



# Integration of Migrant Women in Austria

Policies and Measures

Saskia Heilemann

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## Policies and Measures

Saskia Heilemann

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## SUMMARY

This study was conducted within the framework of the European Migration Network (EMN) on the basis of a common study template covering the reporting period 2016 to 2021 (2020 for statistics). The analyses are based in particular on Eurostat data and national statistics published in Austria as well as on key documents related to nationwide integration policy in Austria. Moreover, experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations provided inputs in interviews and in writing. The aim of the study is to identify the key challenges and possible opportunities for the integration of migrant women, and to understand whether and to what extent the particular situation of migrant women is taken into consideration in integration policies and measures. One focus is on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As is usual in the work of the EMN, the analyses focus on the group of third-country nationals.

While the immigration of migrant women from third countries to Austria decreased significantly after the peak in 2017 (2017: 27,037 first residence permits; 2020: 16,502 first residence permits; -39%), the number of female third-country nationals as a percentage of the female population in Austria increased slightly over the period under review (2016: 6.8%; 2020: 7.5%; +0.7 percentage points). Women from third countries mainly come to Austria for “other” reasons (as refugees, for humanitarian reasons, other; 43%) and family reasons (41%) (Eurostat, 2021b). Specific integration challenges are associated both with these immigration reasons and with the gender of “woman” (EIGE, 2020:5; European Commission, 2020d; European Economic and Social Committee, 2015:5; FRA, 2019:10). However, citizenship and the country of origin may also have a significant impact on integration outcomes, as national integration statistics and research reports show. Intersectionality, i.e. the way in which gender overlaps with other personal characteristics, thus plays a particular role in the integration of migrant women (EIGE, n.d.c).

According to Eurostat data, female third-country nationals are at a significant disadvantage in terms of employment, for example. The percentage of women from third countries aged between 20 and 64 who participate in the labour market in Austria is well below the equivalent figure for men (2020: 56% vs 80%). The activity rate for Austrians is higher overall (2020: 77% for Austrian women, 84% for Austrian men), with the difference between third-country nationals and Austrians being particularly pronounced for women. In 2020, a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated measures to contain the virus, the activity rate among female third-country nationals fell significantly (-4 percentage points), while male third-country nationals and Austrian men were less affected (-1 percentage point in each case). Austrian women actually experienced a decline of only 0.2 percentage points (Eurostat, 2021a). The national integration data published in relevant publications is only of limited use for the purposes of this study, however. In particular, the lack of data disaggregated by sex and citizenship and the separate reporting of certain countries do not allow the group of “female third-country nationals” to be analysed. Qualitative and quantitative studies on the integration of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status in Austria also show that women’s employment trajectories in Austria did not develop as well as those of men (Hosner et al., 2017:56; Public Employment Service, 2018:33; wiiw, 2019:11–13, 15–16). Preliminary evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that women refugees (as opposed to men refugees) switched to inactivity more often and were less likely to return to employment (Leitner and Landesmann, 2021:13–14). Representatives of the Federal

Chancellery, Austrian Integration Fund and non-governmental organizations see patriarchal structures and the gender-specific distribution of roles when it comes to housework and childcare as an overarching challenge for the integration of migrant women in Austria (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021e; Expert Council for Integration, 2020b:10, 2021:66–68).<sup>1</sup> Experts assume that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a retraditionalization or reinforcement of existing gender roles, which increased the integration challenges for migrant women (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021e:14, 19, 26, 32–33; Expert Council for Integration, 2020b:10, 2021:66ff.).<sup>2</sup> In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic is said to have reinforced traditional roles and worsened socioeconomic conditions, two major risk factors for domestic violence (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:15, 69).<sup>3</sup> Migrant women are also particularly affected by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic due to the intersectionality of gender and citizenship (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2020:281). National integration data for the pandemic year of 2020 disaggregated by sex and citizenship have been published but do not allow for an analysis of female third-country nationals – the focus group of this study.

For several years, the integration of migrant women has been a priority of Austrian integration policy and a central work priority of the Federal Chancellery, which took over the responsibility for integration from the former Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs in 2020 (Austrian Integration Fund, 2020b). The Federal Chancellery describes women as “driving forces” (Federal Chancellery, 2021c) and “multipliers” of integration (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146). A particular goal of integration policy is therefore to promote gender equality and equal rights for men and women by strengthening self-determination and independence.<sup>4</sup> To this end, the gender mainstreaming strategy and gender-specific measures are combined, according to the Federal Chancellery (IMAG GMB, 2019b),<sup>5</sup> and compulsory measures are also applied (see Art. 4 to 6 Integration Act<sup>6</sup>).<sup>7</sup> The following documents relating to nationwide integration policy in Austria were examined as part of the study: Government Programme 2020–2024 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a), National Action Plan on Integration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f), 50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2015) and Action Plan on Women’s Health (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, 2018). Concerning the target group “migrant women”, there is a particular focus on civic integration and on the empowerment of women and equality. Other important areas of national integration policy for women include language training, health and protection against violence. What is striking, however, is that the labour market integration of migrant women is mentioned far less frequently in key policy documents than the other areas. Most policies are aimed at women with a migrant background (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146) and not explicitly at women from third countries or certain groups of migrant women. The policies target both first-generation immigrant women and also explicitly second-generation and third-generation women (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f:9).

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1 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021; Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

2 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

3 Ibid.

4 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

5 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

6 Integration Act, FLG No. 68/2017, in the version of federal law FLG I No. 42/2020.

7 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.



The amount of funding for specific integration measures for migrant women at national level more than tripled over the period under review (2016–2021), from €1.37 million in 2018 to €4.79 million in 2021 (Austrian Integration Fund, 2019, 2021c; Federal Chancellery, 2020b, 2021a; Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Hence, in Austria, a wide range of integration measures for women are in place at local, regional and national level. However, non-governmental organizations state that in order for such integration services to be used effectively, the target group must be informed about these services and provided with comprehensive support.<sup>8</sup> Based on the indicators (a) mentions in literature, (b) positive evaluations, (c) awards and (d) confirmation by experts, the following three measures were identified as “good practice”:

#### Kompetenzcheck für Frauen

Project on labour market integration for women aged 18 and over with international protection status who are registered with the Austrian Public Employment Service in Vienna, funded by the Vienna Public Employment Service (ABZ\* Austria, 2021; update Training, 2021).

#### Mama lernt Deutsch

German courses and basic education for female migrants and asylum seekers living in Vienna, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the City of Vienna and the European Social Fund (City of Vienna, 2021).

#### NACHBARINNEN in Wien

Outreach advice and support for social, health and education issues in Vienna for migrant and refugee women and their families from third countries, funded by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, the City of Vienna, the Public Employment Service and by donations (NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 2021a).

There is political awareness of the specific impact that the coronavirus crisis has had on women.<sup>9</sup> However, specific national integration policies – such as targeted strategies or action plans – are not known to have been developed to lessen the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the integration of migrant women specifically. Instead, policies relating to the situation of women and integration policies are both seen as cross-cutting issues in all political decisions and measures to tackle the pandemic (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:3–5, 7).<sup>10</sup> In terms of measures, emphasis has been placed on new measures (migrant women were actively informed about COVID-19)<sup>11</sup> as well as on the expansion of existing measures (advice services now cover additional topics and needs)<sup>12</sup> and their adaptation (switch to digital/online formats; Austrian Integration Fund, 2020a).

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8 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

9 Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021; Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

10 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

11 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

12 Written input: Ursula Eltayeb, City of Vienna - Integration and Diversity (MA 17), 6 September 2021.

Nothing is known about the concrete development of new policies or the further development of existing policies for the integration of migrant women specifically. However, due to the relevance of the issue and because women with a migrant background are particularly affected by the pandemic, there are plans to expand and further develop integration measures aimed specifically at women, especially in the areas of the labour market, education, health and protection against violence.<sup>13</sup> At a structural level, a dedicated women's advice centre is to be set up in the Vienna Integration Centre to support female refugees and immigrants.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1 Background and rationale for the study

Gender or a person's gender identity has a big impact on all stages of the migration cycle, including integration. Concepts such as "double disadvantage" (Boyd, 1984:1091–1119; Grubanov Boskovic et al., 2020) or "intersectionality" (EIGE, n.d.c) are used to analyse and understand how sex and other personal characteristics such as being a migrant intersect and lead to specific challenges for migrant women (European Commission, 2020d). But also the reasons for immigration give rise to particular integration challenges for women (EIGE, 2020:5; European Economic and Social Committee, 2015:5; FRA, 2019:10). Across the EU in 2020, family reasons were the most common reason for women's immigration at 41 per cent; for men, by contrast, it was remunerated activities at 54 per cent (Eurostat, 2021d). The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional adverse effects. While whole societies and economies are suffering, we see that – when taking a closer look – migrant women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant women tend, for example, to work more often in sectors that are hit hardest by the pandemic and therefore suffer disproportionately more often from job loss. They also face increased exposure when providing front-line services in the health and care sector, where they are over-represented. But also additional care work and domestic work are more often taken on by women, with working women and female labour migrants frequently facing a double burden (Azcona et al., 2020:4; Fasani and Mazza, 2020:4; Foley and Piper, 2020:3, 5; OECD, 2020:9–10, 13; UN-Women, 2020). All these factors have a far-reaching influence on the integration of migrant women.

On the other hand, there are also unique opportunities linked to migrant women's integration. In Austria, civil society acknowledges that women are the main force of integration and request that policymakers develop women-specific measures (Menschenwürde Österreich, 2019). By making considerable contributions in their countries of origin and destination, migrant women not only have an impact on their own and their family members' integration but can contribute to the global development agenda, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Looking at financial remittances for example, a key component of the most dominant models of the migration–development nexus, some gender patterns have been identified. Women are more likely to send home a higher proportion of their earnings more frequently and to a larger number of family members. Moreover, when migrant women become an income provider, this can change their status in the family and/or community. This effect on gender power relations may increase women's influence on decisions in general and can promote broader social, cultural, economic and political changes in the long term (UN-Women, 2013:77ff., 2017:39).

## I.2 Aim of the study

In 2016 the European Commission adopted an Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, to support integration policies in the European Union (EU). The European Commission acknowledges that specific attention should be paid to gender aspects and committed to engage in a dialogue with EU Member States to ensure gender aspects and the situation of migrant women are taken into account in planned policies and funding initiatives (European Commission, 2016:12). The assessment of the action plan, however, noted

that it only recognized to a limited extent the specific needs of certain groups and the intersections between the migrant status and gender, for example (European Commission, 2020b:22). Civil society organizations found that the gender dimension of the action plan was not sufficiently developed (European Commission, 2020b:16). In its Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027, presented in November 2020, the European Commission proposed targeted integration support that takes into account individual characteristics that may present specific challenges such as gender. It specifically acknowledges the additional obstacles to integration that migrant women face linked to being both a migrant and female (European Commission, 2020c:6–7). Civil society organizations approve of the new action plan as it represents progress in recognizing and addressing the particular challenges that migrant women face. At the same time, a lack of concrete targets and actions is identified (European Commission, 2020c:2–3). Simultaneously, the importance of systematically including a gender perspective in different policy areas has been emphasized by the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 (European Commission, 2020a:2). Dedicated funding will be available to support actions for the integration of women (European Commission, 2020a:16), which has been welcomed by civil society organizations (Eurodiaconica, 2020:3).

The 2021 European Migration Network (EMN) study on the Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and Measures is the EMN's first gender-specific research study. By conducting the study, we want to understand if and to what extent Member States consider the distinct situation of migrant women in their integration policies and measures. The aim is to provide information that will support policymakers in developing gender-sensitive integration policies and measures that better support migrant women in their integration process, taking their respective backgrounds into account. An overview of research and statistics available at European and national level on the integration opportunities and challenges of migrant women will be provided. In its analyses, the study focuses specifically on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 1.3 Scope and definitions

In the context of this study migrant women are defined as adult third-country national female migrants. As we will see, national definitions differ. Austria's integration policy focuses on women with a migrant background and national statistics published in Austria are partly disaggregated not by citizenship but by migrant background.

In line with the common template developed by the EMN for conducting this study, integration policies refer to targeted integration strategies and action plans but also broader policy instruments relevant to the integration of migrant women, such as governmental programmes. Measures include systematic initiatives (multi-year/long term), projects (ad hoc) and legislative (structural) measures that are used to implement the integration policies.

The reporting period for this study ranges from 2016 to November 2021 (and from 2016 to 2020 for statistics).

The following key terms are used in the study. The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary Version 6.0 (EMN, 2018) unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

**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 (EIGE, n.d.a).

**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 (EIGE, n.d.b).

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

**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 (EIGE, n.d.c).

**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.

**Person with a migrant background:** A person whose parents (mother and father) were born abroad. This group can be further divided into first-generation migrants (persons born outside the country) and second-generation migrants (children of first-generation migrants born in Austria; Statistics Austria, 2021a).

**Refugee:** Either a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.

**Third-country national:** Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)<sup>15</sup> 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).<sup>16</sup>

## 1.4 Methodology

The present study was conducted by the National Contact Point (NCP) Austria in the EMN within the framework of the EMN's 2021–2022 Work Programme. The study follows a common study template with a predefined set of questions developed by the EMN, in order to facilitate comparability of the findings across all Member States. The preparation of the study template was led by the Austrian NCP.

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<sup>15</sup> Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ C 326, pp. 47–390.

<sup>16</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code), OJ L 77, pp. 1–52.

The analyses are based in particular on Eurostat data and national statistics published in Austria as well as on key documents related to nationwide integration policy in Austria. In addition, research reports, literature, Internet sources, legal texts, press releases and media reports were consulted.

To supplement the information obtained from secondary research, qualitative semi-structured online interviews were conducted and written input was obtained. The following experts and governmental and non-governmental organizations contributed to the study:

- Sibel Akgün, Directorate General III (Women's Affairs and Equality), Federal Chancellery;
- Maria-Alexandra Bassermann, Project Coordinator, Gender Focal Point, Integration/ Human Mobility Unit, IOM Austria;
- Ondine Delavelle, Head, Integration/ Human Mobility Unit, IOM Austria;
- Ursula Eltayeb, Integration and Diversity – Municipal Department 17 (MA 17) of the City of Vienna;
- Nalan Gündüz, Directorate General II (Integration, Culture and Ethnic Groups), Federal Chancellery;
- Yvonne Hanus, Director of Career Orientation and Promotion of Women, update Training;
- Ayten Pacariz, Operational Manager, NACHBARINNEN Vienna;
- Hilde Wolf, Head, FEM Süd;
- Unit III/A/10 (Public Employment Service) and Unit III/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), Federal Ministry of Labour;
- Austrian Integration Fund.

The interviewees and organizations that provided oral and written input deserve special thanks for sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The study was conducted by Saskia Heilemann (Research Associate, Interim Head of Research and Migration Law Unit, IOM Country Office for Austria) with support from Prisca Ebner (Administrative and Research Assistant, IOM Country Office for Austria) and Alexander Spiegelfeld (Research and Communications Associate, IOM Country Office for Austria). Prisca Ebner provided research support and drafted the chapters on integration measures and the impacts of COVID-19. Alexander Spiegelfeld was involved in drafting the chapter on national integration policy and on the impacts of COVID-19. In addition, legal aspects were researched by Martin Stiller (Legal Associate, IOM Country Office for Austria). Jonas Begemann (Media Intern, IOM Country Office for Austria) provided support services at different stages of conducting the research and compiling the study.

The study was prepared in close cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.

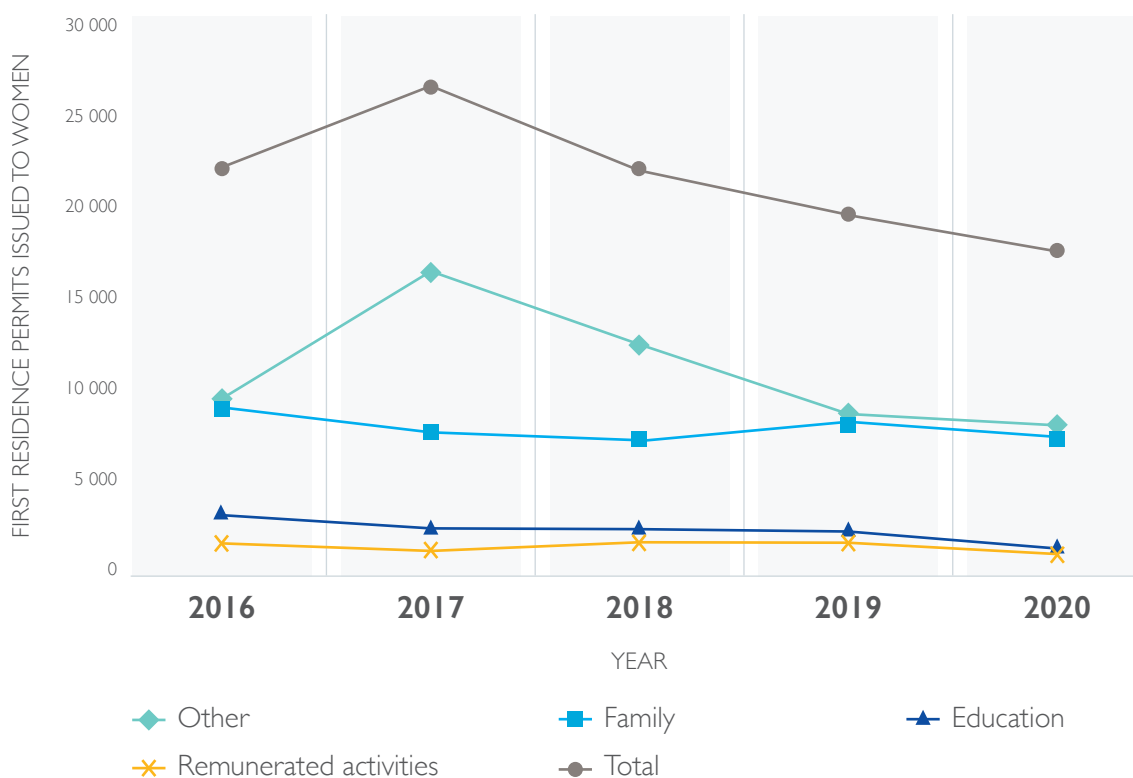


## 2. STATISTICS

### 2.1 Immigration of migrant women

The immigration of migrant women from third countries to Austria decreased significantly after the peak in 2017. While 27,037 first residence permits were issued to women in 2017, the figure was just 16,502 in 2020 (-39%). The reduction in immigration can mainly be attributed to the decrease in immigration for “other” reasons.<sup>17</sup> The number of first residence permits issued for family reasons, education reasons and remunerated activities also fell in 2020 – the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic began – whereas it had previously been relatively stable (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: First residence permits issued to women from third countries by reason for issue, Austria (2016–2020)**



Source: Eurostat, 2021b.

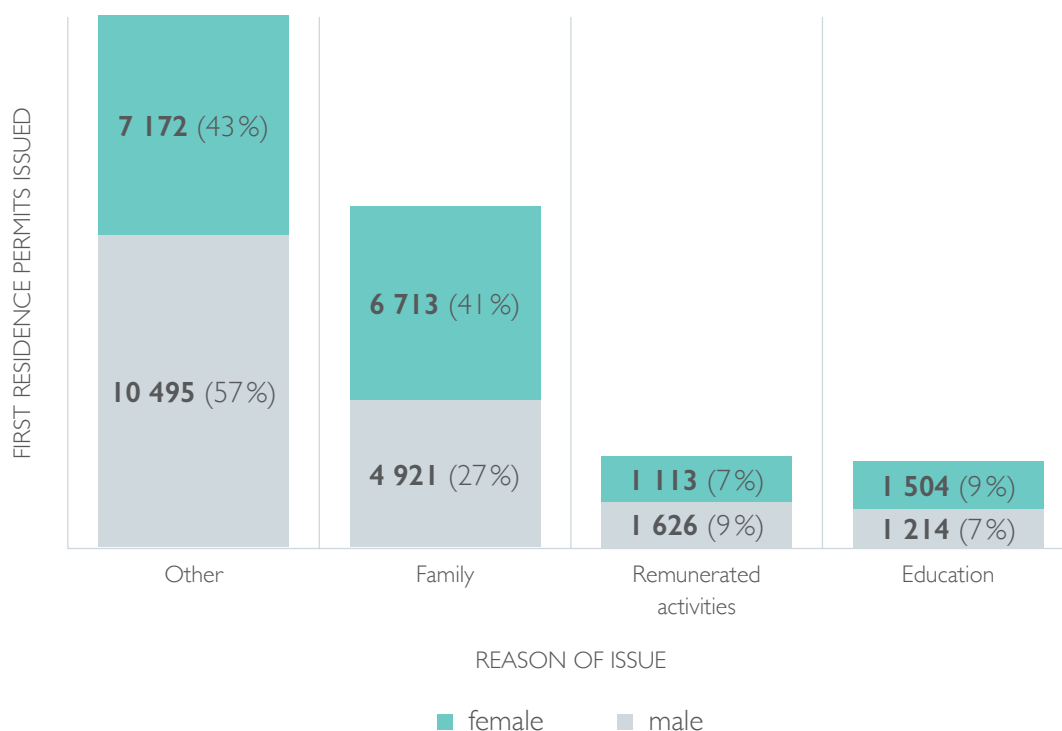
The main countries of citizenship of migrant women – and of migrant men – include Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia (Eurostat, 2021b).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Other” reasons include international protection status, refugee status, subsidiary protection status, humanitarian reasons, residence-only reasons, other reasons not specified, unaccompanied minors, and trafficked persons.

<sup>18</sup> Data broken down by gender are only available for 2016 and 2017. However, the above are also among the top 3 nationalities of all immigrants in 2018 and 2019, suggesting that there are no significant changes even when broken down by gender. Figures for 2020 were also not available at the time the study was prepared.

Both women and men are most likely to come to Austria for “other” reasons, followed by family reasons. Among women, however, the proportion who immigrate for family reasons is significantly higher (41% vs 27%, see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: First residence permits issued to third-country nationals by reason for issue and sex, Austria (2020)**



**Note:** “Other” reasons include international protection status, refugee status, subsidiary protection status, humanitarian reasons, residence-only reasons, other reasons not specified, unaccompanied minors, and trafficked persons.

**Source:** Eurostat, 2021b.

## 2.2 Integration of migrant women

The number of female third-country nationals<sup>19</sup> as a percentage of the female population in Austria increased slightly over the period under review. While women from third countries accounted for 6.8 per cent of the total female population in 2016, they made up 7.5 per cent in 2020 (+0.7 percentage points). By contrast, the number of men from third countries as a percentage of the total male population remained stable at 8.3 per cent (only exception: 8% in 2016), but overall was higher than for women (Eurostat, 2021e). The integration of women in the areas of education, labour market, health and housing is described in more detail below using EU-wide comparative data from Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, and also based on national data published in Austria. The period under review was from 2016 to 2020, with a particular focus on 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and wide-scale restrictions were introduced in economic and social life. It should be noted that the national data published in Austria can only be used to a limited extent

<sup>19</sup> Defined as “non-EU28 countries”.

for the purposes of this study, which focuses on women from third countries. For example, the data sets of the integration monitoring, which are published in the annual integration report, are predominantly broken down by Austria versus foreign country and sex, so that the group of female third-country nationals cannot be analysed (see, for example, Expert Council for Integration, 2021). The integration indicators of the National Action Plan on Integration published in the statistical yearbook “migration & integration”, on the other hand, are generally disaggregated not by citizenship but by migrant background<sup>20</sup> and sex. In addition, it is impossible to analyse the “third countries” category because the data has been compiled to focus the analysis particularly on women from the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) and Turkey, two regions/countries of origin that are important to Austria<sup>21</sup> (see, for example, Statistics Austria, 2021b). Therefore, it is not possible to analyse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women from third countries based on these data. A women versus men comparison is not always conducted, either, in the statistics brochure “women” of the Austrian Integration Fund. Generally, women with and without a migrant background are juxtaposed with each other or compared with the total population (see Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b). The most recently published data refer to the year 2019.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the national statistics do reveal several important findings. In addition, insights are gained from research reports and expert knowledge, with the latter providing an insight into aspects of integration beyond the areas of education, the labour market, health and housing.

### **Infobox 1: Available databases and data sets for further analysis**

The microcensus conducted quarterly in Austria is a random sampling of households during which data is collected in the categories labour market, education and housing. This data offers multiple breakdowns of data, for example by sex, citizenship, country of birth, reason for immigrating, immigrant generation or number of children. A small part of the data set covering the labour market can be found on the user-friendly STATcube, the statistical database of Statistics Austria (STATcube, 2021). Detailed breakdowns of data on this site are fee based. All data sets are available on request for research purposes through the Austrian Social Science Data Archive (AUSSDA, n.d.). In addition, labour market data can be queried via the labour market information system (amis) of the Federal Ministry of Labour. There, too, multi-level disaggregation is possible, for example by sex, citizenship and education (Federal Ministry of Labour, 2022). Statistics Austria recently conducted a nationwide survey on the subject of health, the Austrian Health Interview Survey (ATHIS). Along with questions about health, it covered information about sex, education, employment, citizenship and migrant background. Here, too, the data set is made available on request for research purposes (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2021).

20 A “person with a migrant background” is defined as a person whose parents (mother and father) were born abroad. This group can be further divided into first-generation migrants (persons born outside the country) and second-generation migrants (children of first-generation migrants born in Austria; Statistics Austria, 2021a).

21 The top 3 countries of origin of foreign female nationals as of 1 January, 2020, were Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Turkey and Serbia (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:12).

22 However, the Austrian Integration Fund has announced an update of the statistics brochure “Women - Facts and Figures” for 8 March 2022.

## 2.2.1 Eurostat

### Education

In 2020, the most common level of education completed among female third-country nationals<sup>23</sup> in Austria aged 18 to 64 was compulsory schooling or lower, at 43 per cent (ISCED level 0–2; Austrian Academic Exchange Service, n.d.). Their male counterparts, on the other hand, were most likely to have completed upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, including vocational training (ISCED level 3–4), at 41 per cent. Austrians are far more likely to have completed upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (both women and men; there are very few differences here). It should be noted that women from third countries are more likely to have completed tertiary education than men from third countries (ISCED level 5–8; 24% vs 20%). The figures remained relatively stable over the entire period under review (2016–2020; Eurostat, 2021d).

### Labour market

Labour market participation in Austria for women from third countries<sup>24</sup> aged 20 to 64 is well below the equivalent figure for men, but – until 2019 – followed a positive trend. The activity rate among female third-country nationals thus rose from 55 per cent in 2016 (men: 77%) to 60 per cent in 2019 (men: 81%). In comparison, the activity rate of Austrians was relatively stable (women: 77%, men: 84–85%), but is higher than the activity rate of female and male third-country nationals, with the difference being particularly pronounced among women (2019: 17 percentage points vs 8 percentage points difference). Since 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic began and various measures were taken by the government to contain the virus, the activity rate has fallen – and has done so particularly sharply among female third-country nationals. Their activity rate decreased by four percentage points to 56 per cent in 2020, while male third-country nationals and Austrian men experienced a decrease of only one percentage point. Among Austrian women, the activity rate fell by only 0.2 percentage points (Eurostat, 2021a).

The unemployment rate in Austria among women from third countries<sup>25</sup> aged 20 to 64 is slightly higher than that of men (2020: 15.6% vs 15.2%). Clear differences can be seen when the figures are compared to those for Austrian women, who had an unemployment rate of only 3.8 per cent in 2020 (-11.8 percentage points). The difference is similar among men. While unemployment rates for all groups studied between 2016 and 2019 fell slightly or stagnated, they rose again in the initial year of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing more sharply for third-country nationals than for Austrians. With an increase of 2.1 percentage points, female third-country nationals recorded a slightly lower increase in the unemployment rate than male third-country nationals (+2.8 percentage points; Eurostat, 2021h).

The number of female third-country nationals<sup>26</sup> in Austria who are self-employed fell from 6,600 to 5,000 between 2016 and 2020 (-24%). The number of self-employed male third-country nationals, on the other hand,

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23 For the period 2016-2019 defined as "non-EU28 countries", for 2020 defined as "non-EU27 countries".

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

increased over the same period (+17%) and, at 11,900 (the most recent figure recorded), is 2.4 times higher than among women (Eurostat, 2021f).

## Health

During the period under review (2016–2020), almost all female third-country nationals<sup>27</sup> in Austria aged 20 to 64 report that they received all necessary medical examinations or treatment ( $\geq 98.4\%$ ). Among male third-country nationals, the rate is even higher ( $\geq 99.3\%$ ) and similar to that among Austrians. The reasons given by female third-country nationals for needs being unmet include – in decreasing order of importance – too expensive, no time, waiting list, other, wanted to wait and see if problem got better on its own (Eurostat, 2021g).

## Housing

Looking at the overcrowding rate<sup>28</sup> for 20- to 64-year-olds in Austria, it can be seen that women are slightly less likely to live in an overcrowded household than men. This applies both to third-country nationals<sup>29</sup> and to Austrians. However, there are significant differences between the two citizenship groups of up to 39 percentage points (2020: third-country national females 44% vs males 49% and Austrian females 9% vs males 10%). The trend in the overcrowding rate is falling – a trend that was also seen in 2020, the year of COVID-19 (Eurostat, 2021c).

## **2.2.2 National statistics**

### Education

In 2019, women with a migrant background from successor States of the former Yugoslavia (excluding EU Member States) and from Turkey had a university degree considerably less frequently (12% and 6%) and a lower educational attainment level considerably more frequently (34% and 66%) than women with a migrant background from other third countries (university degree: 37%; lower educational attainment level: 27%; Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:31).<sup>30</sup>

### Labour market

Among women with a migrant background, labour market participation varies widely according to country of origin. For instance, the average activity rate among women from Turkey in 2019 (51%) was at a low level similar to that among women from other third countries (56%). By contrast, nearly two thirds (65%) of the women from the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) participated in the labour market (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:41).

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27 Defined as “non-EU28 countries”.

28 The overcrowding rate is defined as the percentage of the population living in an overcrowded household. An overcrowded household is one in which the household does not have the following minimum number of rooms: One room for the household, one room per couple in the household, one room for each individual aged 18 and over; one room per two persons of the same sex between 12 and 17 years old, one room per person between 12 and 17 years old who does not fall into the previous category, one room per two persons under 12 years old. See also Eurostat, n.d.

29 Defined as “non-EU28 countries”.

30 The figures refer to the annual average for 2019.

Among women aged 25-49 with children under 15, the part-time rate was lower among women with a migrant background. The part-time employment rate was 71 per cent for Turkey, 64 per cent for other third countries and 63 per cent for successor States of the former Yugoslavia (excluding EU Member States). These rates were considerably lower than among women without a migrant background (78%). Among all part-time employed women, obligations to care for children or to care for dependent adults were cited by the majority as the most frequent reason for part-time employment (women without a migrant background: 36%; women with a migrant background: 41%). The next most frequent reason cited was that they did not want to work full-time (21% vs 17%). Significantly more women with a migrant background cited “did not find full-time employment” as the reason (6% vs 12%; Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:42–43).

With respect to the unemployment rate, one should also emphasize the differences based on citizenship. For instance, the unemployment rate in 2019 was strikingly high among women from the Syrian Arab Republic, at 71 per cent. By comparison, the rate among women from other third countries was 17 per cent. Women with a citizenship from one of the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) had a lower unemployment rate, at 12 per cent. The unemployment rate among Austrian women was just half as high, at six per cent (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:44–46).

The national statistics published in Austria are rarely subjected to multiple disaggregation, i.e. beyond sex and citizenship or migrant background. One example of available data is the information on the unemployment rate by educational attainment level. This data reveals significant differences among women with a higher educational attainment level. For instance, the unemployment rate among women from “other” third countries<sup>31</sup> in 2019 was four times higher (university degree) or 3.5 times higher (general qualification for university entrance) than for Austrian women with the same educational attainment level (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:44–46).

## Health

Women with a migrant background are slightly more likely to report having at least one chronic disease<sup>32</sup> than women without a migrant background or than men (with or without a migrant background; 2019: 68% vs 66% and 66% vs 66%). There were greater differences among women from the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) and from Turkey, where the prevalence of a chronic disease was higher overall (women: 74%; men: 69%; Statistics Austria, 2021b:73).

## Housing

Data on housing, broken down by sex and citizenship, is not published in the pertinent statistical publications.<sup>33</sup>

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31 Excluding Afghanistan, the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU), Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

32 This refers to illnesses or health problems that have lasted or are expected to last at least six months.

33 See, for example, the statistical yearbook “migration & integration” (Statistics Austria, 2021b) or the 2021 Integration Report (Expert Council for Integration, 2021).



## Infobox 2: Discrimination

It seems important to mention that integration must be viewed as a whole-of-society process. This naturally means that migrants must make an active effort to integrate. At the same time, the success of integration relies on the involvement of everyone living in Austria (Art. 2 para. 1 Integration Act). In other words, what is needed is a socially permeable and open society free of discrimination (German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2012:5). According to a survey-based study from 2019, however, individuals with a migrant background from third countries experience discrimination in Austria more than twice as often as those without a migrant background (81% vs 38%). Women, for their part, are overall 1.3 times more likely to be discriminated against than men. Among women with children, the probability is 1.5 times higher than for men with children. Migrant women are subjected to multiple discrimination based on the traits of "origin", "gender" and "children". The consequences of discrimination include unequal and worse treatment in the labour market, education, health and housing, which, in turn, has negative effects on the integration process (Chamber of Labour - Section Vienna, 2019).

### 2.2.3 National research

In the period under review, several qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted on education, the labour market and the health of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status in Austria. The studies investigated either differences based on the category of "gender" or focused especially on women as a target group. Only one study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why a comprehensive analysis is not yet possible at this stage. Some of the key findings are presented below.

#### Education

Although women who are granted asylum or who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status are more likely than men to have low educational attainment levels (10% vs 5%), they are also more likely to have university degrees (14% vs 9%; Hosner et al., 2017:35–36; Public Employment Service, 2018:21–22). Considerable differences exist depending on the country of origin. Lower educational attainment levels are found more frequently among women from Afghanistan and Somalia and university degrees among many women from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (Public Employment Service, 2018:21–22).

#### Labour market

Considerably fewer women than men among the persons granted asylum or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status report having been employed abroad (59% vs 95%; Public Employment Service, 2018:33). Education is one factor influencing labour market participation by women (compulsory schooling: 39%; university degree: 85%). This trend is not observable among men. Country of origin is another major factor influencing the degree of labour market participation by women prior to their arrival in Austria (lower participation rates among Afghan and Syrian women and higher rates among Iraqi women and Chechen/Russian women; Hosner et al.,

2017:43–44). In Austria too, women have a lower activity rate than men among persons granted asylum or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status (66% vs 76%; Hosner et al., 2017:9, 56).

A closer look at persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status and the trajectory of their labour market integration reveals that two years after receiving asylum or subsidiary protection status, 15 per cent of the men are largely employed whereas just five per cent of the women are (Public Employment Service, 2018:87). It takes men on average two years and eight months to attain employment whereas it takes women substantially longer, namely four years and three months (Hosner et al., 2017:56, 67). Among persons granted asylum or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, men take six years to close the employment gap they have compared with other migrant men (year 0: -0.7 and -0.5; year 6: -0.1). Among women who are granted asylum or who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, the employment gap narrows but even after seven years is still larger than among other migrant women (year 0: -0.7; year 7: -0.3 vs -0.2; wiiw, 2019:15–16).

Prior to arriving in Austria, women who are granted asylum or who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status were often in professional occupations (32%) whereas men in this category were often in skilled trades (33%). As soon as they are employed in Austria, women work more often than men in professional occupations (13% vs 5%) and more rarely as unskilled workers (26% vs 35%) or in skilled trades (3% vs 19%; Hosner et al., 2017:45, 59). However, women's careers take a stronger turn for the worse than men's between their last job in their country of origin and their first job in Austria. In addition, there are hardly any indications of career recovery after the initial setback (wiiw, 2020:11–13).

Among persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, the percentage who view themselves as overqualified is smaller among women than among men (wiiw, 2020:11–13). Nonetheless, another study concludes that about half of the women feel they are overqualified for the work they do. About 60 per cent of women who are granted asylum or who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status are employed at a lower skill level in Austria than in their country of origin (Public Employment Service, 2018:93).

Looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the integration of female refugees, a first study shows that female refugees are 13 to 19 percentage points more likely than male refugees to move from unemployment before the onset of the pandemic to inactivity during the pandemic. They are also more likely to remain inactive (Leitner and Landesmann, 2021:13–14).

## Health

Among persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, more women than men rate their state of health as rather poor or very poor (16% and 5% vs 14% and 3%; Hosner et al., 2017:68–69). Refugees on the whole rate their state of health as not good more frequently than locals do; women, in turn, indicate that their state of health is not good more frequently than men do (men: 12% vs 7%; women: 17% vs 9%). Differences exist depending on age and country of origin, with women aged 40 to 59 and women from Afghanistan and other countries (e.g. Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Yemen) rating their state of health as good less frequently than Syrian women (Kohlenberger et al., 2019). Unmet health needs affect two out of ten refugee men and four out of ten refugee women. Citizenship and education have an influence. For example,

Afghan nationals and those surveyed who had completed a higher level of secondary education said more frequently that their needs are not met (Public Employment Service, 2018:20). A representative of the FEM Süd women's health centre<sup>34</sup> said a large number of women with a migrant background suffer from psychological conditions (e.g. depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety).<sup>35</sup>

### Infobox 3: Expert knowledge

Representatives of the Federal Chancellery, the Austrian Integration Fund and non-governmental organizations point out one overarching challenge for the integration of migrant women in Austria: patriarchal structures and a gender-specific distribution of roles.<sup>36</sup> In the view of these representatives, refugee women in particular have grown up in patriarchal structures that also shape their lives here in Austria. They say this has multiple effects on the possibilities women have to integrate. First, women are hindered in their self-determination by a lack of equal rights.<sup>37</sup> In addition, they certainly lack visions of what they can make of their lives and have inhibitions about trying something new.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, migrant women – as with women in general – are often already fully occupied due to the gender-specific roles and division of labour in housework and childcare (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021e:14, 19, 26, 32–33; Expert Council for Integration, 2020b:10, 2021:66ff.).<sup>39</sup> This leads to multiple burdens if women have to reconcile family, education and labour market integration.<sup>40</sup>

Experts assume that the COVID-19 pandemic has led in Austria as a whole to a re-establishment of traditional gender-specific roles or a reinforcement of existing gender roles with respect to housework and childcare, placing multiple burdens on women. For migrant women, this means growing challenges for integration and steps backwards in terms of gender equality and self-determination of women. Ultimately, however, there is a lack of sufficient data to prove this (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021e:14, 19, 26, 32–33; Expert Council for Integration, 2020b:10, 2021:66ff.).<sup>41</sup> The Expert Council for Integration and the Austrian Integration Fund point out that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated two determining factors for the occurrence of domestic violence: traditional roles and socioeconomic conditions (overcrowded living conditions, social isolation, economic uncertainty). Women with a migrant background are also affected (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:15, 69).<sup>42</sup> An analysis of the social situation in Austria in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The analysis concludes that categories of people previously disproportionately at risk of poverty or social exclusion were in some cases affected more severely by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic. This includes foreign nationals and women (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2020:281). In addition, it was found that women as well as households where at least one member was a third-country national were more frequently affected by the risk of poverty

34 The interviewee's experience is based on approximately 2,000 clients served per year, of whom approximately 80 per cent are women with a migrant background.

35 Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

36 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021; Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

37 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

38 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

39 Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

40 Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021.

41 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

42 Ibid.

or social exclusion (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2020:65–66). The qualitative study on domestic violence cited by the Expert Council for Integration is based on a survey of experts from different support and advisory organizations. The authors of the study identify overcrowded living conditions in times of lockdown, isolation and economic uncertainty as factors that disproportionately affected families with a migrant background and that led to an escalation of violence and made it more difficult to access support services. However, it should also be noted that the experts surveyed definitely had different experiences and that the results of the qualitative study do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the quantitative trend for violent incidents (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021 e: 17ff.).

## 3. NATIONAL INTEGRATION POLICIES

### 3.1 Overall approach and institutional context

Integration is understood in Austria to be a reciprocal, whole-of-society process that, on the one hand, requires immigrants to take personal responsibility for playing a part in the integration process and on the other hand, provides that governmental institutions establish frameworks and systematically offer integration measures (Art. 1 Integration Act).<sup>43</sup> According to an analysis by Gruber et al. (2016) and Rosenberger/Gruber (2020:87–89), the Austrian understanding of integration policy emphasizes the migrants' responsibility for the success of integration. In the “integration through performance” (Integration durch Leistung) narratives that are dominant mostly in the areas of language, education and work, migrants are expected to use the integration measures and to perform above and beyond these measures at their own initiative. “Support and challenge” (*Fördern und Fordern*) is the integration policy principle laid down in the Government Programme 2020–2024 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:144), and is an expression of the rising expectations that migrants are asked to meet (Bassermann, 2018:29–30).

In Austria, responsibility for integration policy lies with the Federal Chancellery and is discharged there by the Federal Minister for Women, Family, Youth and Integration. In 2020, the integration agendas were transferred to the Federal Chancellery, which was already responsible for women's issues. So, this transfer linked the two agendas together institutionally as well (Federal Chancellery, n.d.). The remit of the Federal Chancellery encompasses, among other things, matters related to social integration and the coexistence of people with and without a migrant background, as well as the coordination of general integration policies (Annex to Art. 2 Part 2 subpara 28 Federal Ministerial Act).<sup>44</sup>

Although the main responsibility is vested in the Federal Chancellery, integration policy in Austria is nonetheless a cross-cutting issue.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, Art. 2 of the Integration Act clearly stipulates that all governmental institutions at federal, provincial and municipal level must contribute to a successful integration process by systematically offering integration measures within the scope of their own responsibilities. According to Biffi, the provinces are particularly significant in this context and play an important role in policymaking and policy implementation (Biffi, 2019:171, 173). For example, each province has its own office or departments responsible for integration, as well as an integration official, an integration mission statement or the like.<sup>46</sup> Vienna, for instance, has its own Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (City of Vienna, n.d.). Lower Austria has a provincial councillor responsible for coordinating integration matters (Provincial Government of Lower Austria, n.d.). Tyrol produced an integration mission statement that is meant to serve as a guide for policy, administration and other integration stakeholders (Province of Tyrol, 2019). Integration policy has also been institutionalized at local level in several Austrian towns and cities (e.g. Graz, Kufstein, Linz, Telfs and Wels).<sup>47</sup>

43 Integration Act, FLG No. 68/2017, in the version of federal law FLG I No. 42/2020.

44 Federal Ministry Law 1986, FLG No. 76/1986, in the version of federal law FLG I No. 148/2021.

45 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

46 Written input: Maria-Alexandra Bassermann, IOM Austria, 8 October 2021.

47 Ibid.

The Austrian Integration Fund is an institution of the Federal State that is primarily entrusted with implementing the measures set forth in the Integration Act (Austrian Integration Fund, n.d.b), but various non-State organizations also implement measures (Rosenberger and Gruber, 2020:37).

The coordination and networking of various stakeholders was institutionalized with the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Integration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.a).<sup>48</sup> The Advisory Committee comprises one representative each of the federal ministries, provinces, the Austrian Association of Municipalities and the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, the social partners, the Austrian Integration Fund, five humanitarian or church organizations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; Art. 19 para 2 Integration Act). The Advisory Committee on Integration is charged, among other things, with exchanging knowledge, information and opinions on the implementation of national integration strategies and with discussing the recommendations submitted by the Expert Council for Integration (Art. 19 para 1 and Art. 20 para 1 Integration Act).

Above and beyond this, the Federal Chancellery is advised on integration policy issues of fundamental importance by the Expert Council for Integration, which is independent and exempted from the obligation to comply with instructions from higher bodies. The Council has existed since 2010 and consists of individuals who all verifiably possess comprehensive expertise on integration. Among its tasks, the Council is charged with supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan for Integration and other national integration strategies and with developing proposals for measures. In addition, the Council publishes an annual integration report (Federal Chancellery, n.d.c; Art. 17 and 18 Integration Act).

### **3.2 Specific approach towards the integration of migrant women**

For several years, the integration of migrant women has been a priority of Austrian integration policy and a central work priority of the Federal Chancellery, which has been responsible for integration since 2020 (Austrian Integration Fund, 2020b). This priority is also confirmed by various national action plans and strategies that explicitly define migrant women as a target group (see Section 3.3).

The subject is of special relevance for the current Federal Government, which consists of the Austrian People's Party and the Austrian Green Party and which commenced its work in 2020. The federal minister tasked with women and integration issues since January 2020 has repeatedly referred to women as "driving forces of integration". In doing so, she has publicly underscored the overall opportunities for integration that come from focusing more heavily on women (Federal Chancellery, 2021c). This is also reflected in the current Government Programme, which provides for a number of specific integration measures for migrant women (see Section 3.3). In the programme, migrant women are understood to be "multipliers" of integration (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146) and driving forces in education for the entire family. They are also seen as playing an important intermediary role in passing on values and thus as heavily influencing how their children's integration unfolds.<sup>49</sup>

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48 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

49 Ibid.



A special integration policy goal is to achieve gender equality and equal rights for men and women. The Federal Chancellery believes this requires empowering and promoting women in their self-determination and independence – in economic terms too.<sup>50</sup> In this context, mandatory measures are used as well (see Art. 4 to 6 Integration Act)<sup>51</sup> to prevent possible traditional gender roles from making it more difficult for women to take part in integration measures (Expert Council for Integration, 2018:78).

Gender-specific strategies and measures to promote gender equality are integral components of national integration policy. A gender-specific approach and gender mainstreaming are combined in Austria and intended to complement each other.<sup>52</sup> Austria has committed itself politically and legally to implementing the strategy of gender mainstreaming at national level, i.e. systematically considering the differences that exist between men and women with respect to conditions, situations and needs (EIGE, n.d.a; IMAG GMB, 2019a). Gender mainstreaming is integrated as a cross-cutting subject matter in all policy measures (IMAG GMB, 2019b), and therefore also in integration policy.<sup>53</sup> The legal basis for this is found in Article 7 of the Austrian Federal Constitution,<sup>54</sup> which provides for the equality of men and women and a prohibition of discrimination.

### 3.3 Analysis of national integration policies concerning migrant women

The following central documents for nationwide integration policy in Austria were analysed in the context of this study: the Government Programme 2020–2024 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a), the National Action Plan on Integration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f), the 50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2015) as well as the Action Plan for Women's Health (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, 2018), which is also of central significance to the integration of women. Migrant women are explicitly cited as a target group in all the programmes and action plans named. The Government Programme 2020–2024 and the National Action Plan on Integration in particular mention them especially frequently.

There is no specific focus on third-country women apart from the 50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria and a target formulated in the Government Programme 2020–2024. Women with a migrant background are mentioned as a target group in the Government Programme 2020–2024 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146), indicating that efforts address not only women who immigrated themselves and belong to the so-called first generation but also women who belong to the second and third generation of immigrants, some of whom already have Austrian citizenship. The general integration policy guidelines in the National Action Plan on Integration even focus on women with a migrant background who belong to the second and third generation (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f:9).

Based on number of mentions in the policy documents reviewed (see Table 1), it can be seen that Austria's national integration policy for the "migrant women" target group focuses on civic integration (4 mentions) and

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50 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

51 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

52 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

53 The Interministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting (IMAG GMB) provides a database of gender equality projects on its website, which also, as of October 13, 2021, includes 29 integration projects (IMAG GMB, n.d.).

54 Federal Constitutional Law, FLG I No. 1/1930, in the version of FLG I No. 235/2021.

language training (3 mentions) as well as health (3 mentions) and protection from violence (“other”; 3 mentions). The main thrust of civic integration is to empower women. The object is to promote self-determination, gender mainstreaming and equal treatment of women by addressing these topics at schools and in intercultural dialogue and by implementing initiatives. In language training, the policy aims at expanding language courses being offered especially for women (German and literacy courses with childcare options, courses with childcare options in-house or nearby, parent-child courses). In health, the objective is to improve the information and advice being offered on psychosocial and sexual health in particular, and to strengthen diversity skills in the health-care system and achieve better access for migrant women. Another important issue is protection from violence, which falls under the category “other”. The object is to protect women from violence shaped by familial, social, ideological, cultural or religious factors, particularly by implementing and further developing initiatives and measures and by establishing this subject matter in curricula. Education and vocational training (2 mentions) are mentioned less often in the policy documents that were reviewed. The focus in this area should be on providing initial and continuing training opportunities as well as specific educational and career guidance for migrant women. There is just one reference to the labour market in connection with the integration of migrant women, namely individual support to facilitate participation. In the “other” category, mention was also made of intercultural leisure and sports activities specifically for the target group “migrant women”. Entrepreneurship and housing are not addressed in connection with migrant women.

**Table I: Mentions of “migrant women” as target group in central documents for nationwide integration policy according to specific areas**

Area	Government Programme 2020–2024	National Action Plan on Integration	50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria	Action Plan for Women's Health	Mentions of “migrant women”
Labour market	×				Strengthen labour market participation by women with a migrant background by providing them with better individual support as they enter the labour market and support in the scope of mentoring programmes (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146).
Entrepreneurship					–
Education and vocational training	×	×			Family-friendly initial and continuing training opportunities (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146).  Educational and career guidance for girls and women in order to open up educational and occupational prospects. And support to help girls and women attain occupational qualifications (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:23).

Language training	X	X	X		<p>Increased range of German and literacy courses with childcare options (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146).</p> <p>Further develop the range of language courses for women in order to increase their opportunities for education and participation. Support women with a higher educational attainment level in accordance with their potential. Range of programmes for parents, including expansion of parent-child courses (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:14–15).</p> <p>Better coordination between available language courses for parents, especially mothers, and the mandatory year of kindergarten, e.g. by offering German courses in the proximity of kindergartens (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2015:9)</p>
Housing					–
Health	X	X		X	<p>Strengthen the diversity skills in the health system and the health literacy of women, in particular raise awareness around women's health, including psychological health, flight traumas or sexualized violence (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146).</p> <p>Improve the information and counselling being offered, especially psychosocial counselling, sex education, the health of children and women, and family planning – particularly for women with a migrant background (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:32)</p> <p>Increase equal health opportunities for socioeconomically disadvantaged women with a migrant background. And design accessible institutions and services in the health and social sector (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, 2018:37–38).</p>
Civic integration	X	X			<p>Initiatives to empower women in the scope of basic welfare support in the asylum process (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:142).</p> <p>Empower girls and women and support their self-realization, for example by enacting a headscarf ban for schoolgirls up to age 14 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:148).</p> <p>Anchor gender mainstreaming and gender equality of women and men more firmly in the curricula (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:27).</p> <p>Make the status of women a topic in intercultural dialogue (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:35).</p>

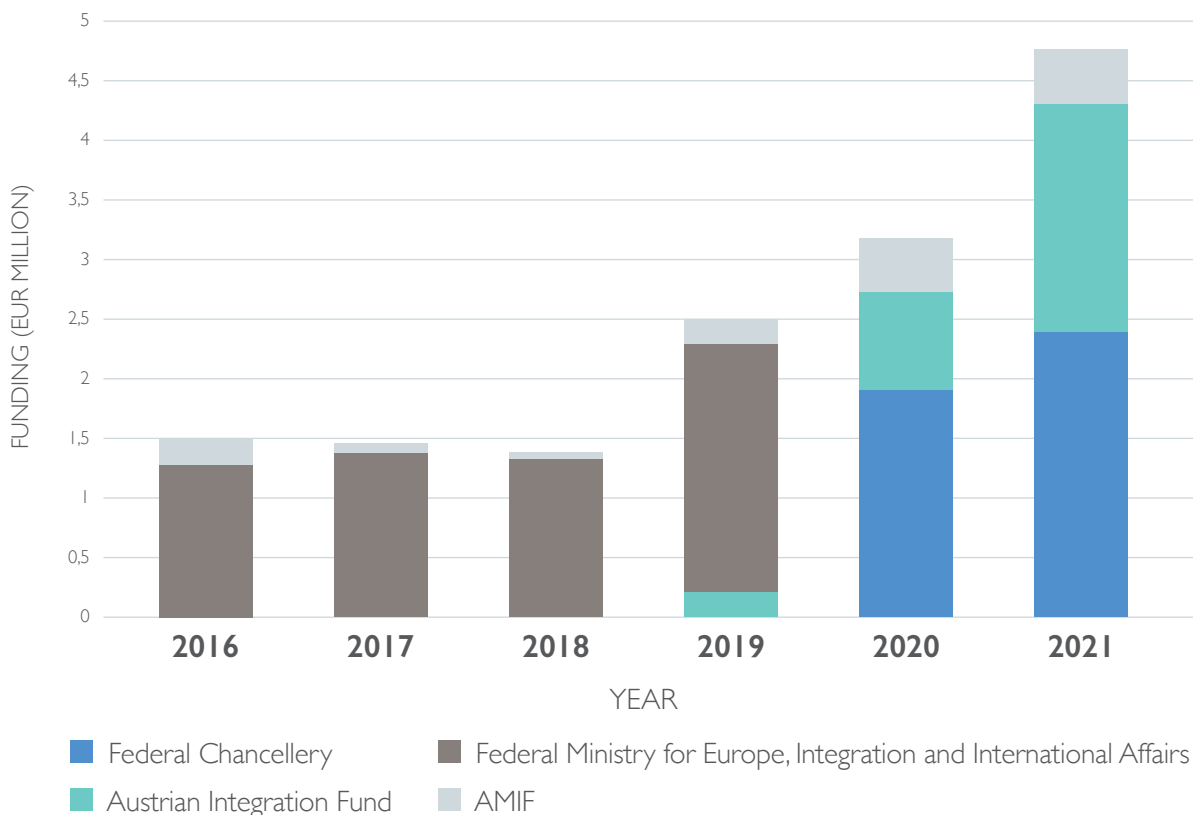
Area	Government Programme 2020-2024	National Action Plan on Integration	50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria	Action Plan for Women's Health	Mentions of "migrant women"
Other (protection from violence)	X	X			<p>Protection from violence: protect from all forms of violence, especially familial violence, violence in the immediate social environment, ideologically based violence and violence in every social, cultural and religious context, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child marriage (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146).</p> <p>Further develop the measures surrounding victim protection with an eye to protecting women and children from violence and coercion (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:27).</p> <p>Anchor protection from violence more firmly as a subject in curricula (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:27).</p>
Other (leisure and sports)		X			Für Intercultural leisure and sports activities are to be developed specifically for girls and women (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b:39).

## 4. INTEGRATION MEASURES

### 4.1 Earmarked funding to support the integration of migrant women

Between 2016 and 2019, funding for specific integration measures for migrant women was provided at national level by the then Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs. Since 2019, this was supplemented by the Austrian Integration Fund. In 2020, the Federal Chancellery took over responsibility from the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs (see Section 3.1). The analysis of funding for specific integration projects that focus on women's issues (Figure 3) is based on the overview of funding programmes focusing on women's issues initiated by the Federal Chancellery (2020–2021) and by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs (2016–2019). It is further based on the calls for funding applications for projects focusing on women's issues by the Austrian Integration Fund (2019–2021). According to this analysis, the amount of funding for specific integration measures for migrant women – viewed over the entire period under review – was relatively stable between 2016 and 2018 (2016: €1.5 million; 2017: €1.45 million; 2018: €1.37 million) but then more than tripled to €4.79 million in 2021. It should be pointed out that targeted funding through the Austrian Integration Fund in particular increased sharply during the period 2019–2021. The percentage of EU funding, in this case through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), fluctuated between five per cent (2017) and 16 per cent (2020) annually (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Specific project funding for the integration of women in Austria (2016–2021)**



Note: Multi-year funding projects of the Austrian Integration Fund were allocated to the individual years on a pro rata basis. For 2016, there is no separate overview of integration project funding by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs for "projects focusing on women's issues"; details of projects specific to women's issues were therefore taken from the overall overview.

Source: Austrian Integration Fund, 2019, 2021c; Federal Chancellery, 2020b, 2021a; Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.

In addition, there are measures that are (co-)financed by other Austrian ministries and/or the European Social Fund (ESF).<sup>55</sup> For example, women and migrants are integrated into the labour policy measures of the Federal Ministry of Labour<sup>56</sup> and are classified in the ESF under the investment priorities “Equality between women and men” and “Active inclusion” (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2015). In addition, there are further funding options and measures at regional and local level, as well as by interest groups and non-governmental organizations (Federal Chancellery, n.d.g).<sup>57</sup>

## 4.2 Good practices in integrating migrant women

At federal level, the Austrian Integration Fund – an institution of the Federal State – is a key actor for implementing measures for the integration of migrant women. Since 2018, the Austrian Integration Fund has focused on supporting women in the integration process. In this context, it has provided supplementary programmes for women, such as seminars, meetings, courses with accompanying childcare and mentoring (Austrian Integration Fund, n.d.a). In addition, the integration centres of the Austrian Integration Fund offer advice and information events for women with a migrant background and for people working in the field of integration.<sup>58</sup> The Austrian Integration Fund initiative TOGETHER:AUSTRIA (ZUSAMMEN:ÖSTERREICH) focuses on young women. This initiative places role models at the heart of school visits by integration ambassadors (Austrian Integration Fund, n.d.c). Furthermore, there was a focus series on the rights and freedoms of young migrant women in partnership with the magazine “das biber” (Das Biber, 2020). Furthermore, the Austrian Integration Fund manages the mandatory German courses as well as orientation and values courses as introduced by the Integration Act (Art. 4 to 6 Integration Act). The obligation to participate in these courses is directed at all persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status over the age of 15. The Expert Council for Integration and the Austrian Integration Fund consider this step to be a particularly effective measure for reaching women. The proportion of female participants has risen by 14 percentage points to 47 per cent in 2019 since the introduction of compulsory participation (Expert Council for Integration, 2019:40–41, 66, 2020a:64).<sup>59</sup> Experts from civic organizations see the obligation of individual population groups to participate in such measures as problematic due to the associated stigmatization of these groups (SOS Mitmensch, 2020:108).

In addition, there is a wide range of integration measures for migrant women in Austria at local and regional level. Three measures are presented below as examples. These measures were – in the course of research – identified as “good practice” on the basis of the following indicators: (a) mentions in the literature, (b) positive evaluations, (c) awards and (d) confirmation by experts.

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55 For an overview of integration projects funded in Austria, see Integrationsprojekte in Österreich, 2021.

56 Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021.

57 For an overview of selected integration projects in Austria and their project funding partners, see European Commission, n.d.

58 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

59 Ibid.

## Infographic 1: Kompetenzcheck für Frauen

# KOMPETENZCHECK FÜR FRAUEN

### WHAT

Systematic initiative supporting the integration into the labour market of women since 2016. The aim is to increase the opportunities of women on the Austrian labour market by recording competences, occupational knowledge and providing career guidance, planning future options and empowerment. The services include mother-tongue individual counselling, workshops and practical experience within the competence check.

### WHO

Women aged 18 and over with international protection status who are registered with the Austrian Public Employment Service in Vienna.

### HOW

Run since 2020 by "update Training" and ABZ\*AUSTRIA and funded by the Vienna Public Employment Service. Close cooperation with initial counselling centres and ongoing discussion around needs/utilization is a proven strategy for reaching potential participants. The combination of mother-tongue counselling services and an individual approach to competence analysis has proven successful in this context. In addition, the project also works to improve women's self-confidence and digital skills, for example through opportunities for digital information exchange.

### IMPACT

The monthly analyses conducted by the Austrian Public Employment Service show that during the period 2016–2020, an annual average of 48 per cent of the women were in employment or in certificated training three months (= 92 days) after completing the initial training. It means that the performance target of 30 per cent was clearly exceeded. The *Kompetenzcheck für Frauen* project was also a winner of the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) 2019.

### CHALLENGES

Challenges identified during the project mostly relate to lack of self-confidence (personal anxieties in terms of lack of skills and knowledge of German) and/or low level of qualifications (qualifications acquired abroad are often insufficient for the Austrian labour market). Moreover, very few women enter employment after the initial training (average 2016–2020: 3%); the majority are in certificated training activities (average 2016–2020: 45%). The COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges for the organization of the competence check. The data also shows a fall in the numbers of those entering employment and certificated training since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020: 0.6% in employment and 37% in certificated training).

### LINK

[www.updatetraining.at/frauenfoerderung/](http://www.updatetraining.at/frauenfoerderung/) [www.abzaustria.at/angebote-projekte/abz-kompetenzcheck](http://www.abzaustria.at/angebote-projekte/abz-kompetenzcheck)

### JUSTIFICATION

The *Kompetenzcheck für Frauen* has been highlighted in the literature by various stakeholders as a proven measure. Furthermore, experts have assessed the measure as significant in interviews. The *Kompetenzcheck für Frauen* project was a winner of the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) 2019 in the category *Promoting gender responsive public services to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality*. The Public Employment Service positively evaluated the project.

Source: ABZ\*Austria, 2021; Expert Council for Integration, 2016:49–50, 2017:47–48; Federal Chancellery, n.d.e; Federal Ministry of Labour, 2021:127, 134; Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021; Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021.; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021; Public Employment Service, 2019; update Training, 2021; Written input: Yvonne Hanus, update Training, 14 September 2021.

## Infographic 2: Mama lernt Deutsch

# MAMA LERNT DEUTSCH

### WHAT

Systematic initiative providing language training since the 2006/07 school year. Since 2012 also offering basic education within the framework of the Adult Education Initiative. A low-threshold, practical programme with coordinated childcare, which goes beyond simple language learning that aims to enable educationally disadvantaged mothers with a migrant background to expand their linguistic and social skills. In 2012, the *Mama lernt Deutsch* project was accredited as a basic education programme of the Adult Education Initiative<sup>60</sup> and now offers extended, free basic education courses in which migrant women learn not only language skills but also basic mathematical skills and training in the use of new media.

### WHO

Open to migrant women living in Vienna with basic educational needs; since 2015 also open to female asylum seekers.

### HOW

The programme is implemented by four non-governmental organizations – Station Vienna, Interface Vienna, the Vienna Adult Education Centres and the Integration House Association Project. Since July 2015, the project has been funded by the European Social Fund (50%) as well as by the City of Vienna (25%) and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (25%). Written information (folders, flyers and information sheets) for mothers at the individual kindergartens or schools as well as direct, personal communication (“word of mouth”) are used to reach migrant women. In addition, the project is embedded in other programmes of the course providers, and the accompanying childcare is seen as particularly attractive.

### IMPACT

The measure was assessed in 2006/07 by the Institute for Linguistics at the University of Vienna. In particular, the low-threshold access, the offer of childcare and the location of the course at school were seen as positive aspects (Blaschitz and Dorostkar, 2007). Evaluations commissioned by the Adult Education Initiative emphasized the role of the measure as a basic education programme with a high level of participation explicitly for immigrant women who are educationally disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market. In addition, *Mama lernt Deutsch* received the *MigAward 2013*.

### CHALLENGES

Due to the requirements of the Adult Education Initiative, some changes were necessary, such as expanding the objectives, increasing the number of hours per week and additional training for the trainers. These requirements have brought with them some challenges and higher costs, but on the other hand have also helped to improve quality. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a major challenge in terms of keeping courses running. Additional input, high flexibility and various digital options became necessary.

### LINK

[www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/deutsch-lernen/frauen](http://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/deutsch-lernen/frauen)

<sup>60</sup> The goal of the „Initiative Erwachsenenbildung“ is to enable young people and adults living in Austria to acquire basic skills and educational qualifications free of charge even after they have completed their schooling (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2021).



## JUSTIFICATION

The *Mama lernt Deutsch* project was highlighted in the Austrian integration reports and received the *MigAward 2013*. In addition, the project was reviewed positively by the University of Vienna. In interviews with relevant experts there was also a positive response to the project.

Source: Blaschitz and Dorostkar, 2007:21–22; City of Vienna, 2021; City of Vienna, 2013; Expert Council for Integration, 2016:43, 2017:64; Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2019:9; Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021; Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021; Stoppacher et al., 2014:13; Written input: Ursula Eltayeb, City of Vienna - Integration and Diversity (MA 17), 6 September 2021.

## Infographic 3: NACHBARINNEN in Wien

### NACHBARINNEN IN WIEN

#### WHAT

Systematic initiative since 2012 fostering civic integration. The project aims at self-empowerment and offers a range of services, including support for families, home visits, mother-tongue advice, accompaniment on official visits, educational breakfasts, parent roundtable discussions and learning assistance for children. The aim of the project is to integrate socially isolated migrant families – particularly women and children – into society, to enable them to better connect to the social welfare, health and education systems and thus to contribute to a more positive attitude towards life and greater freedom of action. In 2013, the first training course took place to train women as social assistants. In 2014, the Sewing Workshop was founded, which enables migrant women to gain practical work experience.

#### WHO

The target group are migrant and refugee women and their families who live in Vienna.

#### HOW

The *NACHBARINNEN in Wien* association implements the project. One third of the funding currently comes from public funds from the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, the City of Vienna Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) and from the Public Employment Service. Two thirds of the total budget comes from donations, private sponsors and income from the Sewing Workshop. In addition, funding is provided by the City of Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Service (MA 11). In order to reach migrant women as effectively as possible, women who speak the same language and have the same cultural background are trained as social assistants (“neighbours”). The “neighbours” visit the women at home to inform them of services and to motivate them to participate in existing integration programmes. Women are approached in parks, outside kindergartens or in other public spaces. But also communities, schools and other institutions refer people to the project. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors, contact with families has increasingly been via digital media, primarily WhatsApp and Facebook.

#### IMPACT

The Vienna University of Economics and Business was commissioned in 2014 to evaluate the project. The analysis of the social return on investment (SROI) showed an SROI of 4.61. This means that each euro invested creates an impact with a monetary equivalent of €4.61; the impact in this case is therefore more than four times the investment. The evaluation assessed the project as successful and extremely effective. In addition to supporting women with a migrant background on their path to empowerment, there was also evidence of impacts on the entire family and other stakeholders, including staff, learning assistants, donors, lecturers and public bodies (Sprajcer et al., 2014:54). In addition, the evaluation found that knowledge of the cultural context, living environments and everyday problems enables the “neighbours” to establish a closeness to the women and inspires trust. In addition, the association has won various national awards, including the MigAward 2017 and Sozialmarie 2020.

#### CHALLENGES

Depending on the cultural background of the families, challenges may arise due to traditional role models and ways of thinking on certain topics. As far as project administration is concerned, documentation and reports sometimes pose a challenge, particularly since these are written in German, but the counselling is done in the respective mother tongue. Finally, securing project funding is challenging.

#### LINK

[www.nachbarinnen.at](http://www.nachbarinnen.at)

## JUSTIFICATION

The project *NACHBARINNEN in Wien* was evaluated positively by the Vienna University of Economics and Business. In addition, the association has won various national awards, including the *MigAward 2017* and *Sozialmarie 2020*, and was very positively assessed by an expert from IOM Austria.

Source: Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 2020, 2021b, 2021c; Sprajcer et al., 2014:6, 10, 51; Written input: Ondine Delavelle, IOM Austria, 5 August 2021; Written input: Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 20 September 2021.



## 5. IMPACT OF COVID-19

### 5.1 Policies and measures to integrate migrant women

There is awareness on the part of the state of the specific impact of the pandemic on women.<sup>61</sup> The strategy of the Federal Chancellery is therefore to assist women with state support in the various spheres of life during the COVID-19 pandemic and to take the female perspective into account in all political decisions and measures across all ministries and at all levels.<sup>62</sup> As with policies relating to the situation of women, integration policies are also seen as a cross-cutting issue in the political response to the pandemic (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:3–5, 7). Accordingly, no specific policies – in the sense of the documents related to nationwide integration policy analysed in chapter 3.3 – are known to have been developed to lessen the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the integration of migrant women in particular.

As far as the existing measures for the integration of migrant women are concerned, there have been updates, changes, adaptations and expansions. At the beginning of the pandemic, informing migrants about COVID-19 measures played a central role in Austria. For instance, the Austrian Integration Fund translated<sup>63</sup> disease prevention and safety measures into 17 languages and published them on its website and on social media, and circulated them by passing them on to multipliers and doctors in the communities.<sup>64</sup> The Austrian Integration Fund also actively approached women with children in order to provide them with information (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021d:12).

In order to keep things going, there was a switch to digital and other communication channels in the areas of advice services and language courses (Austrian Integration Fund, 2020a) – this happened in many programmes, not just those aimed specifically at women. In addition, Austrian Integration Fund online programmes were also initiated on the issues of gender equality, labour market integration, and testing and vaccination options.<sup>65</sup> In terms of health protection measures aimed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Mama lernt Deutsch* project also used digital methods and moved some of the courses online. The related advice services were expanded to include many other topics, such as precarious financial and housing situations, psychological stress, remote schooling, health issues and domestic violence.<sup>66</sup> The advice services were also adapted to meet new needs and, at the *NACHBARINNEN in Wien* association, include things such as specific family activities (development of daily structure plans, leisure activities, games evenings).<sup>67</sup>

A special focus of the measures is the (co-)financing of numerous specifically anti-violence advice centres and facilities. A strengthening of the Women's Helpline in terms of funding and personnel and an expansion

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61 Interview with Federal Ministry of Labour, 16 September 2021; Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

62 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

63 UNHCR Austria, non-governmental organizations, ministries and municipal administrations were also active in this area. However, no information is known about offerings specifically to women. See Written input: Maria-Alexandra Bassermann, IOM Austria, 8 October 2021.

64 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

65 Ibid.

66 Written input: Ursula Eitayeb, City of Vienna - Integration and Diversity (MA 17), 6 September 2021.

67 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021.

of online advice services formed part of the offensive launched by the Federal Chancellery.<sup>68</sup> In order to be able to provide domestic violence support specifically to women granted asylum and women with a migrant background in Austria, the various advice and information services are available in several languages (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:70).<sup>69</sup>

## 5.2 Plans and future outlook

Nothing is known about the actual development of new policies or the further development of existing policies relating specifically to the integration of migrant women (see Section 3.3). Because of the significance of this issue, however, new integration measures are constantly being planned and implemented according to the Federal Chancellery. These new measures have come about in particular because of the new challenges that have arisen for women with a migrant background as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future measures should focus in particular on the labour market, education, health and protection from violence. In order to encourage a professional debate, themed events and expert discussions are also planned.<sup>70</sup>

In addition, the Austrian Integration Fund is constantly working on the expansion and further development of integration measures specifically for women and further intensifying the focus on women's issues.<sup>71</sup> For example, the Austrian Integration Fund issued a call for funding applications for projects throughout Austria in 2022 for measures to provide support to women and girls in the context of integration (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021a). Furthermore, there was a significant change in the organizational structure of the Austrian Integration Fund in 2021. A separate Team for the Advancement of Women (*Team Frauenförderung*) was established to address migrant women in an even more targeted manner. In addition, a dedicated women's advice centre is being set up at the Vienna Integration Centre to provide stronger support for female refugees and immigrants in the integration process.<sup>72</sup>

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68 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

72 Ibid.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Data and statistics

Overall, the analyses of Eurostat data, national statistics published in Austria and Austrian research reports show a heterogeneous picture of migrant women with regard to key integration indicators. Differences exist in terms of citizenship/country of origin, level of education and age (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:44–46)<sup>73</sup> as well as type of migration (wiiw, 2019:15–16). Intersectionality, i.e. the way in which gender intersects with other personal characteristics (EIGE, n.d.c), thus plays a significant role in the integration of migrant women. This influences “the progress of their integration processes as well, and their need for support through integration services” (Expert Council for Integration, 2018:75).

Below, the key integration challenges and opportunities are presented based on the data and statistics analysed in this study (expert knowledge was also incorporated). The following reservations should be noted: Firstly – unlike Eurostat data – national statistics are not always disaggregated by citizenship, but often by migrant background.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, with national data, analysis of “third countries” as a group is not possible as the publications present specific nations separately (in particular, the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (excluding those in the EU) and Turkey). Also, a women versus men comparison is not always conducted. Analysis of the primary data sets could provide further information here (see Infobox 1).

- In particular, both female third-country nationals and women with a migrant background from third countries are more likely than their male reference groups to have only completed compulsory schooling, which may be seen as a challenge to integration. At the same time, though, they are slightly more likely to have a university degree, which may in turn represent an opportunity (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:31; Eurostat, 2021d). This also applies to the group of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status (Hosner et al., 2017:35–36; Public Employment Service, 2018:21–22). The education level of women with a migrant background from the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (excluding EU Member States), Turkey, Afghanistan and Somalia is significantly lower (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:31).
- Another challenge is the comparatively low labour market participation of both female third-country nationals and women with a migrant background (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:41; Eurostat, 2021a). If one looks at the countries of origin, however, certain differences become evident. For instance, the activity rate of women with a migrant background from the successor States of the former Yugoslavia (excluding those in the EU) was higher than the average rate of women from other third countries. Labour market participation in the country of origin is also lower among women granted asylum or benefiting from subsidiary protection status than among men, with such differences being particularly marked among women who have only completed compulsory schooling and women from Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Public Employment Service, 2018:33). Women granted asylum or benefiting from subsidiary protection status were often

73 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021.

74 A “person with a migrant background” is defined as a person whose parents (mother and father) were born abroad. This group can be further divided into first-generation migrants (persons born outside the country) and second-generation migrants (children of first-generation migrants born in Austria; Statistics Austria, 2021a).

employed in professional occupations before their arrival in Austria, whereas men tended to be employed in skilled trades. Once they have found employment in Austria, women work more often than men in professional occupations and less often as unskilled workers or in skilled trades (Hosner et al., 2017:45, 59), but show a greater drop in occupational status between their last position in the country of origin and their first position in Austria (wiiw, 2020:11–13). Studies into the employment history of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status also show that women enter employment later than men, are more often unemployed after several years, and their occupational status rarely improves again (Hosner et al., 2017:56, 67; Public Employment Service, 2018:87, 93; wiiw, 2019:11–13, 15–16).

- In terms of part-time employment, it appears that among women aged 25-49 with children under 15 those with a migrant background from third countries work part-time less often than those without a migrant background. However, among all part-time employed women, women with migration background are twice as likely to state that they work part-time because they have not found a full-time job (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:42–43).
- An analysis of unemployment rates broken down by citizenship shows only a minimally higher unemployment rate for women in contrast to men from third countries. The differences are much more significant when compared to rates for Austrian women (Eurostat, 2021h). Differences according to citizenship (higher unemployment rates for women from the Syrian Arab Republic) and educational attainment (higher unemployment rates for women from third countries with high levels of educational attainment) are also noticeable here (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021b:44–46).
- On the positive side, almost 100 per cent of female third-country nationals stated that they had received all necessary medical examinations or treatment during the period under review (Eurostat, 2021g). However, there are differences according to citizenship and education, with Afghan nationals and persons with upper secondary education at a disadvantage (Public Employment Service, 2018:20). As far as health is concerned, there are only minor differences in the prevalence of chronic diseases between women with and without a migrant background and in comparison to men (Statistics Austria, 2021b:73). Among persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status, however, more women than men rated their health as fairly poor or very poor (Hosner et al., 2017:68–69). Furthermore, according to a representative of the FEM Süd women's health centre, many female clients were suffering from psychological conditions (e.g. depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety).<sup>75</sup>
- Representatives of the Federal Chancellery, the Austrian Integration Fund and non-governmental organizations also regard patriarchal structures and gender-specific distribution of roles as an overarching challenge for the integration of migrant women in Austria. The consequences are a lack of self-determination, multiple burdens due to household, family and education/work as well as an increased risk of violence.<sup>76</sup> In order not to lapse into a “culturalized perception of the problem”, in which the cause of gender

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75 Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

76 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021; Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021; Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.



discrimination is attributed to the cultural differences of migrants (Rosenberger and Gruber, 2020:93–94), there is a need for further substantiation in terms of relevant data and research.

## 6.2 Policies and measures

For several years, the integration of migrant women has been a priority of Austrian integration policy and a central work priority of the Federal Chancellery, which has been responsible for integration since 2020 (Austrian Integration Fund, 2020b). Women are seen as “multipliers” of integration. By focusing more strongly on women, policymakers hope to make a positive impact for integration as a whole (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146, 2021b). A significant goal of integration policy is gender equality, which is to be achieved by empowering and supporting women in terms of their self-determination and independence.<sup>77</sup> This is also reflected in relevant political programmes and action plans – Government Programme 2020–2024 (Federal Chancellery, 2020a), National Action Plan on Integration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f), 50 Action Points: A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, 2015), and Action Plan for Women’s Health (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, 2018). The policy documents that were examined mention the empowerment of women and gender equality (which comes under the sphere of civic integration) most often (see Section 3.3). Here there is agreement with the findings of experts from the Federal Chancellery, the Austrian Integration Fund and non-governmental organizations, who see patriarchal structures and gender-specific distribution of roles as an overarching challenge for the integration of migrant women in Austria that needs to be addressed.<sup>78</sup> Available statistics on the integration of migrant women, on the other hand, mainly point to challenges regarding labour market integration. Based on the policy documents analysed, however, this does not seem to be given particular weight – strengthening the participation of migrant women in the labour market is only mentioned once (see Section 3.3). As far as the target group is concerned, it should be noted that policies rarely focus specifically on women from third countries. The main target group is women with a migrant background (Federal Chancellery, 2020a:146), including second-generation and third-generation immigrants, irrespective of their citizenship (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f:9).

The research has shown that in Austria, there are a large number and variety of integration programmes for migrant women. Non-governmental organizations also welcome the relevant funding priorities of the Federal Chancellery and the Austrian Integration Fund. However, long-term structures to incorporate proven measures into standard provision are lacking.<sup>79</sup> In addition, women have insufficient information about existing integration programmes and public structures. There is a need – also in the future – for institutions and organizations that act as “links” and “bridge builders”, have access to the target group, provide information about existing services and individually support migrant women on their path to integration.<sup>80</sup>

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77 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

78 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021; Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

79 Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

80 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Interview with Hilde Wolf, FEM Süd, 7 September 2021.

## 6.3 The COVID 19 pandemic

The year 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and government measures to contain the virus had a far-reaching impact on society and the economy. Based on the data and statistics analysed in this study, it is evident that there have been negative effects on the integration of migrant women, particularly in the labour market. According to Eurostat data, the activity rate fell for the population as a whole, but this was more pronounced among female third-country nationals (Eurostat, 2021a). A first study on the effects of the pandemic on the labour market integration of refugees shows that refugee women (in contrast to refugee men) more often switched to inactivity and less often returned to employment (Leitner and Landesmann, 2021:13–14). Further, longer-term research is needed here. National integration data broken down by sex for 2020 have been published but a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women from third countries is not possible due to the limited presentation of citizenship. Experts assume that traditional gender roles with regard to housework and childcare have become more prevalent. In their view, this is associated on the one hand with integration challenges for migrant women and backward steps in terms of their self-determination, but also with an increase in domestic violence in combination with worsening socioeconomic conditions (Austrian Integration Fund, 2021e:14, 19, 26, 32–33; Expert Council for Integration, 2020b:10, 2021:66ff.).<sup>81</sup> Here, too, the phenomenon of intersectionality plays a role. Foreign nationals and women are among those groups of people who are more affected by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2020:281).

In Austria, no specific policies – for example, targeted integration strategies or action plans – have been developed to lessen the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the integration of migrant women. Instead, a cross-cutting approach is taken, in that the perspectives of women and integration are to be taken into account in all political decisions and measures across all ministries (Expert Council for Integration, 2021:3–5, 7).<sup>82</sup> Measures were updated, changed, adapted and expanded. For instance, migrant women were actively informed about COVID-19 and the associated prevention and safety measures.<sup>83</sup> Advice services and courses were moved to alternative formats (online/digital, telephone; Austrian Integration Fund, 2020a). Advice services were adapted to new requirements and now cover additional topics such as remote schooling, precarious financial and housing situations, psychological stress and domestic violence.<sup>84</sup> The Federal Chancellery expanded online advice services as part of an offensive against domestic violence and provided the Women's Helpline with additional funding and staff.<sup>85</sup>

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81 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

82 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

83 Written input: Austrian Integration Fund, 9 October 2021.

84 Interview with Ayten Pacariz, NACHBARINNEN Vienna, 7 September 2021; Written input: Ursula Eltayeb, City of Vienna - Integration and Diversity (MA 17), 6 September 2021.

85 Written input: Sibel Akgün and Nalan Gündüz, Federal Chancellery, 17 September 2021.

# ANNEX

## A.1 List of translations and abbreviations

English term	English abbreviation	German term	German abbreviation
Advisory Committee on Integration	–	Integrationsbeirat	–
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	AMIF	Asyl-, Migrations- und Integrationsfonds	AMIF
Austrian Green Party	–	Die Grünen	–
Austrian Health Interview Survey	ATHIS	Österreichische Gesundheitsbefragung	–
Austrian Integration Fund	–	Österreichischer Integrationsfonds	ÖIF
Austrian People's Party	–	Österreichische Volkspartei (auch Neue Volkspartei)	ÖVP
Austrian Social Science Data Archive	AUSSDA	–	–
Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalization	OeAD	Österreichs Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung	OeAD
Chamber of Labour	–	Arbeiterkammer	AK
Coronavirus disease 2019	COVID-19	Coronavirus-Krankheit-2019	COVID-19
European Free Trade Association	EFTA	Europäische Freihandelsassoziation	–
European Institute for Gender Equality	EIGE	Europäisches Institut für Gleichstellungsfragen	EIGE
European Migration Network	EMN	Europäisches Migrationsnetzwerk	EMN
European Social Fund	ESF	Europäischer Sozialfonds	ESF
European Union	EU	Europäische Union	EU

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights	FRA	Agentur der Europäischen Union für Grundrechte	FRA
Expert Council for Integration	–	Expertenrat für Integration	–
Federal Chancellery	–	Bundeskanzleramt	BKA
Federal Constitutional Act	–	Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz	B-VG
Federal Law Gazette	FLG	Bundesgesetzblatt	BGBI.
Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs	–	Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten	BMEIA
(former) Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs	–	(ehemaliges) Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres	BMEIA
Federal Ministry Law 1986	–	Bundesministeriengesetz 1986	BMG
Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research	–	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung	BMBWF
Federal Ministry of Labour	–	Bundesministerium für Arbeit	BMA
(former) Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection	–	(ehemaliges) Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz	BMASGK
Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection	–	Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz	BMSGPK
Integration Act	–	Integrationsgesetz	IntG
Interministerial Working Group Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting	IMAG GMB	Interministerielle Arbeitsgruppe Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting	IMAG GMB
International Organization for Migration	IOM	Internationale Organisation für Migration	IOM
International Standard Classification of Education	ISCED	Internationale Standardklassifikation im Bildungswesen	ISCED
labour market information system	amis	Arbeitsmarktinformationssystem	amis

National Contact Point	NCP	Nationaler Kontaktpunkt	NKP
Official Journal of the European Union	OJ	Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union	ABl.
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD	Organisation für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung	OECD
Public Employment Service	–	Arbeitsmarktservice	AMS
Settlement and Residence Act	–	Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz	NAG
social return on investment	SROI	Sozialrendite	–
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs	nachhaltige Entwicklungsziele	–
Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union	TFEU	Vertrag über die Arbeitsweise der Europäischen Union	AEUV
United Nations	UN	Vereinte Nationen	UN
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR	Flüchtlingshochkommissariat der Vereinten Nationen	UNHCR
United Nations Public Service Award	UNPSA	–	–
Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies	wiiw	Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche	wiiw

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## EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

The European Migration Network (EMN) was launched in 2003, by the European Commission and by order of the European Council, in order to satisfy the need for a regular exchange of reliable information in the field of migration and asylum at European level. Since 2008 Council Decision 2008/381/EC has constituted the legal basis of the EMN, and National Contact Points (NCPs) have been established in the EU Member States (with the exception of Denmark, which has observer status) and in Norway.

The EMN's role is to provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum to European Union (EU) institutions and Member States' authorities and institutions with a view to supporting policymaking in the EU in these areas. The EMN is also tasked with providing such information to the general public.

The NCP Austria – based on an agreement with the Federal Ministry of the Interior – is located in the Research and Migration Law Department of the country office for Austria of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM office was established in 1952 when Austria became one of the first Member States of the Organization. The main responsibility of the IOM country office is to analyse national migration issues and emerging trends and to develop and implement corresponding national projects and programmes.

The main tasks of the NCPs in implementing the work programme of the EMN include drafting the annual policy reports and studies covering specific topics, responding to Ad-Hoc Queries launched by other NCPs or the European Commission, carrying out activities to increase the EMN visibility, and networking within several fora. In addition, the NCPs in each country also set up national networks of organizations, institutions and individuals working in the field of migration and asylum.

In general, the NCPs do not conduct primary research but collect and analyse existing data and information, which are supplemented where necessary through additional information collected directly. EMN studies are prepared in accordance with common study templates in order to achieve comparable results within the EU and Norway. Since comparing results frequently proves challenging, the EMN has produced a Glossary, which ensures that similar definitions and terminology are used in all national reports.

On completion of national reports, the European Commission with the support of a service provider drafts a synthesis report, which summarizes the most significant results from the individual national reports. In addition, topic-based policy briefs, referred to as EMN Informs, are prepared as succinct summaries and comparisons of national findings on key selected topics. All national studies, synthesis reports, Informs and the Glossary are available on the website of the European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs.



