclusion of migrant care workers from political and public debates on the securitisation of migrants;
- A **systematic lack of attention** to issues of concern to migrant women;
- Migrant women are predominantly represented through a cultural lens, portrayed as **'the Other'**;

MEASURES TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- Increase **efforts to include migrant women in politics or public decision-making**.
- Introduce **migrant councils** that involve migrants and are primarily driven by them in order to improve the living conditions of migrants and ultimately influence migration policies.
- Introduce **more NGO-run projects that push for greater migrant participation**, and the involvement of migrants as direct actors of change through processes of participation and active citizenship.





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Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Germany

GABRIELA
GERMANY



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NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN GERMANY

- 27.2% of people (22.4 million) in Germany have a migrant background, and 49.2% of this figure, or **11 million, are women.**
- Out of the 11 million women with a migration background, **3.2 million women are non-EU nationals.**
- Majority of migrant women are from EU countries (33%) led by Poland, Romania, Italy, Croatia and Greece. A significant number also come from non-EU countries such as Turkey, Russia, Syria, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan.

(Data from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, or DESTASIS)

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Women are still under-represented in decision-making bodies from municipal to national levels. People with migrant backgrounds who engage in politics are still relatively few.

The representation of women with migration backgrounds was marginal in the last two federal elections in 2017 and 2021. For example, in 2021, there were **37 members of parliament (MP) who are women with migration background**, out of 735 MPs.

DaMigra (Dachverband der Migrantinnen Organisationen) is an umbrella organization for all migrant women organisations in Germany. Its central goal is empowerment of migrant women, which includes the equal political, social, professional and cultural participation of migrant women.

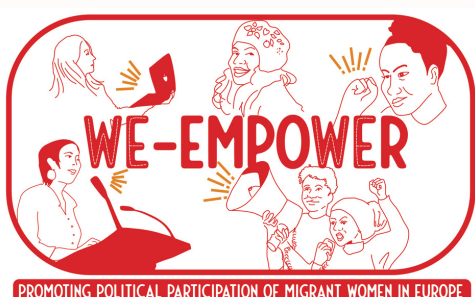
International Women Space is a feminist, anti-racist political group in Berlin led by migrant and refugee women fighting patriarchy, gender-based violence, racism and all types of discrimination.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **Difficulty in acquiring residence permit:** This poses limitations on people with a migration background in exercising their political rights and participating in democratic life.
- **Discrimination against women from non-EU countries:** This stems from power dynamics rooted from colonial history. Migrant women are often asked about their 'migration background', and experience racialisation, even if they have lived in the country for many years.
- **Lack of inclusion and sense of belonging:** Language barrier contributes to the sense of exclusion and prevents migrant women from entering political and local spaces.
- **Less likely to be featured in the media:** There is still a prevalent portrayal of migrant women as objects of desire, as 'exotic' or 'oriental'.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- Implement participatory mechanisms like **migrant advisory councils** (for example in Leipzig) as it promotes involvement in institutionalised round tables, consultation, and participation in civil society rather than just voting and standing for elections.
- Remove migration-specific barriers, for example by **providing appropriate language skills and basic knowledge of the political system** of the host country, as well as access to political parties and other associations to achieve fair political representation of migrants' interests.
- **Develop an open and welcoming atmosphere to migrant women** and a broader understanding of what it means to live in contemporary German society, one that is constituted by people holding a range of intersectional identities.
- **Reducing bureaucracy or paperwork to apply for funding** for migrant women organisations to support their initiatives.



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NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN DENMARK

- In 2021, **there were 300,000 migrant women**, of whom 80,000 had Danish citizenship. During this time, Denmark's population is 5.8 million.
- In the last five years, **most migrant women have migrated from Romania, Poland, and Germany.**
- In addition, statistics show that many migrants came from the USA, India, Philippines, and China.

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

In the Parliamentary elections, **Samira Nawa from social-liberal political party, Radikale Venstre**, daughter of Afghan refugees, was elected. **Monika Rubin**, who is part Polish and part Persian was also elected in the 2022.

Additionally, **Christina Sade Olumeko**, who is Nigerian-French, was elected from the Alternativet, and **Victoria Velásquez**, whose mother is from Nicaragua, was elected from the Red-Green Alliance.

Babaylan-Denmark is a network of Filipino women in Denmark and was established in 1997. Babaylan-Denmark works on several fronts: political, cultural-educational, and social to improve the situation of Filipinas in Danish society and in the Philippines.

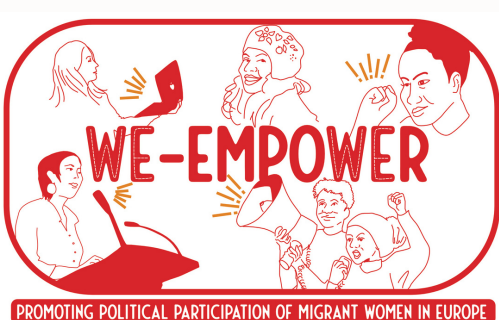
Wo-Mi Women Migrants is a platform created by a group of Latin American women that seek to advance the rights of all women and girls, focus on their needs and conditions, and promote an enabling non-discriminatory environment.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **Rhetoric from the Danish Parliament stigmatises, alienates, and disenfranchises migrant women:** This results in the lack of participation of migrant women at the grassroots level, or in local councils and boards.
- **A growing group of migrant women lack full electoral rights** as only Danish citizens can vote in Parliamentary elections and it is a difficult (process) to obtain Danish citizenship. Many do not know that they can vote in communal and regional elections.
- **Discrimination against migrant women:** Migrant women from Asian and Arab origins tend to experience racial discrimination and xenophobic attitudes at the workplace. These experiences lead to them withdrawing from integrating with their work peers and avoiding partaking in social activities, especially with ethnic Danes.
- **The lack of media representation:** This acts as a barrier to participation for three primary reasons: there is a lack of migrant voices which renders them invisible, a lack of migrant representation in topics of concern to them, and when they do feature, the portrayals of migrants tend to be negative.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- **An easier access to Danish citizenship.**
- **Migrant women in leading positions on the local level and women in decision-making positions** are needed to advocate for better representation of migrant women.
- **Self-organisation and financial support of migrant women** in political issues is needed; survival of migrant women's organisations requires political and financial support from stakeholders.
- **Affirmative actions and quotas** are necessary because members of boards/committees in different domains (whether it is boards of big companies, or parent committees in day-care institutions) tend to elect people from their own education background and/or gender. Quotas will create new role models.





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Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Serbia



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NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN SERBIA

- In the period from 2015 to today, Serbia has been a transit country for about **one and a half million** refugees who passed through the Balkan route in their migration to countries of the European Union.
- In 2022, over 116,000 refugees and migrants came to Serbia, **an increase of over 100%** compared to 2021.
- It is not possible to determine the exact number of women migrants in Serbia, as many of them choose to stay in informal or private accommodations and do not register upon arrival.

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Advocacy Group gathered around NGO Atina represents an informal women's body, made up of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, with the intention to address and advocate for better living conditions, access to justice and human rights for all migrant and refugee women in the Republic of Serbia. The Group carries out activities, actions, and meetings with relevant decision-makers, sharing their own experiences and recommendations for improving the position of refugee and migrant women in the Republic of Serbia. The Group was founded in 2018 and so far had more than 20 members.

The Advocacy Group members recognised **only the initiative of NGO Atina** as an opportunity to participate in political and democratic life in Serbia. The respondents stated that they believe such an initiative exists at the national and international levels, but that they are lacking at the local level to bring migrant women together.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **A language barrier** excludes migrant women from participating in public debates, political processes, or public services.
- **Discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, and migration status:** They are often exposed to sexism, racism, and xenophobia, which can result in their exclusion from public life.
- **Economic vulnerability:** Most often, migrant women face unemployment, or work in low-paid jobs where they are exposed to exploitation and poor working conditions. Low income and an inadequate social protection system affect their financial independence and reduce the possibility of becoming engaged in public life.
- **Lack of access to education** can limit migrant women's professional development and political participation opportunities.
- **Lack of information about their rights, opportunities and resources** can hinder them in integrating and participating in public life.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- **Language and communication:** Access to language programmes and translation services to ensure that migrant women who do not speak Serbian language can communicate with political institutions.
- **Education and empowerment:** Migrant women should be empowered through education about the political system of Serbia, their political rights, and opportunities for political engagement.
- **Promotion of gender equality** in political life, adoption of policies and laws that protect the rights of migrant women, and prevent discrimination based on gender.
- **Economic empowerment** to reduce economic vulnerability and enable them to become actively engaged in political life.
- **Support and mentorship:** This may include mentoring by women leaders, political mentors, and civil society organisations dealing with women's and migrants' rights.
- **Inclusiveness of political processes** to ensure that migrant women have access to political positions, authorities, and political organisations, both at the local and national levels.

