

# Integration of Migrant Women in the Netherlands

## Netherlands national contribution to the EMN study on 'Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and measures'

### Introduction

This is the national contribution of the European Migration Network (EMN) National Contact Point (NCP) of the Netherlands submitted to the 2022 EMN study 'Integration of Migration Women in the EU: Policies and Measures'. The document has been reformatted for readability purposes. This report reflects the legislation, policies and measures that had been put in place in the Netherlands up to December 2021 in the area of integration of migrant women. Other NCPs in EU Member States have produced similar reports on this topic, based on developments within the respective Member State. The national contributions were prepared on the basis of a common EMN template with study specifications to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability between Member States.

#### Scope of the study

This study defines a migrant woman as a third-country national female migrant (i.e. a regularly residing female migrant aged 18 and above). However, the study also analyses those policies and measures that are not exclusively targeting third-country nationals, but which include them as part of a wider target group (e.g. women in general; or migrant women in general which may also include EU citizens with migrant background). The focus of this study is the national level, for reasons of presentation and synthesis of the collected information. However, questions on good practices have been incorporated to allow for the provision of examples from the regional and local level.

The reporting period ranges from 2016 to 2021, depending on the area of analysis (i.e. data, policies, measures).

- Data: 2016–2020, to capture trends over the past 5 years.
- Policies (targeted integration strategies, action plans and sector specific governmental programmes): 2021 and upcoming policy developments.
- Measures (systematic initiatives (long term), projects (ad-hoc) and legislative measures): 2016–2021

#### Synthesis report

On the basis of the national contributions of 24 EMN NCPs, a synthesis report was produced by the EMN Service provider in collaboration with the European Commission and the EMN NCPs. The synthesis report gives an overview and analysis of the policies of all Member States.

The following countries participated: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Latvia (LV), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK).

#### Availability

The national report, the EMN synthesis report and other publications are available on the website of EMN Netherlands: [www.emnnetherlands.nl/onderzoeken](http://www.emnnetherlands.nl/onderzoeken). For the national contributions of other EMN NCPs, please consult the EMN website: [www.home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn\\_en](http://www.home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn_en).

#### COLOPHON

**Authors** Julia Koopmans  
Maren Stegink  
Mats Jacobs

EMN Netherlands, Netherlands National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN) Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)

Ministry of Security and Justice  
Rijnstraat 8  
2515 XP The Hague, The Netherlands

[www.emnnetherlands.nl](http://www.emnnetherlands.nl)

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## Summary

EMN Netherlands, as the Dutch national contact point for the EMN, is responsible for providing up-to-date information on national migration and asylum policy to the EMN. In this research, EMN Netherlands has examined Dutch policy on the integration of migrant women. While integration policies are mostly decentralised in the Netherlands and local initiatives focussed on migrant women may exist, it is important to note that the study is limited to national policy (with the exception of section 3). The study is based on desk research (e.g. literature, policy documents) and interviews with representatives of the ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid* - SZW), the ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap* - OCW) and a researcher from the Knowledge Platform Integration and Society (*Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving* - KIS), as well as written input from various government departments.

### General approach

Integration policy is a shared competence between local authorities and the national government. Local authorities have the main responsibilities in this area. Municipalities are among others responsible for the creation and execution of the decentralised integration policy and the practical (outsourcing of) counselling of newcomers. On national level, SZW is responsible for the development of general, national integration policy and policy on civic integration, although this is rather limited. Cooperation between SZW and other ministries is relevant, as integration plays a part in different domains. For example, this is the case for education, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of OCW.

As concluded based on interviews and the Coalition Agreement of 2017-2021, integration of migrant women is not a policy priority in the Netherlands. Migrant women are not specifically targeted in national government programmes, but addressed as part of a wider group. It concerns third-country national migrant women addressed as part of a wider group of migrants (including EU citizens with a migrant background) or a wider group of women. Certain sector-specific integration policies can be identified as addressing migrant women, i.e. with regards to labour market integration and equal opportunities (emancipation) policy, and education.

### Policy developments and future outlook

No national integration policies or measures were identified that were developed to counteract consequences of COVID-19 specifically for migrant women's integration. A significant change is foreseen in the civic integration policy as of 1 January 2022, though this does not address challenges experienced by migrant women specifically. Also, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy has proposed a programme for improving inclusiveness and diversity in entre-

preneurship, responding in part to the low self-employment rate among women and first-generation migrants.

### Challenges in the integration of migrant women

Statistical research in the Netherlands shows challenges experienced by migrant women, in particular women with a non-Western immigration background (including second-generation migrants), firstly with regards to socio-economic characteristics. Non-Western migrant women are relatively often unemployed, not economically independent, and feel discouraged from seeking employment. Their position deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as unemployment rose while it decreased for persons without an immigration background. Secondly, non-Western migrant women on average have a higher cost of healthcare. Finally, migrant women have lower education levels than female nationals. However, for the highest levels of education, migrant women show the same rate as female nationals, and on average their education levels are higher than migrant men. An additional challenge was identified based on reports, i.e. that female beneficiaries of international protection encounter a disadvantage in accessing the labour market, as municipal caseworkers who are responsible for supporting unemployed persons tend to focus their efforts on the person with a smaller distance from the labour market, which is often the male partner.

### Good practices

Two local measures were identified as good practices by experts interviewed for this study. The first measure concerns a pilot aimed at improving labour market participation among female family migrants, which was part of the 'Reform Assignment Civic Integration' (*Veranderopgave Inburgering* - VOI) programme. The measure is highlighted as a good practice for being successful in reaching empowerment goals for the women involved. Two obstacles were also identified for this programme, related firstly to the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented participants from gaining practical work experience through internships. Secondly, by opting for a pilot project as opposed to a more systematic measure, according to KIS ownership and continuation of the project were not ensured. The second good practice was '*Durven Doen!*', which aims to help single mothers escape poverty and to regain control of their lives. This was highlighted as a good practice for reaching a new target group (first-generation female migrants), though a low participation rate was identified as a challenge.

## 1 Integration of migrant women – statistical data

The study will start by providing statistical data of Eurostat on migrant women and their integration in the Netherlands. It covers several areas that are of importance within the integration process, such as labour market integration and access to education. This kind of data enables a better understanding of the current situation on national level.

### 1.1 First residence permits

**Table 1: First residence permits of women in the Netherlands, by type, all age groups, 2016-2020**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total</b>	<b>47 007</b>	<b>51 513</b>	<b>48 445</b>	<b>53 652</b>	<b>7 117</b>
<b>Family reasons</b>	<b>16 056</b>	<b>19 419</b>	<b>21 322</b>	<b>24 382</b>	<b>17 685</b>
<b>Education reasons</b>	<b>9 038</b>	<b>9 672</b>	<b>10 494</b>	<b>11 528</b>	<b>6 070</b>
<b>Remunerated activities reasons</b>	<b>4 985</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 975</b>	<b>6 510</b>	<b>4 163</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>16 928</b>	<b>16 525</b>	<b>9 654</b>	<b>11 232</b>	<b>9 199</b>

Source: Eurostat, indicator migr\_resfas

In 2016, the number of first residence permits issued to women for family reasons and 'other' reasons were almost identical, followed at a distance by education reasons and remunerated activities reasons. For the period 2017-2020, family reasons are the main reason for issuing first permits, making up almost half of the total from 2018 onwards, while the importance of 'other' reasons decreased over time. Com-

pared to men, more women receive first residence permits for family reasons and for education reasons, while men are more likely to obtain a permit to carry out remunerated activities.<sup>1</sup> Noticeable was the significant decrease in permits issued for remunerated activities and education reasons in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Permits issued for family reasons fell as well but remained the most important category.

### 1.2 Citizenship

**Table 2: Citizenship third-country national men and women with first residence permit in the Netherlands, 2016-2020**

Men:				
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Turkey (38 104)	1. Turkey (37 441)	1. Syria (38 126)	1. Syria (41 514)	1. Syria (44 509)
2. Morocco (21 913)	2. Syria (30 792)	2. Turkey (37 405)	2. Turkey (38 217)	2. Turkey (39 628)
3. Syria (14 956)	3. Morocco (20 743)	3. Morocco (19 756)	3. Morocco (18 878)	3. India (21 520)
Women:				
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Turkey (37 319)	1. Turkey (36 697)	1. Turkey (36 432)	1. Turkey (36 617)	1. Turkey (37 336)
2. Morocco (20 409)	2. Syria (20 632)	2. Syria (29 399)	2. Syria (32 570)	2. Syria (34 942)
3. China including Hong Kong (15 954)	3. Morocco (19 180)	3. Morocco (18 264) Hong Kong (19 503)	3. China including Hong Kong (20 744)	3. China including

Source: Eurostat, indicator migr\_resfas

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, First permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship (indicator migr\_resfas).

In 2016, Turkey was the main country of citizenship both for third-country national men and women. Around half of Turkish nationals were men (38 104) and half were women (37 319), and their numbers remained relatively stable over the years. Meanwhile, there has been a steady decrease of Moroccan nationals both among men and women.

The number of persons with Syrian citizenship increased drastically over the research period. This trend was visible for men first, as Syrian became the number one nationality for men in 2018, increasing from 14 956 (2016) to 38 126 (2018), and climbing further to 79 451 (2020). For women, the increase in Syrian nationals developed at a slower pace, climbing from 10 487 (2016) to 34 942 (2020), just below the number of women with Turkish nationality.

Two other trends should be noted. Firstly, the increase in Chinese nationals (including Hong Kong) among which women are overrepresented, going from 15 954 (2016) women to 20 744 (2020), versus 13 792 (2016) and 18 608 (2020) among men. Secondly, the number of men with Indian nationality doubled from 10 166 (2016) to 21 520 (2020), reaching the top three nationalities for that group. While the female Indian population in the Netherlands is smaller, the growth of this group was just as significant, reaching from 6.

The share of migrant women of the total population in the Netherlands compared to the share of migrant men is slightly higher each year in the period 2016-2020 (in total around 1.33% are migrant women and 1.29% are migrant men).<sup>2</sup> The share of both migrant women and migrant men increased during this period. No evidence was found for changes related to COVID-19.

### 1.3 Labour market

**Table 3: Unemployment rates for third-country men and women and female nationals, age class 20-64, 2016-2020, Netherlands**

	Total population	TCN migrant women*	TCN migrant men*	Female nationals
2016	5.5%	16.9%	12.3%	5.7%
2017	4.4%	13.3%	11.9%	4.6%
2018	3.4%	11.1%	8.9%	3.3%
2019	3.0%	10.3%	7.9%	2.7%
2020	3.3%	n/a	n/a	3.2%

\*TCN defined as non-EU28

Source: Eurostat, indicator lfsa\_urgan.

**Table 4: Activity rates for third-country men and women and female nationals, age class 20-64, 2016-2020, Netherlands**

	Total population	TCN migrant women*	TCN migrant men*	Female nationals
2016	81.6%	47.2%	71.8%	77.0%
2017	81.6%	47.3%	69.9%	77.4%
2018	82.0%	50.8%	71.5%	77.9%
2019	82.6%	52.4%	77.8%	78.8%
2020	82.7%	n/a	n/a	79.3%

\*TCN defined as non-EU28

Source: Eurostat, indicator lfs\_argan.

The data show that each year in the period 2016-2019, a higher share of TCN migrant women are unemployed compared to TCN migrant men and female nationals. On average, the unemployment rate of migrant women during this period is 12.9%, while for migrant men this is 10.4% and for female nationals this is only 4.08%. Nevertheless, there has been a

decrease of the unemployment rate since 2016 among all groups (data for 2020 not available). Activity rates are also lower among TCN migrant women compared to TCN migrant men and female nationals each year in the period 2016-2019, but have increased for all groups.

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat, Population on 1 January by age group, sex and citizenship (indicator migr\_pop1ctz).

## 1.4 Entrepreneurship

**Table 5: Self-employment (x1000), age class 20-64, 2016-2020, Netherlands**

	Total population	TCN migrant women*	TCN migrant men*	Female nationals
2016	1 255.6	8.2	13.8	427
2017	1 280.5	7.5	14.9	441.1
2018	1 299.4	9.6	17.4	446.0
2019	1 318.7	9.9	21.4	452.2
2020	1 353.6	n/a	n/a	463.3

\* TCN is defined as non-EU28.

Source: Eurostat, indicator lfs\_esgan.

The data on self-employment show that among all groups, the number of self-employed persons has increased between 2016 and 2019. TCN migrant women are self-employed relatively rarely compared to TCN migrant men, considering that TCN migrant women make up a larger share of the population (in 2019: 1.43% of migrant women and 1.39% of migrant men).

## 1.5 Education

According to the Eurostat data on this subject, in 2019 (the latest available year for which data are complete), 20.5% of female nationals aged 18-64 had an education level of less than primary, primary, or lower secondary education (levels 0-2).<sup>3</sup> For TCN migrant women, the share of women who had lower levels of education was significantly higher at 35.6%. For TCN migrant men, the share that had lower levels of education was higher still: 39.8%.

For upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, in 2019 42.4% of female nationals had completed these levels. This share was lower for TCN migrant men (at 30.8%) and women (at 22.7%). For tertiary education, among all groups TCN migrant women had the highest rate of tertiary education at 35.9%. For female nationals this was 37.1% and for TCN migrant men 26.7% had completed tertiary education.

## 1.7 Health

**Table 6: Self-reported unmet needs for medical examination for third-country national men and women and female nationals, age class 20-64, 2020, Netherlands**

	TCN women	TCN men	Female nationals
Too expensive	4.5 (pu)	1.2 (pu)	0.1 (p)
No unmet needs to declare	95.5 (pu)	97.7 (pu)	99.0 (p)

Source: Eurostat, indicator hlth\_silc\_30

In short, in 2019 TCN migrant women on average had a higher level of education than TCN migrant men. Compared to female nationals however, they were overrepresented in the lowest levels of education (less than primary, primary and lower education) and underrepresented in middle levels of education (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education). TCN migrant women have a high rate of tertiary education compared to TCN migrant men, and are comparable with the rate of female nationals.

## 1.6 Housing

According to the Eurostat data on this subject, TCN migrant women experienced a lower overcrowding rate than female nationals in 2016 (5.0 versus 4.5), but experienced a drastic increase to 23.3 in 2020.<sup>4</sup> For female nationals the rate increased to 4.6 in 2020. The total overcrowding rate for Dutch nationals increased from 4.4 in 2016 to 4.8 in 2020. For TCN migrant men, the overcrowding rate provided is stated as unreliable for the period 2016-2018. In the subsequent years the rate fluctuated from 41.3 (2019) to 26.3 (2020).

To conclude, whereas the overcrowding rate of TCN migrant women was close to the national average in 2016, by 2020 they experienced a significantly higher rate. The reason for these fluctuations is unknown.

3 Eurostat, Population by educational attainment level, sex, age and citizenship (%) (indicator EDAT\_LFS\_9911). Note: TCN defined as non-EU28 for full time period. Age class 18-64.

4 Eurostat, Overcrowding rate (total population aged 18 and over) by age, sex and broad group of citizenship, (indicator ILC\_LVH015) age class 18-64.

In 2020, 0.1% of female nationals declared that access to medical examination was too expensive, versus 4.5% of TCN migrant women. However, no conclusions can be drawn from these statistics as data for TCN migrant men are stated as being unreliable (pu), and all data are provisional (p).

## 2 Key challenges and opportunities for migrant women's integration

Firstly, this chapter provides for an overview of the key challenges and opportunities for migrant women's integration that have been identified by national research and statistical sources. Secondly, the main public and policy debates regarding migrant women's integration are discussed.

### 2.1 Challenges and opportunities identified by research and statistical sources

Several challenges can be identified regarding the integration of migrant women, based on public reports from the Netherlands as discussed below. These challenges relate to:

- lower levels of education and economic independence, and a greater distance to the labour market (see paragraph 1)
- gaps in caseworker support for female beneficiaries of international protection and other women in finding employment (see paragraphs 2 and 4)
- a rise in unemployment among migrant women and men during the Covid crisis (see paragraph 3)
- childcare duties being an obstacle for labour market participation among migrant women (see paragraph 5)
- the self-perceived impact of female students' online presentation on their career opportunities (see paragraph 6)
- mental health issues among beneficiaries of international protection, including women (see paragraph 7)
- a double disadvantage regarding the average cost of healthcare for migrant women (see paragraph 8)

In addition, the following opportunities can be identified:

- to improve chances of female beneficiaries of international protection at the labour market, it is worthwhile to invest in their social network (see paragraph 4)
- lessons that have been drawn from projects focused on improving labour market participation among beneficiaries of international protection specifically can be applied to other target groups as well (see paragraph 4).

1. CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*.

In 2020, the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) identified several challenges for migrant women's integration in the labour market.

Firstly, the CBS research noted that women with a non-Western immigration background have lower levels of education than women with a Dutch background. More than half of first-generation Turkish migrant women have received a low level of education, as well as half of first-generation Moroccan migrant women. Education levels are significantly higher among second-generation Turkish and Moroccan migrant women.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, on average women with a non-Western<sup>6</sup> immigration background are more often unemployed in comparison to Dutch women without an immigration background, and are thus less often economically independent. This is true especially for first-generation non-Western migrant women.<sup>7</sup> Among women (including second generation migrants) from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Somalia and Eritrea, only a minority is economically independent. Turkish and Moroccan women receive welfare benefits or have no income relatively often. However, within this group there is a large difference between first and second generation migrants: second generation women of Turkish and Moroccan descent are economically independent twice as often as first-generation women.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, women with a Surinamese immigration background (including second generation) are relatively often economically independent. They work full-time more often than Dutch women without an immigration background, as do women with a Western immigration background (including EU nationals).<sup>9</sup>

A second challenge noted by the CBS is that women with a non-Western immigration background (including second generation) relatively often feel "discouraged" from seeking employment, meaning that they do not seek employment despite being unemployed, because they do not expect results.<sup>10</sup>

In short, women with a non-Western immigration background experience several socio-economic disadvantages, though

5 CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*, p. 62-63.

6 Persons with a Non-Western immigration background are defined by CBS as follows: 'Persons with an immigration background from one of the countries in Africa, Latin-America and Asia (excluding Japan and Indonesia), or Turkey. Due to their social-economic background, persons with an immigration background from Indonesia or Japan are considered persons with a Western immigration background. This concerns primarily persons born in former Dutch Indies, and employees of Japanese companies with their families.' Source: CBS, 'Persoon met een niet-westerse migratieachtergrond,' <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/onze-diensten/methoden/begrippen/persoon-met-een-niet-westerse-migratieachtergrond>, last accessed on 9 August 2021.

7 CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*, p. 6.

8 CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*, p. 68.

9 CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*, p. 61.

10 CBS, *Emancipatiemonitor 2020*, p. 66.

improvement is seen among the second generation. An opportunity could be the fact that women with a Western or Surinamese immigration background work full-time relatively often.

2. *De Gruijter et al., 'Monitor gemeentelijk beleid arbeids-toeleiding vluchtelingen 2020, op weg naar een nieuw inburgeringsstelsel', KIS, 2020, and De Gruijter et al., 'Monitor gemeentelijk beleid arbeidstoeleiding en inburgering statushouders 2021', KIS, 2021*

KIS publishes a yearly monitor of municipalities' efforts to guide beneficiaries of international protection into paid work, which is a local competence. In the publication from 2021, the monitor firstly notes an opportunity: 26% of municipalities offer specific trajectories to guide women into paid work. However, the monitor also notes that female beneficiaries of international protection are often not included in the labour market support provided by municipalities. This is because in the case of married partners, many municipalities focus their efforts on the partner that is most easily integrated in the labour market, which is often the male partner. This puts women, especially women who joined their family later, at a disadvantage. The share of municipalities that declared to have been offering support to both partners in finding paid employment has furthermore decreased, going from 67% in 2020 to 47% in 2021. The authors note that due to the larger distance of women to the labour market, the fact that they are often deprived of assistance in finding employment puts this target group at an even greater disadvantage.<sup>11</sup> This challenge was also noted in previous editions of the KIS-monitor, and was addressed in 2018 in a motion carried by the Dutch Parliament.<sup>12</sup>

In the 2020 edition of the monitor, it was furthermore noted that some local caseworkers saw pregnancy as a reason to temporarily suspend their support to women as they considered it an obstacle for these women to participate in volunteering, which is one of the tools used by municipalities to increase employability.<sup>13</sup> Pregnancy can thus pose a challenge for female beneficiaries of international protection in their integration trajectory.

3. *Burema et al., 'De coronacrisis en de arbeidsmarktpositie van mensen met een migratieachtergrond,' Atlas voor gemeenten, 2020.*

This report studies the impact of the Covid crisis on the labour market position of persons with an immigration background

(including second generation migrants), and highlights a challenge for migrant women. The authors find that during the crisis, the share of men and women in employment increased for the group with no immigration background, whereas it decreased for men and women with a (non-Western) immigration background.<sup>14</sup> For women with a non-Western immigration background the decrease was more significant than for women with a Western immigration background (this concept includes EU nationals).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the share of women depending on unemployment benefits rose both for women with a Western and with a non-Western immigration background, but increased more among the latter group.<sup>16</sup> The economic position of migrant women, especially with a non-Western immigration background, thus deteriorated during the pandemic while it improved for (male and female) nationals.

4. *Stavenuiter et al., 'Re-integratie van vrouwen met een afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt,' Kennissynthese Movisie en Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020.*

In this report, several projects aimed at women (both migrant and non-migrant) into (paid) work are examined. In doing so, challenges are identified as well. Some challenges are experienced by women in general: a lower quality of health, care for the household or family (especially for women with children), and age, as women over 60 do not expect to find work and younger women with no qualifications experience a large distance from the labour market. In addition, several challenges are identified which apply specifically to female beneficiaries of international protection: language skills, a lack of work experience and professional identity, and mental health challenges.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, several reasons are listed why municipalities sometimes fail in guiding women – including migrant women – into paid work. For example when women do not want to work (yet) or cannot start to work right away. In other cases, municipalities are not aware of the situation of certain women and can thus not respond properly. In addition, some municipalities invest their energy in helping persons that are most likely to find work, which may disadvantage women. And lastly, not always do municipalities take into consideration the background characteristics of women and the intersectionality of these characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the report also identifies an opportunity for female beneficiaries of international protection. As this group often

11 De Gruijter et al. 2021, p. 6.

12 *Parliamentary Papers II, 2017-2018, 32824 no. 216.*

13 De Gruijter et al. 2020, p. 29.

14 Burema et al. 2020, p. 8.

15 Burema et al. 2020, p. 29.

16 Burema et al. 2020, p. 19.

17 Stavenuiter et al., 'Re-integratie van vrouwen met een afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt,' Kennissynthese Movisie en Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020, p. 3.

18 Stavenuiter et al., 'Re-integratie van vrouwen met een afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt,' Kennissynthese Movisie en Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020, p. 4.

has a relatively small (Dutch) social network, the authors note that it is worthwhile to invest in expanding this network as this can improve the chances to find work. They provide several examples of how this can be done: through women's own contacts; by employing buddies or female role models; or through key persons from migrant organisations, volunteer organisations or NGOs.<sup>19</sup>

Another general opportunity for integration projects was noted: 'between target groups, there is overlap in the effective elements of interventions. General effective elements are: improving motivation, a personalised approach, intensive support in the workplace, creating broad support for integration within organisations and support among the social network, cooperation between municipalities, employers and healthcare organisations. Persons who receive tailor-made support regarding labour market integrations, find suitable employment more quickly and are more likely to maintain that employment. Pilots and interventions that work for one target group may also work for others. At the moment, there is a focus on pilot projects for beneficiaries of international protection. The lessons learned in these projects may be applied to other groups.'<sup>20</sup>

5. Oostveen et al., 'Evaluatie VOI pilot duale trajecten', Regioplan, 2021.

In their evaluation of a pilot project within the 'Reform Assignment Civic Integration' (*Veranderopgave Inburgering - VOI*) programme (see Q11, table 8) on 'dual trajectories', which combined language training with labour market integration of newcomers, the authors noted that childcare is needed to enable couples with children to both participate in paid employment. This applies specifically to women because without childcare, according to the authors, in practice it is usually women who sacrifice their participation in order to perform care duties. For some women participating in the programme childcare proved too expensive, even after receiving childcare benefits. To address this, two municipalities participating in the pilot programme offered extra financial support and helped newcomers in arranging childcare.<sup>21</sup>

6. Klooster et al., *ROA Rapport, '(On)gelijke toegang tot stage en werk van hbo'ers met een migratieachtergrond, "Hbo'ers, onderwijs en werkgevers over verklaringen en oplossingen"*, Maastricht University, 2020.

The programme 'Further Integration in the Labour Market' (*Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt - VIA*), financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, comprises several

pilot projects aimed at uncovering methods to improve labour market participation among migrants in the Netherlands (see Q11, table 2). One of the projects looks at access to internships and employments for students from universities of applied sciences. As part of the project, interviews were conducted with students and graduates from universities of applied sciences; education professionals and employers. The interviewees were asked to share experiences with unequal treatment and what they thought caused these challenges. In this context, several interviewed students noted that students with an immigration background generally present themselves more discretely on the online professional platform LinkedIn, especially in the case of female students with a muslim background. The students perceived this as reducing their visibility for recruiters and employers, compared to students with a Dutch background.<sup>22</sup>

7. SCP, 'In uitvoering. Een analyse van het op statushouders gerichte beleid en wat er nodig is om dit beleid te verbeteren,' 2021.

In a 2021 policy brief on beneficiaries of international protection in the Netherlands, the SCP noted that this target group experience significant mental health challenges compared to other groups. At the same time, they make limited use of mental health care. The authors consider that this may be due to a lack of specialised, culturally-sensitive healthcare where the specific issues of beneficiaries of international protection are taken into account. Various challenges were mentioned without distinguishing between men and women, such as a heightened risk of PTSD, depression and psychosomatic issues. It was furthermore specified that both for men and for women, mental health issues are more frequent when they have had negative experiences during their journey to the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup>

8. CBS, 'Jaarrapport Integratie 2020', 2020.

In its yearly report on Integration, the CBS investigates several indicators related to integration. Although the report itself does not describe challenges, the issues identified above (i.e. related to socio-economic characteristics) are echoed in the statistics that are included in the report. In addition, the report provides data related to healthcare which shows a double disadvantage for migrant women. Firstly, in the age group until 65 years old, among all ethnicities women have higher costs of healthcare than men. Secondly, the average cost of healthcare is higher for persons with a non-Western immigration background compared to persons with a Western immigration background (including EU nationals) and to Dutch

19 Stavenuiter et al., 'Re-integratie van vrouwen met een afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt,' Kennissynthese Movisie en Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020, p. 33.

20 Stavenuiter et al., 'Re-integratie van vrouwen met een afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt,' Kennissynthese Movisie en Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020, p. 37.

21 Oostveen et al., 'Evaluatie VOI pilot duale trajecten', Regioplan, 2021, <https://www.divosa.nl/sites/default/files/voi-pilots-eindrapportage-duale-trajecten.pdf>, p. 51.

22 Klooster et al. 2020, p. 37.

23 SCP 2021, 'In uitvoering. Een analyse van het op statushouders gerichte beleid en wat er nodig is om dit beleid te verbeteren,' p. 13-15; p. 50.

persons without an immigration background. Among all women, those with a Turkish immigration background have the highest healthcare costs: 24 percent higher than Dutch women. Women with a Turkish immigration background are also prescribed antidepressants most often among all population groups (including men), followed by women with a Moroccan immigration background.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2 Main public and policy debates regarding migrant women's integration

The public and policy debate about the integration of migrant women primarily regards the cultural aspect of integration.<sup>25</sup> In policy debate, this is demonstrated by political statements, ideas, and motions, made by members of the Dutch parliaments which in many cases reflect on the cultural challenges women face such as forced marriages or religious oppression and how this may be different from Dutch cultural norms.<sup>26</sup> An illustrative case is the initiative of VVD politician Bente Becker 'In Nederland beslis je over je eigen leven' ('In the Netherlands you make decisions about your own life') which is a proposal to tackle the cultural oppression of a particular group of migrant women in Dutch society.<sup>27</sup> Newspaper articles showed mixed reactions to this initiative. On the one hand, the proposal was received positively as it is a step in the right direction to put an end to the culturally oppressed position faced by some migrant women. On the other hand, the initiative was criticized as according to critics it again revolves around the important, but small-scaled, problem of cultural oppression, while not addressing other issues such as women's health, economic independence, combating sexual violence, combating stereotyping and ensuring equal pay are not addressed in the current integration policy.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the public and policy debate primarily discuss the cultural challenges women undergo, while socio economic issues and

opportunities regarding their integration are less addressed in the debate. However, it should be mentioned that the attention for female beneficiaries of international protection, who are able and allowed to work, is growing.<sup>29</sup>

## 3 National integration policies in the Netherlands

*This chapter describes the overall organisational approach with regard to integration policy in the Netherlands. It elaborates on the competent authorities and analyses how migrant women are addressed in national integration policies. Lastly, an overview of integration measures and overarching programmes per sector is provided.*

### 3.1 Authorities for integration policy

The responsibility for integration policy in the Netherlands is a shared competence between local authorities and the national government. Local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for the creation and execution of the decentralised integration policy within their municipality.<sup>30</sup> In addition, municipalities have to implement the Participation Act. This is a general act on participation and (re-)integration in the labour market. The aim of this policy is to get more people (including those with work disabilities) to work with the support of municipalities.<sup>31</sup> In addition, municipalities are responsible for the practical (outsourcing of) counselling of newcomers.<sup>32</sup> This includes for example arranging housing, offering support in relation applications for surcharges, guidance in the health-care system and general coaching.

On a national level the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, SZW) is responsible for the development of general integration policy<sup>33</sup> and policy on civic integration.<sup>34,35</sup> Nevertheless, the extent of

24 CBS 2020, Jaarrapport integratie 2020, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/publicatie/2020/46/jaarrapport-integratie-2020>.

25 Interview with KIS on 24 September 2021.

26 Trouw, 'Help de vierde generatie vrouwen met een migratieachtergrond te emanciperen', <https://www.trouw.nl/opinie/help-de-vierde-generatie-vrouwen-met-een-migratieachtergrond-te-emanciperen~b4bea35b/>, last accessed on 2 November 2021 (in Dutch); Joop, 'Sigrid Kaag bekritiseert intolerante toespraak Wopke Hoekstra', <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/nieuws/sigrid-kaag-bekritiseert-intolerante-toespraak-wopke-hoekstra>, last accessed on 2 November 2021 (in Dutch); De Volkskrant, 'Politici betuigen in manifest steun aan bedreigde schrijver Lale Gul', <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/politici-betuigen-in-manifest-steun-aan-bedreigde-schrijver-lale-gul~bf93976e/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, last accessed on 2 November 2021.

27 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2019-2020, 35341, no. 2.

28 Trouw, 'Help de vierde generatie vrouwen met een migratieachtergrond te emanciperen', <https://www.trouw.nl/opinie/help-de-vierde-generatie-vrouwen-met-een-migratieachtergrond-te-emanciperen~b4bea35b/>, last accessed on 2 November 2021 (in Dutch); Het Parool, 'Ook hier worden vrouwen mishandeld en uitgebuit als huisslaaf', <https://www.parool.nl/columns-opinie/ook-hier-worden-vrouwen-opgesloten-mishandeld-en-uitgebuit-als-huisslaaf~b01741f6/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, last accessed on 3 November 2021 (in Dutch); Algemeen Dagblad, 'Drie ton subsidie voor hulp aan lhbtiers in gesloten gemeenschappen', <https://www.ad.nl/politiek/drie-ton-subsidie-voor-hulp-aan-lhbtiers-in-gesloten-gemeenschappen~a5f36369/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, last accessed on 3 November 2021 (in Dutch); Eenvandaag, 'VVD wil hardere aanpak eerwraak maar overdrijft hoe vaak het voorkomt', <https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/item/vvd-wil-hardere-aanpak-eerwraak-maar-overdrijft-hoe-vaak-het-voorkomt/>, last accessed on 3 November 2021 (in Dutch).

29 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021.

30 CPB en SCP, 'Kansrijk integratiebeleid op de arbeidsmarkt', 2020.

31 National government, 'Participatiewet: informatie voor gemeenten', Participatiewet: informatie voor gemeenten | Participatiewet | [Rijksoverheid.nl](https://rijksoverheid.nl), and 'Participatiewet', Participatiewet | [Rijksoverheid.nl](https://rijksoverheid.nl), last accessed on 27 October 2021; Movisie, 'Participatiewet en de WWB Maatregelen: een overzicht', Participatiewet en de WWB maatregelen: een overzicht | Movisie, last accessed on 27 October 2021.

32 VNG, 'Raadgever Asiel en integratie', <https://vng.nl/artikelen/raadgever-asiel-en-integratie>, last accessed on 24 August 2021.

33 EMN Ad-Hoc Query (2013. 497): Immigrant Integration Plans.

34 EMN Netherlands, 'Arbeidsmarktintegratie van personen die internationale humanitaire bescherming genieten in Nederland: Beleid en goede werkwijzen', 2016, <https://emnnetherlands.nl/sites/default/files/2018-02/2016-Arbeidsmarktintegratie%20van%20Personen%20met%20Internationale%20of%20Humanitaire%20bescherming.pdf>, last accessed on 11 August 2021.

35 Art. 7, sub a en d, Organisatie-, mandaat- en volmachtbesluit directeur-generaal Sociale Zekerheid en Integratie 2015.

national integration policy is limited, due to the Netherlands decentralised focus. Therefore, the Ministry of SZW has a supportive role for municipalities.<sup>36</sup> Cooperation between the Ministry of SZW and other ministries is relevant, as integration plays a part in several domains that fall under different ministries.<sup>37</sup> For example, this is the case for education, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*, OCW). The Ministry of SZW has a coordinating role in certain stages, to ensure the coherency between the policy and to monitor the progress of agreements. Other ministries have the responsibility to ensure the achievement of the policy goals within their domain related to integration.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2 General approach towards integration policies and gender mainstreaming

Interviews with representatives of the Ministry of SZW, the Ministry of OCW and a researcher from the Knowledge platform Integration and Society (*Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving*, KIS) reveal that the integration of migrant women is not a policy priority in the Netherlands.<sup>39</sup> The Coalition Agreement of 2017-2021 also does not specifically refer to migrant women in relation to integration.<sup>40</sup>

Although migrant women are addressed in certain government programmes, the measures are mostly part of a broader policy strategy for e.g. women in general.<sup>41</sup> There is no common national integration policy/strategy addressed towards migrant women. Instead, Dutch integration policy is characterised by a general approach. At the national level, limited distinction is made between sub-groups. Regarding civic integration, the policy aims to provide space for a more tailored-approach in individual cases. Municipalities are able to narrow this down when they take measures on a local level. In other policy areas related to integration, e.g. health, education and economic integration, it is relevant to note that the Netherlands does also not use a targeted approach for certain ethnicities or nationalities. The reason to adopt a generic and mainstream approach instead of a target group approach, is that target group policy could emphasize the differences

between different groups of people.<sup>42,43</sup> Migrants, or sub-groups of migrants, are thus not always addressed separately from Dutch nationals, and by extension there is no differentiation for female migrants either.

Relevant to note is how the Ministry of OCW aims to draw more attention to gender mainstreaming within priority domains that are covered by other departments. This functions parallel to general emancipation policy itself.<sup>44</sup> A theme with priority concerns the economic self-reliance of women. In relation to national integration policy, no systematic gender mainstreaming takes place, although there might be some projects/pilots where this is the case.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the Ministries of OCW and SZW have formal and informal cooperation between their respective departments on equal opportunities of women and LGBTI-persons and civic integration of migrants.<sup>46</sup> This approach is not complemented by national gender specific integration policies. With regards to other policy areas related to integration (entrepreneurship, housing, and health) there is no sign that gender is mainstreamed in national policies.

### 3.3 Migrant women addressed per sector

#### Labour market

Under the Participation Act, the implementation of labour market integration policy is a local responsibility. Municipalities are tasked with supporting the labour market integration of all residents who have a distance to the labour market.<sup>47</sup> In general, there is no targeted approach for migrants or for migrant women, but this may depend on the municipality. The Ministry of SZW is not involved in the implementation of the Participation Act, but has a supervisory role.<sup>48</sup> Due to the structural disadvantages faced by persons with a migrant background in the labour market, in recent years more attention is being paid to the position of this group in particular.<sup>49</sup>

An ongoing programme (2018-2021) of the Ministry of SZW, 'Further Integration on the Labour Market' (*Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt* - VIA), focuses on labour market integration of persons with a non-Western migrant background.

36 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021.

37 Regioplan, 'Synthesestudie beleidsdoorlichting integratiebeleid', 2016, <https://www.rijksbegroting.nl/system/files/251/xv05synthesestudie-beleidsdoorlichting-integratiebeleid-regioplan.pdf>, last accessed on 25 August 2021.

38 CPB en SCP, 'Kansrijk integratiebeleid op de arbeidsmarkt', 2020.

39 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021, and with KIS on 24 September 2021.

40 Coalition Agreement (Regeerakkoord) (2017) 'Vertrouwen in de Toekomst'.

41 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Opbrengstenbrief emancipatie, 5 February 2021.

42 Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving, 'Gerichte aandacht voor (sub) groepen van statushouders: Wanneer alleen algemeen beleid niet voldoende is', 2021, [https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/420114\\_gerichte-aandacht-voor-subgroepen-van-statushouders\\_web.pdf](https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/420114_gerichte-aandacht-voor-subgroepen-van-statushouders_web.pdf).

43 *Parliamentary Papers-II*, 2010-2011, 32824, no.1.

44 Regioplan, 'Beleidsdoorlichting emancipatiebeleid (artikel 25 begroting OCW)', 2018.

45 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021, and KIS on 24 September 2021.

46 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021.

47 Rijksoverheid, 'Participatiewet: informatie voor gemeenten', <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/participatiewet/participatiewet-informatie-voor-gemeenten>, last accessed on 1 September 2021.

48 Article 76 of the Participation Act.

49 SCP 2020, p. 72.

Programme VIA consists of eight pilots, each of which looks at different career stages. The pilots are aimed at testing different approaches in these stages which may further the labour market integration of persons with a non-Western migrant background, and to share these insights with employers, (local) governments, social partners and other organisations.<sup>50</sup> In response to concerns that women were disadvantaged in labour market integration support by municipalities, the Minister of SZW assured that Programme VIA would pay equal attention to supporting women and men.<sup>51</sup> This was operationalised by distinguishing between men and women in the research projects that were conducted as part of the pilots, if this was possible based on the number of respondents. Differences between men and women were indeed addressed in some of the pilots' final reports.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the Ministry of SZW has launched a programme together with the Ministry of OCW 'Economische veerkracht van vrouwen' (2019-2024).

Furthermore, there are two ongoing national programmes that pay special attention to the labour market integration of women. Both programmes do not specifically target migrant women, but are aimed towards women with a distance to the labour market in general.

1. *Vakkundig aan het werk* ('Skillfully at work') (2021-2023) is a programme aimed at developing new scientific knowledge to help municipalities in guiding citizens into paid work more effectively. The sixth round of this programme (start 2021), commissioned by the Ministry of OCW, is focused on improving the financial independence of women. The aim is to obtain research-based tools, mechanisms and working methods used by municipalities in gender-sensitive action, so that women with a distance from the labour market are better guided towards paid work, and thus to durably increase their economic independence (duration 2021-2023).<sup>53</sup> One of the projects in this programme focuses specifically on female beneficiaries of international protection with a low level of education.<sup>54</sup>

2. *Economische veerkracht van vrouwen* ('Economic flexibility of women') (2019-2024) is part of the National Scientific Agenda (*Nationale Wetenschapsagenda*, NWA). The Ministries

of OCW and SZW invested three million euros in this programme, which is aimed at "the whole ecosystem around groups of economically vulnerable women." The programme aims to formulate concrete and science-based action perspectives for the various stakeholders within the ecosystem in order to increase the sustainable economic independence of women, including after 'life events' such as a birth or divorce. The results are differentiated between three target groups: women who receive welfare benefits; women who are unemployed and do not receive welfare benefits; and women who are employed but do not receive sufficient income.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Language training*

Learning the Dutch language is an important element of civic integration. In this section, only language programmes additional to civic integration, are mentioned. Further on this study will elaborate more on civic integration in general.

Migrant women are addressed by the Dutch government with regard to language training with the policy follow-up approach low literacy 2020-2024 Count on skills, '*Tel mee met taal*'. The government invests in this policy strategy to tackle low literacy faced by adults and to increase their skills.<sup>56</sup> This in addition to the budget for adult education available for municipalities. General measures are e.g. new communication campaigns to reach the adults facing low literacy, funding and support for municipalities in order to e.g. train 'language buddies' and subsidizing employers for courses on basic skills available for their employees.<sup>57</sup> The receivers of this funding can choose to focus on a specific target group, e.g. on women.<sup>58</sup> This policy takes gender specific needs into account.

Experience is taken from a former project '*Educatie voor Vrouwen met Ambitie*' in 2014-2018. This project focused on further development of basic skills, confidence and empowerment of women in general.<sup>59</sup> This in order for women to participate in society and to take further steps on the labour market. Municipalities can still make use of a toolkit on empowerment derived from the project.<sup>60</sup> Therefore migrant women are again addressed as part of a wider group of women and no specific categories of migrant women are targeted.

50 Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 'Programma Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt', 2020, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/11/09/bijlage-1-informatiefolder-2020-programma-verdere-integratie-op-de-arbeidsmarkt-via>, last accessed on 1 September 2021.

51 Kamerstuk, Vergaderjaar 2017-2018, 29544 no. 821.

52 Eindrapportages VIA-pilots <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/11/09/verdere-integratie-op-de-arbeidsmarkt>.

53 <https://www.zonmw.nl/nl/subsidies/subsidieoproepen-op-uitnodiging/detail/item/economische-zelfstandigheid-van-vrouwen-6e-ronde-vakkundig-aan-het-werk-1/>

54 Information provided by the Ministry of OCW, 9-11-2021.

55 Women with an immigration background includes intra-EU migrants and second generation migrant women.

56 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2018-2019, 28670, no. 84.

57 National Government, 'Vervolgaanpak laaggeletterdheid 2020-2024, Tel mee met Taal', <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/publicaties/2019/03/18/vervolgaanpak-laaggeletterdheid-2020-%E2%80%93-2024-tel-mee-met-taal/vervolgaanpak-laaggeletterdheid-2020-%E2%80%93-2024-tel-mee-met-taal.pdf>

58 Government Gazette (Staatscourant) 2020, no. 65777.

59 Stichting Lezen en Schrijven, 'Pilot EVA (Educatie voor Vrouwen met Ambitie)', <https://www.lezenenschrijven.nl/wat-doen-wij/oplossing-voor-je-vraagstuk/speciale-aandacht-voor-vrouwen>, last accessed on 30 August 2021.

60 Information provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 13 September 2021.

### Health

The Netherlands has specific policy that addresses problems migrant women, or other vulnerable groups including migrant women, encounter in the Dutch healthcare system. One of these is the special treatment of asylum seekers during their pregnancy. Due to the more vulnerable position of the asylum seeker, the responsible midwife is more involved and helps to coordinate the pregnancy of the pregnant migrant woman.<sup>61</sup> Another example is the "Dutch Chain Approach", an integrated approach of governmental and non-governmental organisations to address female genital mutilation through prevention, care, law enforcement and education.<sup>62</sup>

### Civic Integration

In general, migrant women are not specifically addressed with regard to national civic integration policy. There are for example projects and pilots organized at a local/regional level or by an organisation related to the integration of migrants. In some cases, these pilots and projects are subsidised by the national government. For example the pilot 'Female family migrants' with the goal to narrow the distance of migrant women to the labour market by offering them a customized integration route. This pilot is part of the *Veranderopgave Inburgering* (VOI)-pilot program which is developed to work towards the introduction of the new Civic Integration Act. Within this programme, 57 municipalities are participating in 21 pilots on different themes, aiming to gather lessons and experience that will support the implementation of the new act. The above mentioned pilot focuses specifically on the situation of female family migrants.<sup>63</sup>

### Self-determination

The Ministry of SZW aims to improve the self-determination of people living in closed communities to ensure that there are fewer victims of harmful practices and that people become aware of their own autonomy and personal freedom. By focusing on the preventive side of self-determination policy, SZW is committed to raising awareness and initiating a change of mentality within closed communities.

Following the parliamentary initiative '*In Nederland beslis je over je eigen leven*' ('In the Netherlands you make decisions about your own life') the aim to improve self-determination is put to practice with the launch of several initiatives, including

two projects aimed specifically at improving the position of women and LGBTI+ persons living in closed communities. These projects are Femmes for Freedom and Dona Daria. The former is carrying out a project aimed to educate migrant women subject to a civic integration requirement and LGBTI+ persons on the prevention of practises that limit the right of self-determination, like forced marriage and honour-related violence. The latter is carrying out a project with the goal to increase the social network of women and LGBTI+ persons from closed communities by informing them about volunteering and available courses. In addition, the project also tries to improve skills necessary for self-determination.<sup>64</sup>

### Emancipation policy on self-determination<sup>65</sup>

The emancipation policy of the Ministry of OCW has two target groups: women and LGBTI+ persons. As such, migrant women are not a specific target group. However, the emancipation policy uses an intersectional approach, taking into account differences between women, for example based on immigration background, level of education, age, and labour disabilities.<sup>66</sup> The aim of the emancipation policy is to achieve safety and equal opportunities for women and LGBTI+ persons, focusing among others on financial independence of women, gender diversity and equal treatment.<sup>67</sup> As part of this policy, two relevant programmes are subsidised:

- 1.) The project 'LEF', implemented by 'Fier' and 'Femmes for Freedom': LEF aims to counter harmful traditional practices and to help girls and women from refugee and migrant communities to achieve their goals.<sup>68</sup>
- 2.) Alliance 'Change from inside out' (Verandering van binnenuit): standing for equality, safety and acceptance of women and LHBTI. Organising gatherings for migrant communities with different cultures and values to talk about these subjects and raise awareness.<sup>69</sup>

### Other sectors

Important to note, there is currently no specific national policy for migrant women with regard to entrepreneurship, education and vocational training.

In addition there is no specific national policy for migrant women with regard to housing. Housing of target groups, among which migrant women may be overrepresented, is a

61 COA, 'Gezondheidszorg voor asielzoekers in Nederland', [https://www.coa.nl/sites/default/files/2020-01/factsheet\\_gezondheidszorg\\_voor\\_asielzoekers\\_in\\_nederland\\_0.pdf](https://www.coa.nl/sites/default/files/2020-01/factsheet_gezondheidszorg_voor_asielzoekers_in_nederland_0.pdf), last accessed 02 November 2021.

62 Pharos, 'The Dutch chain approach', <https://www.pharos.nl/english/female-genital-mutilation/the-dutch-chain-approach/>, last accessed on 02 November 2021.

63 Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 'Veranderopgave inburgering: 57 gemeenten starten met pilotprogramma', <https://www.uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl/actueel/nieuws/2019/07/18/veranderopgave-inburgering-57-gemeenten-starten-met-pilotprogramma>, last accessed on 03 November 2021.

64 This information was provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment on 23 November 2021.

65 Aanhangsel van de Handelingen II, 2019-2020, no. 469.

66 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Opbrengstenbrief emancipatie, 5 February 2021.

67 Emancipatienota 2018-2021.

68 Emancipatienota 2018-2021, p. 9. See also: Femmes for Freedom, 'Project LEF', <https://www.femmesforfreedom.com/project-lef/>, last accessed on 25 November 2021.

69 Movisie, 'Verandering van binnen uit', Verandering van binnenuit | Movisie, last accessed on 25 August 2021.

municipal competence. These target groups are: vulnerable elderly persons, beneficiaries of international protection, mental health patients, home- and roofless persons, and women in women shelters.<sup>70</sup>

## 4 Integration measures in the Netherlands

*This part of the study looks at available funding and offers examples of integration measures targeting migrant women that have been identified as a good practice.*

### 4.1 Funding

In the Netherlands there is no specific national funding for the integration of women. As of January 2022, a new civic integration system came into effect in the Netherlands, in which the responsibility for civic integration will be assigned to municipalities. The municipalities funding from the national government to carry out their tasks, but there are no specific budgets for women in this system. No structural EU funding takes place in relation to integration measures specifically targeting or addressing migrant women, but in the case of subsidies granted for general measures in the context of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), attention is requested for the specific position of women.<sup>71</sup>

### 4.2 Good practices

The following two examples of good practices have been identified through interviews with experts from KIS and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid*, SZW and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*, OCW). Please note that the discussion below does not constitute an exhaustive list of good practices.

#### *Measure 1: VOI-Pilot on female family migrants*

The VOI-Pilot on female family is a local ad hoc project which targets third country nationals position in the areas of labour market, education and vocational training, language training and overall civic integration. The pilot projects run from 15 August 2019 and lasted two years. The pilot is a tailor-made measure (only migrant women) which targets two types of women; women who arrived in the Netherlands to join a beneficiary of international protection and women who received a regular residence permit to join their partner or family member in the Netherlands. The target group of the VOI Programme concerns persons who are subject to a civic integration requi-

rement, i.e. third-country national newcomers. This good practice was proposed by an expert from the Knowledge Platform on Integration and Society (KIS), as the project was effective in reaching empowerment goals for the women involved.<sup>72</sup> This was also highlighted in the project's final report.<sup>73</sup>

The VOI-Pilot comprised six pilots, in which municipalities experimented with different trajectories for supporting female newcomers who arrived as family migrants, aimed at strengthening their labour market position. The pilots were in response to the weaker labour market position of female newcomers. In addition, while municipalities are – in line with the Participation Act – responsible for providing labour market integration support for this target group, they are not always able to do so. The participating municipalities also experienced this challenge, noticing specifically that female family migrants are not always oriented to finding employment due to e.g. lower levels of education, a lack of work experience and lack of a professional identity.<sup>74</sup> The projects aimed to activate female family migrants, although it was noted that it would not be possible to achieve paid employment for all participants within the scope of the project. A secondary objective was to improve Dutch language attainment.<sup>75</sup>

The measure applied strategies and methods identified in research as potentially increasing labour market participation among women. For example, it was found that empowerment – improving self-confidence and confidence in labour market opportunities – could increase motivation among women to find work. The pilots were implemented by six different municipalities which partnered with a local implementing organisation for the project. The measure was funded by the Ministry of SZW and consisted of the following three strategies.

- 1. Identifying potential participants:** Potential participants were identified by municipal caseworkers based firstly on their own databases. Secondly, recent family migrants who had signed the participation statement as part of the civic integration trajectory were also known to the municipality. The remaining women were identified through an NGO that was in contact with beneficiaries of international protection.
- 2. Information sessions, personal intake and ensuring accessibility:** Most of the pilots invested heavily in the

70 National Government, 'Meer maatregelen voor huisvesting van aandachtsgroepen nodig,' 2021, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/05/31/meer-maatregelen-voor-huisvesting-van-aandachtsgroepen-nodig>, last accessed on 7 October 2021.

71 This information was provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment on 1 November 2021.

72 Interview with KIS, 24 September 2021.

73 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 84.

74 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 78.

75 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 78.

recruitment and intake of participants. Some held information sessions to which potential participants and their partners were invited. In some pilots, information sessions were followed up by a personal intake, if possible at women's own homes, so that caseworkers could get a view of their living situation. Several municipalities provided transportation and childcare to enable women to attend group meetings that were part of the pilot.<sup>76</sup> In five pilots, women were assigned a buddy or coach, in addition to a caseworker, and in general all pilots used a tailor-made approach to support the participants.<sup>77</sup>

**3. Creating a safe environment in group sessions and carefully selecting groups:** All of the pilots organised group meetings aimed at empowering women, with the exception of one pilot where meetings were aimed at language acquisition.<sup>78</sup> In the empowerment sessions, trainers strived to create a safe environment and address the women in a positive way. Attention was paid to the composition of group, e.g. creating a separate group for women who spoke (some) English and a group for older, illiterate women with a shared cultural background. Several groups comprised women who spoke the same language or used an interpreter to ensure participants could communicate.<sup>79</sup>

Evaluations of these pilots took place. The quantitative outcomes were as followed - after the pilots, women were more often active in volunteering, internships, education/training or work experience placements. At the start of the pilot, 35% of the 168 participants were active in some form of civic participation (internship, volunteering, education, language training, work experience placements, paid employment). At the end of the pilot, 51% of the women were active, mostly in volunteering (35 women). Only 12 participants obtained paid employment by the end of the pilots. It was thus concluded that after the pilots, women were more often active in volunteering, internships, education/training or work experience placements.<sup>80</sup> Qualitative outcomes showed that empowerment is a necessary step for becoming active in civic participation or orienting on seeking employment:

The objective of the pilots was to find out what works, and how to improve the position of female family migrants. In this regard, the municipalities participating in the pilots concluded that women who have arrived in the Netherlands for family reunification with beneficiaries of international protection

('nareizigers') should be considered a separate target group from other female family migrants, despite both being newcomers. As only a small part of the women who participated in the pilots were family migrants, conclusions could only be drawn about what worked for those that were beneficiaries of international protection. For them, it was found that empowerment is a necessary step for becoming active in civic participation or orienting on seeking employment. Existing support for newcomers and unemployed persons often disregards this element of empowerment. In the pilots, it was found that women's self-confidence improved and that participants started thinking about their own abilities, desires and skills, rather than focusing only on their families.<sup>81</sup>

Drawing on this final point, the expert who proposed this project as a good practice also identified a broader challenge regarding measures targeting integration of female migrants. They noted that this group is targeted mainly through pilot projects, and that ownership and continuation of the efforts is not ensured. This would be better addressed by a systematic focus on the impact of (integration) policy on women and on their specific needs and strengths.<sup>82</sup>

#### *Measure 2: Durven Doen!*

*Durven Doen!* Is a local systematic initiative (multi-year / long team) focussed on the area of civic integration for migrants in general (not only third-country nationals, but also EU nationals). In contrast to the tailor-made VOI-pilot, *Durven Doen* is mainstream measure (migrant women are taken into account while the measure has a wider target group). This program targets single mother who live in poverty which often concerns single migrant mothers. The organisation Super Single Moms started in 2008 to strengthen the position of single mothers. The Training module '*Durven Doen!*' started in 2018 and is still in place up till today, it is promoted by the Ministry of OCW and co-created by the Ministry of SZW.

This good practice was proposed by experts from SZW and OCW.<sup>83</sup> According to these experts, the training program by the foundation Single Supermom is effective and has an important role within the Hague as it reached first generation migrant women that were not reached before. The gap between the first and second generation became smaller. The programme was also considered a good practice in a report of Movisie and the Verwey-Jonker research institute, for successfully reaching the target group and improving their participation.<sup>84</sup>

76 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 17-56

77 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 74.

78 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 36.

79 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 17-56

80 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 83

81 Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, Eindrapport VOI-pilot vrouwelijke nareizigers en gezinsmigranten, 2021, p. 84.

82 Interview with KIS, 24 September 2021.

83 Interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 8 September 2021.

84 Stavenuiter et al., 2020, p. 50.

In all municipalities and sub-municipalities the same strategy was used to recruit participants: a Facebook campaign, kick-off meetings for mothers and distributing flyers. At the end of the program the mothers filled in a survey and the coordinators asked for oral feedback. The results showed that the organisation was satisfied with the number of participants and also with the results. Most participants graded the project with an 8 (out of 10) or higher and said it helped them break out of their isolated position in society. In most municipalities 1/3 of the participants did not finish the program. No specific plans were made to overcome this problem.

## 5 Plans and future outlook

*This chapter describes future policies and measures that aim to address challenges faced by migrant women during integration. It includes the government's plans on the empowerment of entrepreneurs of women and the new Civic Integration Act.*

### 5.1 Entrepreneurship

First there is the area of entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy submitted a proposal in November 2021 to a national financial scheme. The proposed programme 'Welfare in an inclusive ecosystem for entrepreneurship' ('*Welvaart door een inclusief ecosysteem voor ondernemerschap*' - WINECON) aims to make entrepreneurship more diverse and inclusive to create wider prosperity, in particular by better involving women and persons with a migrant background. One of the drivers mentioned in the proposal is the low rate of entrepreneurs among women and (first generation) migrants in the Netherlands. The knowledge platform would serve, among others, to better analyse these gaps and understand how they changed over time.<sup>85</sup> In spring 2022 it will be decided which proposals will receive funding, and whether WINECON will be among them.

### 5.2 Civic integration

Then there is the new Civic integration Act. The Act was installed in January 2022 and aims to address general challenges faced by migrants (e.g. language skills, unemployment), but does not set specific goals or measures addressing migrant women. Under this legislation, municipalities will become responsible for implementing civic integration policy. The aim of the Civic Integration Act is to help third-country national migrants participate in society as quickly as possible, and find paid employment. Under the new act, migrants receive tailor-made civic integration support based on a broad intake. The Dutch language requirement is increased from A2 to B1 level. Beneficiaries of international protection will receive integration support from the moment they are assigned to a

municipality. The Netherlands does not currently plan to develop any new integration measures that address challenges faced by migrant women. However, some programmes mentioned earlier (Programme VIA, *Vakkundig aan het werk*, and *Economische veerkracht van vrouwen*), aim to draw lessons and develop knowledge to be shared with municipalities and other actors implementing labour market integration policy, which could result in new (local) measures addressing challenges faced by women.

## 6 Conclusions

### Main challenges & opportunities

Firstly, with regard to socio economic characteristics, Western migrant women are relatively often unemployed, not economically independent, and feel discouraged from seeking employment. Also, non-Western migrant women on average have a higher cost of healthcare. In addition, migrant women are overrepresented among lower education levels. However, for the highest levels of education, migrant women show the same rate as female nationals. Lastly, female beneficiaries of international protection encounter a disadvantage in accessing the labour market, as local caseworkers tend to focus their efforts on the person with a smaller distance from the labour market, which are usually men.

Investing in empowerment, expanding female beneficiaries of international protection's social network and using a tailor-made approach when supporting migrant women, were identified as opportunities for the integration of women. Furthermore, lessons that have been drawn from projects focused on improving labour market participation among beneficiaries of international protection specifically can be applied to other target groups as well.

### Key characteristics of the national integration policies and measures

Migrant women are not specifically targeted in national government programmes, but are addressed as part of a wider group. This concerns third-country national migrant women addressed as part of a wider group of migrants (including also EU citizens with migrant background) or a wider group of women. In general government programmes, the integration of migrant women is mostly covered in relation to the labour market. There are also programmes related to the sectors emancipation, education, civic integration and healthcare. However, migrant women are not specifically targeted.

### Link challenges and future policy plans

There are several on-going programmes addressing labour market integration of migrants (Programme VIA) and women

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, '*Welvaart door een inclusief ecosysteem voor ondernemerschap, WINECON*', 2021, p. 6.

*(Vakkundig aan het werk, Economische veerkracht van vrouwen)*. The programmes aim to draw lessons for local authorities on how to support the labour market integration of third-country national newcomers and of (migrant) women. This links to one of the challenges identified for migrant women, i.e. their disadvantaged position on the labour market.

In the area of entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy has submitted a proposal for a programme (WINECON) which aims to make entrepreneurship more diverse and inclusive to create wider prosperity, in particular by better involving women and persons with a migrant background. This relates specifically to the challenge that migrant women are underrepresented in self-employment statistics.

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## Appendix – definitions

The following key terms are used for this report. The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary Version 6.0<sup>86</sup> unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

Dual approach to gender equality: complementarity between gender mainstreaming and specific gender equality policies and measures, including positive measures.<sup>87</sup>

**Gender:** The socially constructed attributes, roles, activities, responsibilities and needs predominantly connected to being male or female in given societies or communities at a given time.

**Gender mainstreaming:** Systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all policies and actions.<sup>88</sup>

**Gender-sensitive:** Policies and programmes that take into account the particularities pertaining to the lives of both women and men, while aiming to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality, including an equal distribution of resources, therefore addressing and taking into account the gender dimension.<sup>89</sup>

**Integration:** In the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States.

**Integration indicators:** Benchmarks used to measure the integration of migrants in specific policy areas, such as employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

**Intersectionality:** Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.<sup>90</sup>

**Migrant:** In the EU/EFTA context, a person who [...]: (i) establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country.

**Third-country national:** Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).

### DISCLAIMER

This report has been produced and composed by EMN Netherlands. It also incorporates information provided by partners. EMN Netherlands is in no way responsible for any use made of the information provided.

86 EMN Glossary, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en), last accessed on 9 July 2021.

87 EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – dual approach to gender equality', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1092>, last accessed on 9 July 2021

88 EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus - gender mainstreaming', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.

89 EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus - gender sensitive', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1211>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.

90 EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – intersectionality', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.