



Policy Brief
Migration through the lens of gender
in the 2030 Agenda

POLICY PAPER

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POLICY BRIEF

MIGRATION THROUGH THE LENS OF GENDER IN THE 2030 AGENDA

1. Introduction

The constantly increasing human mobility either within or across different countries is a phenomenon that has been observed more widely in recent years due to – inter alia - the effects of climate change. Women of all age groups, social and educational backgrounds and marital status constitute a significant percentage of mobile populations.¹ During their journey, they are exposed to various risks, which makes them particularly vulnerable. The provision of support services and the subsequent empowerment of women is crucial both at the reception stage and at the integration process, in compliance with the terms of equality and respect for human rights.

This policy brief analyses three key pillars that need to be strengthened to facilitate the integration of migrant and refugee women into the Greek society. Combating violence while simultaneously shaping a holistic support framework, providing equal opportunities for participation in economic life, and finally tackling and combating xenophobia and racism are some of the key elements to a successful integration process. The analysis is conducted through the lens of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals**, based on a Human Rights Based Approach (**HRBA**). The principles of inclusiveness and non-discrimination are fundamental to the realisation of Agenda 2030's main objective of **'leaving no one behind'**.

2. Migration in the 2030 Agenda

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), **eight of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals** relate to various aspects of migration.² These are goal **3** (Good Health and Well-Being), **4** (Quality Education), **5** (Gender Equality), **8** (Decent Work and Economic Development), **11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities), **13** (Climate Action), **16** (Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions), **17** (Partnerships for the Goals). Agenda 2030 acts as a 'road map' for a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable world that seeks to overcome modern challenges and obstacles to prosperity. To this end, regional organisations, such as the European Union, have developed a wide array of policies and tools (research, financing, etc.) to achieve the goals. At the same time, the international community is in the process of adapting traditional human rights texts to today's needs. The Global Compact on Migration and Global Compact on Refugees³ draw attention to sharing responsibility and co-operation among nations for more efficient management of migration flows. However, the public safety argument is constantly gaining ground in international debates over the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees, making it imperative to adopt policies that protect human rights against racist or other dangerous rhetorics.

1 [IOM, The Sustainable Development Goals seen through the lens of Migration.](#)

2 [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.](#)

3 [Global compact on refugees.](#)

3. Equality in the 2030 Agenda

The fifth goal of sustainable development is dedicated to gender equality. According to recent data from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) which published the Gender Equality Index for 2019⁴, Greece ranks last among the EU member states, proving that the start of the new decade requires a systematic and strategically designed effort to consolidate equality by 2030. The year 2020 is to be the last one for the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016 - 2020⁵, hence there is an imperative need for a new action plan in the coming years. This new plan needs to be realistic and at the same time raise the bar for the consolidation of equality in public and private life. Combining the country's obligations that result from other sustainable development goals with the vulnerability and multiple discrimination faced by female refugee and migrant populations, integration is the strategic planning area where the principles of equality and migration intersect. Indeed, as migration management passes from an international to a local level, Sustainable Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) act as a reminder that the integration of migrant and refugee women consists an area in which local communities and, on a broader level, the international community must invest to achieve sustainability in general.

4. Integration of migrant and refugee women in the Greek society

Empowering women from refugee or migrant communities should be a strategic priority of any integration plan. With the active participation of men and the gradual development of a culture that rejects violence as a means of resolving disputes and at the same time recognises the equal roles of both genders, the empowerment of refugee and migrant women can have a multiplier effect. In other words, empowering women is in the long run equivalent to enhancing social cohesion and prosperity. After all, participation in social and economic life is not only beneficial to women, but has a positive impact on the societies in which they live and develop their activities.

The effects of such participation extend beyond the financial gain and can make a significant contribution to alleviating social inequalities. In particular, in a recent survey in countries hosting a significant number of refugees (USA, Turkey, Germany, Lebanon)⁶ it was calculated that bridging the gap on labour and pay differences between men and women with refugee status could improve global per capita income by at least \$ 53 billion and release more than \$ 2.5 trillion. At the same time, women's autonomy, as well as most of the opportunities they can seize, are beneficial to both themselves and their families. Women's empowerment will gradually lead to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality by creating the conditions necessary for the achievement of other goals, such as decent work and economic development.

4 [EIGE, Gender Equality Index 2019.](#)

5 [National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016 - 2020.](#)

6 [IRC, Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential, July 2019.](#)

5. Combating violence as a prerequisite for integration

Violence against women is present in all social, political, economic and cultural settings with common characteristics that are differentiated and magnified in the case of refugees due to the *'refugee situation': the experiences of war, the painful uprooting, the distant and dangerous journey to Europe, the instability and uncertainty about the future and the not always welcoming response by the Greek society and state.*⁷ Detecting and identifying cases of violence is a field in which, despite the significant efforts made by professionals, there are gaps and difficulties. Inadequate intercultural tools and many issues stemming from years of systemic gaps in reception of asylum seekers and applicants are key challenges. The dissemination of violence at home into other environments destabilises the foundations for harmonious social coexistence, while increasing inequality.

6. Fighting racism and xenophobia

According to the 2018 Annual Report of the Racist Violence Reporting Network⁸, 117 incidents of racist violence were recorded with more than 130 victims. In 74 incidents, the targets were migrants and refugees on grounds of ethnic origin, religion, colour, associations of third country nationals, human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants, as well as a memorial to the refugee victims of shipwrecks. The Network has detected an increase in racist violence for yet another year, largely due to polarisation at the international level associated with the reception of refugee men and women, as well as other elements - particularities of Greek society.

The climate that is being created makes the (successful) integration of refugee and migrant women into local communities a challenge and a bet to be won. The question is whether an inclusive society contributes to combating xenophobia and racism or whether we need a society which is already open in order for the integration process to succeed. The dynamic nature of the process suggests that both of these scenarios are plausible and desirable. However, although the integration process is mostly local, next to the good practices implemented at local level, we need centralised initiatives of the government, which will pursue a smooth process and build a healthy society that will draw strength from the individuality of its members without viewing it as an obstacle.

7. Conclusion - Recommendations

In view of the numerous challenges that are constantly emerging, the achievement of sustainable development goals is becoming more imperative than ever. To this end, international cooperation is needed to safeguard the human rights acquired, the implementation of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, the sharing and effective accountability between states. On a practical level, the Greek government should invest in a viable integration strategy, which will take into account the particularities of local societies along with the rights and obligations of migrant and refugee women.

More specifically, to name but a few:




- The rights of refugee and migrant women should be respected in all processes, regardless of the legal status of each individual.

7 [ActionAid, «Η ενδοοικογενειακή βία κατά την περίοδο της οικονομικής κρίσης - Η οπτική των επαγγελματιών και προτάσεις βελτίωσης των εφαρμοζόμενων πολιτικών», Νοέμβριος 2018.](#)

8 [Racist Violence Reporting Network, Annual Report 2018.](#)

- The new National Action Plan on Gender Equality that will come into force after 2020 should include integration actions that are part of a broader integration plan, which will be gender-responsive in terms of the country's public policies.
- Interdisciplinary teams should work with refugee and migrant women with the aim of providing systematic and coordinated services to facilitate their integration.
- The thematic area of human rights should be incorporated into primary / secondary and tertiary education curricula to combat xenophobia and racism.

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