



Project Result 1: Developing a common understanding regarding the modern digital inclusion needs of TCN women in Europe

Task 1.3: Identification of the needs and key principles regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women.

TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

POLAND, GREECE, GERMANY, AUSTRIA



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Task 1.3: Identification of the needs and key principles regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The **DIGITS: Soft DIGITal Skills building for TCN women** is a 2-year **Erasmus+** project implemented by partners from **Poland, Greece, Romania, Belgium, Austria** and **Germany**. The project aims to improve the digital inclusion of third-country national (TCN) women through practical tools and tailored educational interventions that will contribute to a better quality of life for them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the enormous contributions migrants make to their communities across the world, as well as the need for cohesive integration support for the promotion of migrants' own health and well-being. In many societies, representing a significant portion of the 'frontline' workforce, migrants have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic – both physically and in terms of access to information and services. The adaptation of systems to allow for online service provision has been a key focus for service providers during this global health crisis, but for many migrants – and other vulnerable groups – accessing such online support can be difficult.

The European Commission's EU action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 highlights particular concerns around lack of internet connection, language barriers, lack of e-ID and lack of digital skills on the part of TCNs across Europe. More specifically, many migrants that are internet non-users are at particular risk of social isolation, due to their digital exclusion. It's true that migrants also face additional barriers to digital inclusion, due to a reliance on others to translate the websites of service providers and social media platforms to their native languages. While the pandemic has prompted more innovative approaches to service delivery, digital inclusion is of paramount importance.

Although the digital sector is rapidly growing, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year, the share of women in this sector is decreasing. Women and especially TCN women are under-represented at all levels in the digital sector in Europe. Women in Poland, Romania and Greece are the least likely to be taking part in the digital economy, either through employment, use of the internet, or skills. TCN women have limited opportunities to access digital skills training and to access digital employment opportunities. Therefore, migrants who lack access to online connectivity, digital devices and skills have been further isolated during the pandemic.

Consequently, the main objective of the DIGITS project is to improve the digital inclusion of TCN women in selected EU countries through practical tools and tailored educational interventions to ensure a better quality of life for them. More specifically, the DIGITS project aims to improve national and transnational understanding of the digital inclusion needs of TCN women in the EU. It is important to develop practical tools and gather useful resources in terms of digital inclusion and thus social justice for women with a migrant-refugee background.





To this end, the DIGITS consortium will prioritize increasing participation rates among people with fewer opportunities, specifically migrant and non-digitally literate women, in line with the principles of the 2020–25 Gender Equality Strategy as a vehicle for the promoted gender perspective in the proposed action. Our approach will be integrated to improve the capacity of professionals and stakeholders who have direct access to TCN women on how to develop their digital skills and ultimately empower them. Also, a specific objective is to raise awareness among professionals, relevant stakeholders and the public on the digital inclusion needs of TCN women.

The transnational character of the DIGITS project adds significant value, since it focuses on developing a common solution for a complicated problem, affecting all countries represented in the consortium.

Leader partner – Coordinator:

- POLISH MIGRATION FORUM (Poland): <https://forummigracyjne.org>

Partner Organisations:

- SYMPLEXIS (Greece): <https://symplexis.eu>
- HIP - HUB FOR INNOVATION POLICY S.R.L (Romania): <https://hubinno.eu>
- DIESIS COOP (Belgium): <https://www.diesis.coop>
- AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF INCLUSIVE SOCIETY (Austria): <https://www.inclusivesociety.at>
- BK Consult GbR (Germany): <https://bk-con.eu>
- GREEK FORUM OF MIGRANTS (Greece): <https://www.migrant.gr>

The DIGITS four implementing countries involved in PRI titled “Developing a common understanding regarding the modern digital inclusion needs of TCN women in Europe” are Poland, Greece, Austria and Germany. Partners from these countries have produced a brief national report presenting the main findings and conclusions of the tasks assigned under PRI. In parallel, the output leader (Symplexis) had developed the present transnational report, consolidating the findings of all national reports. The key aim of these reports is to identify the policy needs and define key principles regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women.

More in detail, the present **transnational report** presents:

- Summary of the **desk research**, following the structure of National Reports, also including the key figures and statistics regarding TCN women, the migration policy, the COVID-19 digital transformation and impact in the partner countries. Also, the desk research includes the obstacles and challenges for TCN women, the employment and other relevant policies affecting TCN women, the soft skills and the digital labour market training needs for TCN women in the partner country.
- Summary of the key findings reached transnationally through an **online survey**. The online questionnaires targeted TCN women legally staying in the partner countries with the interest in acquiring digital skills, who are also in search of a job in their recipient countries. In Particular, **42 TCN women living in Poland, 16 TCN women**



living in Greece, 17 TCN women living in Austria and 15 TCN women living in Germany participated in the online survey (90 participants in total).

- Summary of the key findings reached through **organized focus groups/interviews with professionals, educators, and representatives of public and private stakeholders** working with TCN women per partner country (Poland, Greece, Austria, Germany). In detail, **7 professionals from Poland, 7 from Greece, 7 from Austria and 6 from Germany** participated in the focus groups and individual interviews (27 participants in total).
- Summary of the key findings reached through **organized focus group(s)/interviews with TCN women transnationally** in order to identify the existing situation regarding the soft digital skills and competences of TCN women in the modern society. So, **11 TCN women who migrated to Poland, 10 to Greece, 8 to Austria and 8 to Germany** participated in the focus groups and individual interviews (37 participants in total).
- Summary of the key findings reached transnationally through **targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders** served to collect information and insights from a wide range of stakeholders, including organizations and institutions providing services to TCN women as well as training institutions and VET providers. Particularly, **6 stakeholders from Poland, 6 from Greece, 5 from Austria and 5 from Germany** participated in the focus groups and individual interviews (22 participants in total).
- **EU level observations, conclusions and recommendations** regarding national contexts and statistics that should be linked with the digital capacity building programme, which will supplement the existing skills and competences, according to actual digital needs of the TCN women.





2. OUR PARTNERS

The DIGITS Consortium is composed by 7 local and international organizations working with migrant related issues since several years.





3. KEY TERMINOLOGY

Third Country Nationals (TCNs): Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU (every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union, and citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship) and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement (the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU Member States), as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).

Soft skills: Personality traits and interpersonal skills - Related to a person's character, mindset, emotions and attitude and not depended on acquired knowledge -Have more to do with "who people are" and "how they connect/interact with other people" - Transferable across careers and industries - Difficult to be highlighted in a CV, as they are more wide-ranging and most of the times interrelated, while they can't be easily quantified and proven through certification - Are about life and well-being in general!

Digital skills: the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, and create content using digital devices, such as computers and smartphones.

Digital Soft Skills: successful combination of soft and digital skills - the ability to carry out tasks, such as:

- Using laptop, tablet, or smartphone
- Managing files and folders on a computer
- Sending/receiving/printing Emails
- Researching information online
- Searching for training opportunities online & Learning/studying online
- Making Internet calls/video calls
- Being safe and responsible online
- Safely using cloud-based collaboration tools like Google Drive, Drop Box, and Microsoft Teams
- Creating Purchasing goods and services online
- Creating and managing spreadsheets and online documents
- Time management/organizational skills - Using online calendars and efficiently managing your schedule
- Creating a CV using online templates
- Creating a professional profile on social media
- Online networking
- Collaboration via online platforms and relevant tools
- Effective online communication
- Being creative online
- Fostering online entrepreneurship
- Searching for jobs online
- Stress management with the help of online tools





Inclusion – Integration: Social inclusion is the process of individual’s self-realization within a society, acceptance, and recognition of one’s potential by social institutions, integration (through study, employment, volunteer work or other forms of participation) in the web of social relations in a community. It has a particular meaning to those people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and live in precarious conditions. For them, social inclusion involves breaking various barriers to acquire their social rights as full members of society.





4. DESK RESEARCH

Greece

At a time when populations are on the move, pushed by economic poverty and seeking a better future with dignity for themselves and their families, the female migrant is the protagonist and engages herself in a struggle to claim both for herself and her family a better life. Women migrate for diverse reasons from leaving behind poverty, conflict, and climate-related disasters to escaping deeply entrenched gender inequalities, including sexual and gender-based violence and lack of access to livelihoods and resources. Many women migrate in pursuit of work or educational opportunities and the possibility of a better life for themselves and their families.

According to the International Migration Outlook 2022 for Greece, in 2021 the migrant population reached 1.4 million, of which 54% is women migrants in Greece. The main countries of birth are Albania (48%), Georgia (7%), Russia (5%). In 2021 the foreign-born population represented 13.1% of the population. Following the Generation 2.0, in 2022, population for Greece was approximately 10.6 million persons. Early 2022, around 781.000 people of migrant origin resided legally in Greece. Of these, around 686.500 were third-country nationals with residence permits, while beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and subsidiary protection status) were about 59.300 and asylum seekers were approximately 35.180. Thirty years after receiving the first large-scale inflow of immigrants and seven years after the European “refugee crisis”, Greece is still grappling with its transformation from a sending and transit country to a destination for migrants and refugees. However, what is apparent so far is that that the largest percentage of migrants and refugees are still seeing Greece as a transit country and not as a destination.

In parallel, the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the enormous contributions migrants make to their communities across the world, as well as the need for cohesive integration support for the promotion of migrants’ own health and well-being. In many societies, representing a significant portion of the “frontline” workforce, migrants have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, both physically and in terms of access to information and services. Under the European HEAL project (<https://healproject.eu>) which aims to facilitate the integration of TCN women victims of trafficking, surveys show that TCN women living in Greece face difficulties in combining work and raising their children.

Furthermore, the lack of language skills constitutes a major difficulty for TCN women residing in Greece, as it can also lead to further challenges related to socialization, accessing services and employment. Furthermore, according to the survey of Symplexis for the European project ICT4TCN (<https://ict4tcn.eu>), it’s obvious that for TCN women the knowledge of the national language is fundamental to socio-economic participation and integration, as also recognition of qualifications. Regarding the Key obstacles for TCN women in accessing online support services include lack of internet connection, lack of



technology, lack of e-IDs, and lack of time and space at home. Discriminatory practices are another obstacle for the migrant population and specifically for migrant women.

In January 2019, the government presented for public consultation a proposal for a new strategy, that contains provisions regarding education, labour market integration, racism and xenophobia, among others. At the beginning of 2022 a new National Strategy for the Integration was uploaded for public consultation by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum receiving various comments and criticism (Generation 2.0, 2022).

Other significant policies and measures for social inclusion through labour market integration implemented in Greece, addressed to TCN women are the following:

- The [ENGAGE "Development of inclusivE iNteGratiOn pAthS 4 miGrant women"](#) project addresses integration-related needs of third-country national (TCN) women, who typically face more barriers and challenges in their efforts to enter the labour market than TCN men. The project's aim is to create social, cultural and employment pathways for the integration of TCN women in the host communities between 2021-2023.
- The [ENFEM "Female Third Country National Integration in Local Communities through Employability and Entrepreneurship Local Oriented Strategies"](#) project is implemented by ADDMA within the framework of the AMIF (Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund) European program, with the aim of integrating female TCN's. From the end of 2021, the project aims at exchanging practices at a European level, through a cross-sectoral network, and at the development of local strategies to facilitate the socio-economic integration of TCN women through employability and entrepreneurship.
- The European project [ETHIKAS "Empowering Migrant Women Using Design THInKing ApproacheS for Sustainable Entrepreneurship"](#) aims to support the social and sustainable entrepreneurship of migrant women through people-centered approaches, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and mindset needed to build a system that works for everyone: society, the economy, and the environment. The main objective is to design and test new adult learning opportunities between 2022 and 2024, especially for migrant women adults with low levels of education and skills.

Data from Eurostat shows that women in Greece accounted for more than one quarter of the employed ICT specialists. A wide range of initiatives and policy measures have been launched to address the gender gap within the ICT sector, raise the digital skills of girls, women and ensure that women can access digital jobs and upskilling opportunities. However, the structural limitations of the Greek context as well as the lack of an integrated plan for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers result in the fact that the training needs of these communities are not met, whether this concerns women as a distinct group or the migrant population in total. Sporadic efforts are taking place in refugee accommodation sites or as part of the NGO community offering outlets to the need of training, but without an overarching strategy and without guaranteeing the sustainability



of funding sources, these initiatives are often short-lived and non-cumulative towards the end goal, which is the successful, long-term integration.

Poland

TCN women face several challenges when attempting to integrate into Polish society. Many of them face language barriers, as they may not speak Polish or have limited language skills. This can make it difficult for them to communicate with others. Additionally, discrimination based on race, religion, and nationality can be a major issue. Also, they may be subject to verbal and physical abuse or be denied access to certain services due to their background. TCN women in Poland often lack legal protection. This can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment and make it difficult for them to seek legal recourse if they are wronged. Despite these challenges, many TCN women have been able to integrate successfully into Polish society. Many have found employment, contributing to the economy, and making a positive impact. They have also formed support networks with other immigrants, helping each other to adjust to life in Poland.

In Poland, the population of TCN women is diversified and expanding. Although there is an increasing number of women from Vietnam, India, and other nations, most of these women are from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, they often face many problems regarding their integration and access to the digital world. TCN women often lack the soft digital skills needed to use technology and access digital employment opportunities effectively. In addition, many TCN women have limited access to the internet and digital resources due to language barriers, cultural norms, and lack of resources. Furthermore, the lack of access to digital training courses, as well as the lack of financial resources, can make it difficult for these women to access digital employment opportunities. As a result, TCN women are often left behind in the digital revolution, unable to benefit from the opportunities that technology can offer.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migrant women in Poland. They have faced a range of difficulties, including job losses, increased stress and anxiety, lack of access to healthcare, increased risk of domestic violence, and restricted access to services. Also, migrant women have had limited access to digital tools and services that could help them cope during the pandemic. According to statistics on unemployment, there are still many obstacles for female third-country nationals, which may hinder their complete integration. During this time, the overall unemployment rate decreased, going from an average of 9% in 2016 to approximately 7% in 2020. (Integration of migrant women, 2022). Overall, the pandemic has highlighted the need for increased digital access and support for vulnerable groups, such as TCN women in Poland.

As of January 1st, 2023, UNHCR states in their report (Ukraine Emergency - UNHCR Poland Factsheet, 2023) that over 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine have registered in Poland for Temporary Protection. The UNHCR organization also conducted 3,596 interviews among Ukrainian refugees, a significant proportion of whom were women (88%). "Almost half of them (46%) held university degrees, a third (33%) had obtained technical or vocational





education and one-fifth (19%) - had secondary education. Prior to displacement, a vast majority (69%) were employed and 16% - retired." (Refugees From Ukraine In Poland Profiling Update November 2022) In response to the challenges faced by migrant women during the pandemic and war, a number of initiatives have been launched to support them. These include providing access to digital tools and services such as virtual consultations, online language courses, and digital literacy training (The Impact of Covid-19 on Ukrainian Women Migrants in Poland, 2021).

Digital transformation has the potential to empower vulnerable groups by providing greater access to services, information, and resources. However, it is important to ensure that digital transformation is implemented in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all. Many TCN women in Poland need to be made aware of the potential opportunities available through digital technologies.

There are a few activities that were or will be carried out in the span of 2020-2023:

- IT Skills 4U program - Ukrainians interested in pursuing an IT career or switching to IT are welcome to participate in the IT Skills 4U programme. By signing up, you get access to the free training, suited to your IT background, that will help you get AWS certifications and find employment in the cloud sector (<https://cloudteam.pl/en/it-skills-4u>).
- New Technologies for Women - Ukraine - The Perspektywy Women in Tech Educational Foundation and Intel Corporation want to encourage progress by providing an annual scholarship and a series of workshops led by top Intel experts. (<https://www.stypendiadladziewczyn.pl/ukraine>).
- INCUBATING FREEDOM for Ukraine - Adapting Women to Digital Economy - The plan was to train 30,000 women, mostly refugees from Ukraine temporarily residing in Poland. This will help solve the socio-economic problems of refugees, will ultimately strengthen the economy of Ukraine, and will also have important implications for the Polish IT market. (https://perspektywy.pl/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7802:ukrainki-i-polki-dla-cyfrowej-przyszlosci-startuje-perspektywy-academy&catid=24&Itemid=119).
- Digital SkillUp courses (available in many languages) - Digital SkillUp courses are designed to help you gain new skills in emerging technologies and digital transformation. The participant can choose courses in different areas of the field. They are carried out in many languages such as Croatian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Romanian, and Spanish. (<https://www.digitalskillup.eu/pl/digital-skillup-courses>).

In conclusion, it is important to raise awareness of the challenges facing migrant women in Poland and to combat xenophobia and discrimination. There is a clear need for the training and courses to be conducted in more languages. With the right training, individuals can develop the necessary skills and competencies to succeed in the digital labor market.





Germany

According to the Federal Statistical Office, the 22,6mn is the number of the population of Germany with migrant background and 13.4mn the foreign population. While until 2021 the two most common birth-countries of TCNs in Germany were Turkey and Syria, the experience of refugees during and after earlier refugee movements is receiving more attention because of the war in Ukraine. More specifically, according to the latest statistics of 2022 (that are not complete yet), another 1,2million of Ukrainians migrated to Germany in 2022, making Ukraine the second most common country of origin for TCNs in Germany. Thus, according to the most recent data from 31 of January 2023, the top 5 countries of origin of TCNs in Germany are Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and Russia. According to the European Migration Network Study on Integration of Migrant Women of European Migration Network of September 2022, the percentage of women among 3rd country migrants in Germany was 47.8% on 2020. We can imagine that these percentages are expected to be increased once the Ukrainians refugees will be counted.

One of the key goals of Germany's migration policy is to promote integration and help refugees and migrants to settle and build a new life in the country. The integration of women and girls is prioritized in the National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I), which considers the different needs of this target group and includes measures related to language acquisition, employment, education, and social integration. The plan also aimed to enhance the participation of migrants in political and social life and to combat discrimination and racism. The NAP-I called for the development of targeted support programs for women and girls affected by violence, as well as measures to promote gender equality and prevent violence in migrant communities. Also, it recognized that gender is an important factor in the integration process and highlighted the need to protect the rights and interests of women and girls from migrant backgrounds. The plan also emphasized the need to combat violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. It targets women who have been in Germany for a longer period of time but points out that support is envisaged to begin upon their arrival in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Germany and has accelerated the country's digital transformation. In response to the restrictions and lockdowns imposed to slow the spread of the virus, many businesses and organizations have had to quickly adapt to remote work and digital solutions with the remote work, online learning, online shopping, and telemedicine. Apart from the above evolutions that concern the digital transformation, of course the pandemic has also affected the TCN women in Germany, since the German government developed new integration measures to respond to the specific challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives and projects were informed by research carried out by the umbrella organisation of migrant women's organisations 'DaMigra', as part of the ongoing Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ) funded project '#selbstbestimmt'. The research aimed at identifying the short term and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on this group, and what measures should be taken. Measures to prevent violence include, for example, the nationwide project 'MiMi- Violence





Prevention for Refugee Women, Children and Migrant Women' (MiMi-Gewaltprävention) that included a multilingual information campaign to support families in dealing with domestic violence.

TCN women in Germany face several challenges and obstacles that can limit their inclusion and full participation in German society such as the language barrier, the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, the early school leaving, asylum procedures, residence titles and work permits that mostly impede migrant women who migrated for humanitarian reasons from entering the labour market. Discriminatory attitudes, lack of access to childcare, limited political representation, domestic violence and cultural norms make it more difficult for migrant women to use technology to access information and services that are critical for their well-being and inclusion in society. The abovementioned sociocultural norms can create significant barriers to the digital inclusion of migrant women in Germany, making it more difficult for them to access digital services and participate fully in the digital world.

TCN women in Germany can benefit from training in both soft skills and digital skills to increase their competitiveness in the labor market. Some specific training needs for TCN women in Germany may include German language skills and digital literacy. From 2022, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration will implement projects primarily targeting the empowerment of migrant women and support them in arriving in Germany, including digital inclusion. For example, the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration continues to fund a further training programme 'MI-KADOpus' within the framework of the FrauenComputerZentrum (Women's Computer Centre), which will digitally qualify refugee women from 2022 and train refugee women so that they can conduct IT trainings. In addition, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration will implement projects for migrant women to develop job-specific skills and entrepreneurship skills. In Germany, the "Coalition Agreement of the Federal Government in 2021" includes that migrant women addressed as a larger group of migrants in boosting entrepreneurship by reducing barriers to access financing and funding. In parallel, the Bertelsmann Foundation that works upon the field of the public debate on migration highlighted the "hidden resources" of migrant women as entrepreneurs and the need to identify such potential and to better utilize it by having a proper training.

Austria

TCN make up for 35% of the overall immigrant population, with refugee migration from Syria accounting for a quarter of this figure (Bundeskanzleramt, 2022). While the rate of migrant women among these decreased, their share of the overall female population increased by 0.7% from 2016, amounting to 7.5%. Following the figures provided by Eurostat, the paramount reasons for migration given are various such as the refugee status and family reasons (Heilemann, 2021). To paint a better picture of the social integration of TCN women in the Austrian labour market, we will take into account the parameters of language, education, work and employment, as deployed by the Austrian government.





In 2020, the most common level of education completed among female third-country nationals in Austria aged 18 to 64 was compulsory schooling or lower, at 43%. Labour market participation in Austria for women from third countries aged 20 to 64 is significantly below that of men (2020: 56% vs 80%) but followed a positive trend until the COVID-19 pandemic. The activity rate among TCN women soared from 55 per cent in 2016 (men: 77%) to 60 per cent in 2019 (men: 81%). Since 2020, which marks the onset of the pandemic, the rate has plunged, particularly among female TCNs. There are also significant differences between the two genders in the amount of time required to find employment; men granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status need two years and eight months, whereas women take four years and three months.

The principle that underpins integration policies ranging from 2020–2024 in Austria is "support and challenge". Integration is understood as mutual process that puts on immigrants the personal responsibility of partaking in the process, while offering systemic frameworks established by the government. Additionally, immigrants are supposed to use the instruments provided by the policy measures and to perform beyond their requirements. Specifically, integration policies regard women as a crucial multiplier of the process, as they play a significant role in shaping education and values for the whole family. Thus, Austrian policies tackle integration as a gender-specific and gender-mainstreaming, encompassing the existing differences between the needs of the two genders. The paramount aspects promoted are civic integration, language training, health, and protection from violence, to foster the equality and empowerment of women, for example adding childcare options to the courses offered. Integration policies, therefore, focus more on women as part of a familiar unit, rather than their vocational training and education, which are mentioned in few of the policies analyzed.

Furthermore, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the levels of activity of TCN women, with the corresponding activity rates dropping by 4 percentage points for females and only 1% for males in 2020. Furthermore, the pandemic has worsened the already existing integration challenges for TCN women by reinforcing traditional gender roles. Indeed, the Federal Chancellery, Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) and non-governmental organizations already regarded patriarchal structures and the gender-specific distribution of roles as a paramount obstacle in the integration of women in the labour and digital market. However, the government has not issued any COVID-19 policies that specifically targeted TCN women. Instead, the AIF, has prompted up some of the courses offered digitally, tackling issues that ranged from gender equality to labour market integration. The process of digital transformation, therefore, was not developed on a parallel path with integration and labour policies.

From a social perspective, traditional gender roles and patriarchal constitute a major challenge for the integration of TCN women in the Austrian labour market. The stereotypes related to TCN women and their language skills as well as labour skills result harmful, preventing them from accessing well-paid jobs and instead funneling their workforce in stereotypical, "unskilled" jobs with lower wages that bear bad social stigmas. These aspects





leave them outside of the digital realm. Furthermore, strengthening women's confidence and motivation is another crucial aspect according to researchers. Moreover, TCN women reported having mobile phones but no access to computers, which further hinders access to the digital labour market.

The employment of third-country nationals in Austria is regulated by the Employment of Foreign Nationals Act. They require a combined work and residence permit that allows employment with a specific employer, or free access to the labor market, or a labor market authority authorization in addition to their residence permit or visa. Additionally, before an employment permit can be issued, the AMS (the national labour market service) checks in each individual case whether nationals, EEA citizens or advanced integrated foreigners are registered who are willing and qualified to take up the job in question (labor market test). These policies contribute to making the hiring process particularly lengthy, difficult, and expensive. Furthermore, they significantly hinder the integration process in the labour market for TCN.

As it emerges from the policies analyzed, TCN women need gender-specific support that accompany them throughout their entrance process in the labour market. To this aim, mentoring programmes seem to be a good practice, offering a positive kind of assistance. Said programmes need to be family-friendly and provide initial and ongoing training opportunities, for instance by establishing some form of child-care and training that continuously adapt to an ever-changing, fast-paced market. Support in obtaining the qualifications is also needed, with mother-tongue counseling services and skills analysis tailored individually. The needs analysis needs to intersect the specific needs and situations of TCN women with the specific features of the Austrian digital labour market. The latter requires technology-oriented skills such as computer literacy, website development, database management, paired with emotional intelligence and adaptability. Furthermore, given the fast pace of digital work environments, self-direction and increased autonomy need to be underscored as well. On top of that, the labour market mirrors the five digital skills areas identified by the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) of the European Commission, such as information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem-solving.





5. FIELD RESEARCH

5.1 Online Survey

Greece

In Greece, Symplexis and Greek Forum of Migrants conducted the first part of field research through the online survey. In total, 16 TCN women answered the online questionnaire. Among 16 TCN women, 5 represented the 18-24 group, 2 responded from the group of 25-34, 4 from the 35-44 group and 1 from the 55-64 group. Regarding the nationality of respondents, 3 women come from Ukraine, 4 from Albania, 4 from Georgia, 1 from Sudan, 1 from Iran, 1 from Kazakhstan, 1 from Afghanistan and 1 from Australia. More specifically, 7 TCN women received higher education at the bachelor level and 5 of them finished secondary education. Out of 16 respondents, 14 are currently employed.

The jobs listed in the survey consist of 2 women work in cleaning services, 1 as a hotel employee, 1 in the field of skin care, 1 is teacher, 1 social anthropologist, 1 insurance agent, 1 project officer and 2 are interpreters. Most of the respondents do not own a personal computer, laptop, or tablet. Yet most of them have their own smartphone. In terms of access to an internet connection 14 respondents have it at home, and 13 respondents have a mobile internet connection. All the participants replied that they use daily or almost daily the internet. Similarly, all women answered that they are familiar with Social Media Platforms. Among the answers about social media, the most frequent were Facebook and Instagram. On the topic of attending online training programmes/courses, 10 TCN women replied that they don't have experience of this. In the question related to using digital government services, 10 women claimed they have been using some of those services. According to the importance of soft digital skills, 12 participants answered the creation a CV using an online template and to be safe and responsible online. Furthermore, regarding the next question 15 women answered that using a smartphone or tablet is absolutely useful and 14 agreed that it is absolutely useful sending/receiving/printing E-mails and making Internet calls/video calls. In total, 7 TCN women were interested in receiving more information and/or participating in the educational training programme for migrant women to develop their soft digital skills and knowledge.

Poland

Poland's research team collected data from 42 women. Among 42 participants, one person represented the 18-24 group, 12 women responded from the group of 25-34, 15 from the 35-44 group, one from the 55-64 group, and one from the 65 plus group. Regarding the nationality of respondents, the Polish Migrant Forum gathered 19 answers from Ukrainian women, 19 from Russian women, and one from Vietnamese, Afghan, Tajik and Chechen women. Most of the respondents (76,2%) received higher education, 12 at the bachelor level, 19 at the master and one at the doctoral degree. Out of 42 respondents, 24 are currently





employed. The jobs listed in the survey consist of 10 women employed within social services and education, office jobs in case of 10 women, two working in cleaning service and two in gastronomy. Most of the respondents do not own a personal computer or tablet, yet most of them have a laptop and almost all of them have their own smartphone. In terms of access to an internet connection 34 respondents have it at home, and 35 respondents have a mobile internet connection. What is interesting is that all the respondents use the internet daily or almost daily, and only one wasn't familiar with any social media platforms. Among the answers about social media, the most frequent ones were Facebook and Instagram. On the topic of attending online training programmes/courses, 31 respondents acknowledged they had such an experience while the remaining 11 did not. Most popular were language courses, mostly learning Polish.

The next part of the survey is related to using digital government services. Out of all respondents 30 claimed they have been using some of those services. The next survey question focused on the perceived importance of the soft digital skills. Two soft skills indicated most often were "Use of e-government platforms" and "Effective online communication". Questions about the usefulness of listed digital skills in your life and career had comparable answers. "Using a laptop", "Learning/studying online", "Finding and managing information on the internet" and "Using a smartphone or tablet" were found useful by 39 women. The last substantive question investigates the willingness to develop digital skills in listed areas of everyday life. Areas with the highest score were "Education" and "Vocational training", second most popular were "Employment support" and "Online financial transactions / buying online". In total, 36 women were interested in receiving more information and/or participating in the training programme.

Germany

The first part of field research in Germany has been conducted through the completion of structured questionnaires. In total, 15 TCN women answered in the online survey and that most of the respondents are between 35 and 54 years old. Also, the great majority of our respondents were from Ukraine (73%) while there were 2 Turkish and 2 Russian participants. The statistics show that most of the respondents are well-educated (master's degree or equivalent) while we have cases of VET and Secondary Education alumni and some of them, they are not employed yet. However, a big percentage has already jobs such as architect, art teacher, builder, hairdresser and on the field of motherhood protection. Everyone owns a smartphone, while also laptop is commonly used. Every one of the respondents have an internet connection both at home and in their mobiles. The great majority of our sample is using internet every day, while a 7% uses it a few times a week.

Almost all our participants are familiar with social media, while the platforms they use are Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp, YouTube and TikTok. In addition, most of the participants have attended an online training and mainly these trainings are the German Language. In some other cases they attended online trainings about the Entrepreneurship and Yoga. Most of our participants have already used a digital service. However, this was back in their countries, while they reported that in Germany, they did not





have the chance yet to use this kind of services. As it concerns the importance of several soft digital skills according to the sample's opinion, the most important skills are the creating a CV using online templates, the searching for jobs online and the creating a professional profile on social media. While the less important are the collaboration via online platforms and relevant tools, to be creative online and the time management/organizational online skills. As it concerns the importance of using digital tools, it has been evaluated that the great majority of our respondents were willing to learn more about our program and participate in it. Thus, 12 people gave us their email addresses to contact them for further project activities.

Austria

In the online survey conducted in Austria, the total number of responses is 17. The respondents ranging in age between 18-24 years are 6, the respondents between 25-34 years are 6 and the respondents between 35-44 years are 5. Their ethnicity is African, Albanian, Ukrainian, and Russian, but mostly Turkish and most of them (47.1%) have obtained a bachelor's degree and are currently working. The 15 participants have both a laptop and a smartphone, and more than half of them have an Internet connection, both at home and on the phone. Approximately 90% of respondents use the internet and social media daily. 64.7% of respondents have never taken online training (and for the few who have, the courses were about learning a language). The survey also showed that almost half of them have used online government digital services, a significant finding. Considering the digital skills proposed in the survey, respondents universally recognized their importance, but less importance was attached to buying goods online or producing graphic designs. All the suggested areas that improve digital skills were highly valued, but 76.5% of them were not interested in participating in the training.

All in all, the survey was ambitious at a time when reaching potential women to empower them with soft digital skills to assess their understanding/access to digital tools through an online survey is difficult. Since the participants are all highly educated/qualified and have a successful career and a good job it explains the lack of interest in the training. Probably not the only reason as the respondents on the other hand are mostly in an age range between 18-34 years old, which confirms that young women are quite digitally literate. Another factor that is important to point out is that although 90% of them use the Internet daily, 5 of them do not have Internet access at home and 6 of them do not have Internet on their phone. So, this leads us to think about what barriers we may encounter in reaching women who do not have a constant and stable Internet connection.





5.2 Interviews and focus groups with educators/ professionals

Greece

The research team of Symplexis conducted 2 online focus group and 2 online individual interviews via Webex with 7 educators and professionals. The first focus group was organized with two teachers who volunteered for a year at a school for migrants. According to the experience of the two volunteers, their migrant students had smartphones and easily continued their lessons online during the pandemic. With the help of the volunteer staff, they got to know Webex and E-mail, so they did not miss their classes. However, lack of good internet access was a frequent obstacle in their education. Regarding the education of TCN women, they emphasize that priority is given to individualized approaches and categorization of educational material according to their needs. Cultural mediators and interpreters also have an essential role in keeping this educational programme fully informed.

The second focus group took place on the same day and involved three workers who worked in reception areas in Samos through a family programme. Based to their experience the women themselves had knowledge of social media, maps, and Google translator. Also, in the majority they had WhatsApp. Any training programme for digital skills should include the process of how to get on the internet, search for information, check the quality of the connection, use video conferencing applications, search job sites, and create a professional profile. An individual interview was held with an English teacher who has been working with refugees for the last 4 years in camps in various parts of Greece. As she points out, it is important to look at the cultural background of migrant women. Iraqi women have not learned to work, they have been trained in the exclusive role of mother, wife, and housewife. It is difficult for them to understand their rights unlike Ukrainian women who have a Westernized lifestyle, they know the necessity of a resume and new technologies. The second interview took place with an adult educator who works for an organisation that supports vulnerable groups and migrant women. As she says, the training must be adapted to the everyday life of the migrants. In addition, the training material should include the state digital tools to help them with benefits, accommodation, and the permits they need to issue. Women will have the opportunity to learn how to search for jobs, answer emails and build their resumes.

Poland

Interviews and focus groups with 7 educators/professionals had taken place in the form of two focus groups and one individual interview. The participants were working in the marketing, IT sector, in the field of migration and support women. One participant is a career counselor and coordinator of psychologists in a Polish NGO for migrants. Interviews and





focus groups with 7 educators allowed to come to the conclusion that the learning background of third-country national women in Poland widely varies depending on their country of origin, educational and work experiences and other factors. When it comes to the level of digital skills and knowledge of TCN women in Poland it is considered that young adults usually already have those skills or can develop them using materials from the internet. This, of course, is not true for every TCN woman in Poland and we should keep in mind that younger generations need proper education in topics such as safety on the internet, but on most occasions, they are well versed.

However, starting as young as in the age group 35/40+ various troubles transpire. Regarding the experience of the educators, a lot of migrant women do not have access to personal computers or laptops, so they try to do everything on their phones, often not having a chance of learning computer skills. To enter the digital labor market, they cannot usually create and use email, deal with administrative responsibilities (trouble with an online bank account, electronic signature, paying taxes), synchronizing the use of a smartphone with a laptop and using software in a different language. For those reasons, the staff of an organization working with TCN women must be qualified for providing training to them. Solely online disseminating information about the course often does not reach those in need. That is why it is a good practice to share such information through other NGOs having access to migrants, giving out leaflets and publishing them on Facebook groups. Another challenge faced by migrant women influencing the work of educators is organizing time and caring for their children during the time of training. All interviews and focus groups concluded that the scope of our project would be most beneficial if focused on creating a house budget, finding a job, and being able to work in an office.

Germany

Under this research component, BK has implemented a face-to-face focus group with 6 educators and professionals working with migrants. The participants were trainers in adult education, also teaching TCN students, university employees assisting TCNs in the framework of several projects, social workers providing support to TCNs under the dual educational system of Germany and volunteers in non-typical/experiential learning and in supporting TCNs. All of them are working with TCN women from Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, India of different ages. Age is an important factor as it concerns the level of digital skills, since young people tend to be fairly computer savvy and can use social media. Middle-aged and especially older people cannot master a smartphone and most of them do not use a computer and the internet at all.

Moreover, Office applications such as Word or PowerPoint can only be used by a few women, mostly of the working ones. The lack of digital skills is visible mainly when it comes to online applications for job. Most women cannot write online applications because they don't know how to look for a job online, how to write an online application and there is hardly any money for technology. In most cases they only have a smartphone but do not know how to work with it. Participants' view of the main challenges faced by TCN women wishing





to develop their soft digital skills are the lack of qualitative and free courses, the lack of technology-driven premises in the adult education sector. The necessary software is too expensive and there are too few offers from the job center. Also, there is no equality of opportunities for TCN women, due to family responsibilities. Language barrier is a real difficulty when they are trying to access the German labour market or the formal education. Participants are very positive in learning more upon how to promote digital skills training for women. However, the lack of infrastructure, of regular trainings in intercultural competences and of English skills consist daily challenges. Most of the respondents would like to support TCN women in learning digital skills and their colleagues to take away their fear of digitization. Lastly, the project has been characterized as a challenge, because TCN women have not received any help in this area so far but at the same time it is important to provide TCN women with better qualification.

Austria

The online focus group involved 7 professionals with different backgrounds working in national and international NGOs. They have worked as researchers and trainers in different projects and initiatives. Their professional experiences range from capacity building, migration, education, and their experiences with women cover different backgrounds such as young mothers, migrants, and women from rural areas. The general overview is that TCN women face different barriers according to their age, experiences, purposes and where they are from. Their migration history can also affect the way they interact with the hosting community and then, their integration and life goals. TCN women at a young age have shown already a quite good understanding of digital tools, with discrete agility in using the main functions defined as “soft digital skills”.

On the other hand, at an older age, the range of skills related to digital decreases, as much as the willingness to engage in training or new learning paths. This is also related to a scarce hope to have the chance to find a better opportunity in a foreign country. There is first the language barrier to face, the trauma of leaving the country of origin, the cultural differences and the assessment of competencies to address. Thus, the hope that new skills will improve their situation is low. It has been pointed out that many of them are highly qualified but since the recognition of the titles is arduous, this affects their active involvement in society and their earning potential.

Moreover, the professionals showed enthusiasm for our project, but they expressed some concerns about the capacity of reaching out to the relevant target group and they pinpointed that many programmes and initiatives are not able to actively involve women in rural areas or outside Wien. Also, the material created must be suitable to the target group (referring to language, pertinence and relevance, accessibility, the vocabulary used) adapting the material to the resources available on our side (to ensure we have appropriate technological equipment according to the goals set), but also recipients' side. Lastly, a training course should consider the different backgrounds. TCN women from African countries will have different needs than Ukrainian and Middle Eastern. The journey





is different and what they are looking for might vary. It is recommended to include online safety (to learn how to avoid digital fishing, fake news, and scam), tools and skills relevant to their jobs, such as communication (email, video calls in different platforms), Excel and cloud-based platforms.

5.3 Interviews and focus groups with TCN women

Greece

In Greece, the Greek Forum of Migrants conducted a face-to-face focus group with 10 TCN women from Afghanistan, Albania, Ukraine, Nigeria, Mauritania, Ethiopia, Senegal. Most of the participants have attended digital education but they consider their digital educational level as very low. Five out of ten TCN women attended online language courses, but it was difficult for them since they do not have basic digital skills, are unfamiliar with online platforms. They all agreed that it is crucial to attend classes for digital skills, since after the COVID-19 everything became digitals. According to our discussion TCN woman and their friends want to learn, and develop themselves, however they face many challenges to follow whole program of the classes due to everyday life problems: family, kids, economic issues, at least 12 hours of work, language difficulties and not having personal laptop or computer.

All ten TCN women agreed that they need detailed guidelines with government online services, even though most of them were not new arrivals in Greece. To cover their needs through governmental platforms in the best situation they ask for help to their children, neighborhood, migrants' communities, and friends. In addition, they all agreed that TCN woman in Greece need digital literacy, since everything all over the world is becoming digital, and unknowledge of it makes hard for them to be active in the contemporary world. They mentioned that Greece does not include third country nationals as the members of society, since everything in the governmental platforms are written in Greek, even the steps of the procession and in the public sectors almost all the employees do not speak English. All the ten participants confirm that they would like to attend classes to develop digital skills. They suggested to start teaching by low level of digital skills Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Viber, E-mail, Google Maps, uploading and downloading files, photos, documents, later Word, and Excel, but they all highlighted the importance of explaining step by step gov.gr, booking appointment in the hospital and TAXISnet.

Poland

At the same period, the research team of Polish Migration Forum interviewed 11 TCN women. Five participants were Afghan women, two were Tajik, other two were Chechen and there was one Belarussian and one Ukrainian participant. Out of the four youngest participants, all had IT classes in school and learned to use smartphones and had no trouble acquiring those skills. Other four women did not have such classes but found a way to learn the basics



either by attending courses provided by municipalities or by helping their children study online during the COVID outbreak. In terms of digital government services, all interviewed declared it was very hard to learn the systems and most of them used the help of friends, children, or somebody at city hall. They believe there should be a course teaching that because the instructions are not understandable, and the language barrier does not help either. Overall, using and trying to learn digital government services creates frustration and a feeling of dependency and hopelessness. The majority of the 11 women surveyed were interested in developing skills related to finding work, creating a CV, and using office software and job search platforms.

Additionally, many of the women mentioned the importance of gaining life skills such as easier planning of their arrival and first steps in the new country, gaining self-confidence, finding friends, and using e-banking. Several of the women also mentioned an interest in using Facebook and Instagram, as well as programmes needed for their children's schools such as Zoom, and Teams. Among the challenges we learnt about standing in the way of efficient digital skills learning, we found: the need for childcare, not being able to leave the house, language problems and a lack of translation. These factors make it difficult to find the time and motivation to learn digital skills. Overall, despite the challenges, the benefits of learning digital skills for TCN women are visible.

Germany

Under this field research component, BK has implemented separate face to face interviews with 8 women in Germany. First, they discussed interviewee's experience with digital education and digital educational level. Most of the women admitted that they have a very low level of digital skills, without having attended any kind of digital education, while they are eager to do so. However, some of them considered their digital skills as satisfying, since they are competent in applications such as Email, Word and Zoom or social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp and Telegram, while they also know how to use their smartphones. When the discussion came to more complex activities such as online appointments and online services, they admitted that they do not have this kind of knowledge.

All the women highlighted that they urgently need digital skills for their employment, so they can keep up and integrate in the modern, digital world. The main challenges faced by TCN women wishing to develop their soft digital skills and to enter the digital labour market is the lack of affordable or free trainings regarding digitization, lack of courses taught in the native language of the refugees and lack of equipment. There is also fear of the digital world due to a lack of understanding of security on the Internet. They supported that with sufficient skills in digitization, they can get a job and integrate into society. All the women supported that digital skills are very important for them to have a chance on the job market. Most applications are now submitted online, but this path is not possible for them without digital skills. During the interviews they suggested some topics to be included in our training programme for TCN women, as presentation techniques, graphic design, access to online health services, online job search, creating CVs, and online applications. Also, they consider important to create profile on social media, have internet security and use e-mail.





Austria

The one-to-one interview involved women from Ukraine and Turkey, living in Austria for less than 1 year. Their professional background is different: there are students, professionals and currently employed participants, but also women looking for an opportunity in Austria. The all 8 women are not fluent in German, but with a good level of English and their age varies between 18 to 45. During the discussion they expressed their discomfort in adapting to a new digitalized system. However, the main services used are linked to online banking, emails, and communication (WhatsApp, social media).

The women interviewed showed willingness in learning new skills if it is required at the workplace, but not outside of it or if it is not something essential for the everyday life. They recognize the role played nowadays by digitalization and the upside of interconnection, when far from home, to be in contact with family members and friends. In addition, withing this modern society they should face a lot of obstacles and the first one is the language. So even if they are familiar to install an app for different services, at the same time the fluency in German might be eventually required during the online surfing. Indeed, 4 of them stated that generally, they are more prone to use digital platforms that avoid social contact because they do not speak German or English fluently. This allows them to avoid uncomfortable situations. The Turkish participants did not encounter the same problems because of the big Turkish community in Austria, to such an extent that many of the services are automatically translated into Turkish. Lastly, we discussed about the essential skills in a digital world, and they included the navigation into the different apps and the capacity to be informed of the functionalities offered. It is important for them to have an online communication via videocall, use online work-platforms as to find and apply for a job and use online services for the health system, the online banking and have access to school platforms.

5.4 Targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders

Greece

One-to-one interviews were held with six stakeholders all of them have emigrated to Greece from TCN countries. Among participants were project managers from migrant communities, stakeholders from social cooperative enterprises, and NGOs with the main goal the integration of immigrants and refugees in Greek society. According to the experience of stakeholders, the knowledge of digital skills of TCN women who in Greece is of two speeds. One speed is high because they were working with digital software back in their countries of origin and the other speed is low because they were not even allowed basic education in their countries, so they don't know how to use a laptop. Challenges faced by TCN women wishing to develop their soft digital skills and to enter the digital labor market regardless of the country of origin are similar. First, they do not have access to electronic





devices, most of them do not own computers and of course they don't have access to stable internet connections. Usually most of the TCN women can't afford it due to their economic conditions.

Moreover, the language barrier is also playing a huge role as a challenge for TCN women, since software is translated in English. It is important to highlight that all of them mentioned time management as a challenge for TCN women, because they must work and take care of their families. According to the interviewed stakeholders the scope of this project is very important and helpful for TCN women in Greece. The training programme should cover basic level of the subject such as creating e-mail, using of social media, Google Maps, uploading and downloading documents, files, pictures, Word and Excel and they all highlighted the importance of explaining step by step the digital services of the state, government platforms, booking an appointment in the hospital and TAXISnet. Lastly, the stakeholders pointed out that because the residence permits and everything that concerns them is now done online it would be better for TCN women to feel comfortable in using these digital services that are for free and not pay accountants and lawyers to do it.

Poland

Polish Migrant Forum targeted consultation with five key stakeholders had taken place in the form of individual meetings. The consultations occurred with organisations for migrant and Ukrainian refugees dealing with women's rights and social assistance, grant-making organization operating in Poland, in social change and using new technologies, organization creating training programs which provide equitable access to the knowledge and skills needed for high-opportunity jobs. In the experience of stakeholders, the level of digital skills and knowledge of TCN women is quite varied. Yet the most needed are support and capacity building even if they already have well-developed skills.

The main challenges faced by TCN women wishing to develop their soft digital skills and enter the digital labor market are lack of individual support and lack of equipment. Women have no knowledge of applications needed to live in Poland, application for public transport, Librus, government applications, better job search portals and often fall victim to scams and phishing. There is a problem with the online education of children, mothers are not familiar with online education tools, so they do not control the learning process of children. Also, women who do not know the Polish language are therefore unable to check job offers. They also have poor knowledge of Polish job offers and standards. Usually, the staff of the organisations is already qualified for providing online training to TCN women. Caseworkers, educators, and trainers help to operate the most important applications and government websites, supporting the organization of the payment of benefits for children and its banking service, as well as in the verification of job offers. However, most of the organizations express interest in having their staff build further capacities on providing digital education to TCN women, especially because there are not enough people trained in this area and this project could close that gap. In conclusion, the scope of our project was perceived as viable and important to develop.



Germany

Under this research component, BK has implemented a common focus group with five selected stakeholders working with migrants. The participants are doctor and social worker, accompanying TCNs to authorities and organizing appointments with authorities, economist offering advisory support to disadvantaged groups, consultant, and entrepreneur. All of them are working with TCN women from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Most of them are specifically working with women that want to start their own business. Based to their experience, the origin of the TCN women is a major factor that determines the digital skills level. Digital skill and knowledge level of TCN women depends hugely on their professional, educational, and cultural background, age, and interests. On average, their skill and knowledge level seem to be on par with German citizens. But then there are also women who do not have the technical requirements for participation in the digital world and whose digital skills are therefore weak.

The main challenges faced by TCN women wishing to develop their soft digital skills are the lack of courses and structured learning opportunities in the mother tongue, the lack of equipment, while software is too expensive and there is the fear of digitization. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge of Microsoft environment and the language are the biggest obstacles for the entering in the digital labour market. At the same time the staff of organisation is very positive in expanding their knowledge with regards to digital (business) education in general. The main challenges faced for them are the lack of tools and techniques available to provide high quality, digital education, the skills shortages, the language barriers, and the lack of knowledge about the needs of TCN women. Most of the respondents would be interested in becoming Trainer of Trainers and they highlighted the importance of our project. Suggested topics to be included in our training program for TCN women to develop their soft digital skills are the dealing with computers, Microsoft applications, digital time management, security, using graphics programs and using platforms, social media and it has also been suggested that our programme should also offer an overview over online learning/studying programmes or how to find them.

Austria

The stakeholders participated in the interview in different online sessions. Their background varies, in terms of age and experiences, but they have generally leading roles. They are coordinator or managers, working with African community and diaspora, social inclusion projects that involve people with fewer opportunities, Erasmus+ funding, exchange of non-EU citizens to provide them support in Austria. After the war in Ukraine, they have all implemented activities of support, networking and job hunting for Ukrainians women that arrived in Austria. The general consideration is that age matters in terms of ICT skills. So far, they considered that younger women, between 18-35 years old, are more likely to know well their way around digital skills and functions and more obstacles are noticed around 40+.

The same can be noticed regarding where they come from because there are communities more secluded than others. Also, it has been clearly stated that often, the resources





available are not sufficient to encourage and boost the learning process. Among the barriers that the stakeholders have recognized in promoting digital literacy, there are the language barriers, long and difficult process in having their titles recognized and this leads to a vicious circle of accepting every job that provides a basic salary but with zero stimuli in upgrading their knowledge and position and lack of support system for TCN women. The stakeholders' staff has not been specifically trained for this target group or to teach digital skills, but they showed appreciation and interest for DIGITS project. The stakeholders recognized the languages as main barrier in implementing successful trainings, but also the ability to draft a programme that is interactive and interesting for the target group, which needs to be clearly defined to guarantee the project's success. Among the topics to be included, they have mentioned are the data protection, the online safety, the communication (via email, videocall, instant messaging) and job-related skills such as preparation of CV.





6. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS PER COUNTRY

Greece

From October 2022 to February 2023, Symplexis and the Greek Forum of Migrants conducted primary and secondary research on the digital skills of female third-country nationals living in Greece. During the research process it seemed difficult to define the level of digital skills of TCN women, as there is great diversity in terms of their exposure to the internet and new technologies. It is evident that an important role in this relationship of migrant women with digital media is held by the time, the country of origin and the circumstances under which a migrant woman came to the host country. Each story is different and directly and rapidly influences the migrant women's own desire to develop digital skills or to maintain a more technophobic approach towards digital tools.

It seems that although the digital sector is continuously developing in the European Union countries, migrant and refugee women are not yet established in the digital age. According to the literature survey, it is evident that TCN women are underrepresented in the digital labour market and digital economy. It seems that they have limited digital employment and training opportunities to date. In other words, they are isolated from new technologies, online access and digital media, a situation that was exacerbated during the pandemic. More specifically, the conditions of teleworking and distance learning brought about by the pandemic put many digitally illiterate TCN women at risk of social isolation, due to their digital exclusion. Moreover, immigrant women also face additional barriers to digital inclusion due to their reliance on others to translate service provider websites and social media platforms into their native language.

Through both the literature review and field research, an attempt was made to address key difficulties that exclude TCN women from digital life. Language barriers, poverty and the different cultural backgrounds of migrant and refugee women contribute to their digital exclusion. Furthermore, the findings of the research highlighted the gendered dimension of the migration phenomenon, as many migrant women are trapped in social roles and obligations imposed by their gender and thus all these prevent them from entering the digital labour market. In this light, interviewees unanimously emphasized the empowering nature that digital education should have for TCN women, with the goal of being economically independent, networking and discovering their multiple skills. In addition, they argued that the role of cultural mediator can mitigate the cultural gap in terms of their entry and advancement in the labour market.

In Greece, the migration phenomenon has undergone quantitative and qualitative changes over time. In 2021 the migrant population in Greece reached 1.4 million, of which 54% is women migrants. At this point it was essential to have contact with people from





migrant communities as well as with staff from the reception areas. To complete the data, following the literature survey and online questionnaires, interviews and focus groups were conducted with volunteers and workers in the field of migrant education. At the same time, a focus group was completed with TCN women themselves who provided their personal experiences about their digital literacy. More specifically, 16 TCN women from Ukraine, Albania, Georgia, Sudan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Australia took part in the online survey and the questionnaires were accessible in Greek and English. Symplexis conducted online interviews and focus groups with 7 educators and professionals working with the migrant population. In parallel, the Greek Forum of Migrants conducted an in person focus group with 10 TCN women from Afghanistan, Albania, Ukraine, Nigeria, Mauritania, Ethiopia, and Senegal. They also conducted both in person and online interviews with 6 key stakeholders. After that, the research team of Symplexis selected 3 good practices focusing on training and European projects targeted to TCN women, in particular digital and labour field-oriented initiatives.

Based on all the above findings of the Greek national survey, it is evident that the digital inclusion of TCN women is critical and should be introduced through proper training in basic digital skills after the COVID-19 pandemic. The digitization of the Greek public and private sector has been rapid, and a large part of the population has not been able to respond. The ensuing lockdowns were the catalyst for an overdue technological upgrade in Greece, pushing for widespread adoption of digital solutions. In fact, the pandemic has further highlighted the country's long-standing problems in digital connectivity, digital skills, and digital literacy. Despite this shortfall, the continuous needs of citizens and consumers have forced public authorities and companies to launch a variety of e-services and digital solutions. Likewise, it seems that telecommuting and video conferencing are here to stay given the fact that they are more financially and environmentally sustainable.

Therefore, a modern digital training program for TCN women, which will be tailored to their needs and expectations, to improve their social and professional life, is of utmost importance. The goal through the development of their digital skills is the prospect of a better job that will be consistent with their economic prosperity and self-sufficiency. Interviewees unanimously agreed on the need for educational materials that provide essential skills and knowledge needed to strengthen their position in the labor market and take advantage of the many benefits that technology provides. After all, with the entry of immigrant women into the digital world, their traditional role will also be redefined, giving them the resources for a transition in their lives on a social, professional, and economic level. This transition will broaden their horizons, socialize them, and offer opportunities for active participation in the digitized life of the 21st century.

Poland

The learning background of third-country national women in Poland widely varies. Some third-country national women may have advanced digital skills and be well-versed in using technology for communication, work, and other purposes, while others may have limited experience with technology. The level of access to technology and opportunities for digital





skill development may also depend on a variety of factors, such as socio-economic status, language barriers, and cultural attitudes towards technology. It is important to note that these generalizations may not apply to every individual as it is shown multiple times in the national report and that only a comprehensive study can present a more accurate picture of a digital skill set of third-country national women in Poland.

According to the desk research, there are quite a lot of great opportunities spread all over Poland for migrant women to acquire digital skills. Due to the influx of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, there is a significant predominance of offers for Ukrainian women over other nationalities. Most programs concentrate on access to school, employment, information, and language training, which goes hand-in-hand with data about needs received during an online survey filled out by 42 women from Ukraine, Russia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Chechnya (out of whom 53,8% were unemployed) and interviews held with 11 women from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Chechnya, Belarus and Ukraine (out of which 72,7% were unemployed – some due to insufficient level of Polish, being the primary caregiver to somebody at home, having health issues and others due to trouble with diploma recognition). There is however one topic grossly overlooked by most of the courses – everyday life challenges happening due to a lack of digital skills. Two of the questions most connected to the essence of the project allowed us to combine data by comparing the average of scores given to in total 19 statements in related questions. What we found is that the importance and perceived usefulness of digital skills has growing appreciation with older age groups – especially in the 45+ group.

Since Poland's migration landscape is so diverse, to gather information, the online survey was translated into 6 additional languages and data was collected from 42 TCN women. The results showed that the group of women who lack digital skills the most was underrepresented. In the online survey, it was also found that areas of life where the highest willingness to develop digital skills was recorded were education and vocational training, then employment support and online financial transactions, followed by healthcare services and finally social services with cultural activities / entertainment. It is also interesting to note that the significant number of participants in interviews and survey were from the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups (31,0% of women filling out the survey and 45,5% of interviewed women), which suggests that they may be more likely to be actively engaged in digital technology topics and therefore have a higher level of digital competences. To complete data the team conducted interviews and focus groups with educators/professionals and 11 third country national women. The findings showed that the staff of organizations working with TCN women need to be qualified to provide training in digital skills, including the national language and understanding of core humanitarian standards. The educators were interested in improving their capacities in providing digital education due to challenges they face daily, such as low attendance of participants and often lack of access to those in need.

The project's focus should be on daily skills and should be supplementary to what is offered by other organizations. The main challenges faced by TCN women in developing their digital skills and entering the digital labor market are a lack of individual support and



equipment. Women also face difficulties in accessing information and services, and most of all finding jobs and friends. All interviewed women declared that help with digital government services would be crucial to integrating into Polish society. Most would like to develop skills related to looking for a job, gaining life skills and self-confidence in this topic, finding friends, using social media platforms, and programmes needed for school education. Half expressed interest in building their own business. There are however challenges to be considered like the need for childcare during classes or language problems.

Furthermore, for educators to be able to support TCN women on the journey to gaining new skills they must be able to fully communicate with them, work within core humanitarian standards and stay patient during classes. Individual approach is a necessity with this target group.

Overall, it is true that the data collected from the participants provides a valuable starting point for the project. By conducting interviews and collecting data from educators and stakeholders we were able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the existing digital skill set of third-country national women living in Poland.

Germany

The national report of Germany describes the current situation in the country, as it concerns the digital inclusion of TCN women, through desk and field research and identification of 3 best practices.

Germany is a country characterized as a destination for the migrant population with the number for the foreign population estimated to be 13.4 million, while the top 5 countries of origin of TCNs in Germany are Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and Russia. According to the European Migration Network Study on Integration of Migrant Women of September 2022, the percentage of women among 3rd country migrants in Germany was 47.8% in 2020, without calculating the Ukrainian population that immigrated to Germany after the breakout of the war. Germany has a complex migration policy that is influenced by a variety of factors, including EU regulations, national laws, and political considerations.

According to the research, TCN women in Germany face several challenges and obstacles that can limit their inclusion and full participation in German society. Some of these challenges include language barrier, lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, early school leaving, asylum procedures, residence titles and work permits, discriminatory attitudes, lack of access to childcare, limited political representation and domestic violence. In parallel, there are several sociocultural norms in Germany that can create significant barriers to the digital inclusion of migrant women, making it more difficult for them to access digital services and participate fully in the digital world, such as cultural norms, lack of digital literacy, lack of technology access and privacy and security concerns.





The lack of digital skills is visible mainly when it comes to online applications for job. Most women cannot write online applications because they lack the German language and digital skills. For the respondents TCN women to our survey, it has been concluded that as it concerns the importance of several soft digital skills according to the sample's opinion, the most important skills are the creating a CV using online templates, the searching for jobs online and the creating a professional profile on social media. In parallel, according to the different stakeholders who participated in the research, staff that works with the migrant population is also in need of digital upskilling, since there is not this expertise in their organizations, and the employees have not received any formal training as to how to provide online training for TCN women.

From all the above findings of the national research, we can see that digital inclusion of TCN women in Germany is of utmost importance and should be introduced through proper training upon core digital skills. Many migrant women come from countries where access to technology and digital tools is limited, and they may have limited exposure to and experience with technology. This can make it difficult for them to access digital services and participate fully in the digital world. Also, they may face barriers to accessing technology, such as a lack of resources to purchase devices, limited access to the internet, and a lack of digital skills. This can make it difficult for them to participate in the digital world and access digital services. Specifically, after the outbreak of the pandemic, this digital inclusion is considered as "mandatory" since the pandemic has accelerated the country's digital transformation in terms of remote work, online education, e-commerce, and digital health. Thus, programs of high quality should be available for TCN women, which can help to improve their employment prospects and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their competitiveness in the job market and to take advantage of the many benefits that technology provides, such as increased efficiency, flexibility, and access to information. For now, age is an important factor as it concerns the level of digital skills, since young people tend to be fairly computer savvy and can use social media. On the other hand, middle-aged and especially older people cannot master a smartphone and most of them do not use a computer and the internet at all.

Finally, the "top suggested topics" to be included in the DIGITS training program for TCN women to develop their soft digital skills, as they were derived from the research in Germany, are the using of e-mail, the online research, the dealing with computers, the creating profiles on social media and the internet security.

Austria

The research in Austria has shown a substantial difference regarding the digital skills for TCN women living in the country based on the gender, the age, and the country of origin. It is evident that the integration of women, their access to the labour market and educational background might vary according to the intersection of the above-mentioned factors. For instance, it has been seen that TCN women enter the job market later compared to men; but at the same time, depending on their country of origin, they are more likely to have titles that men do not have. The fluency in the language of the hosting country is usually better





for men than for women, considering social norms and gender roles that might hinder their normal and ordinary access to resources, experiences, and practice.

One of the main obstacles that emerged in the research is the language barrier. Even if Austria is renowned to be a multicultural city, the previous migration influx contributed to shape the language scenario in the public services. On the other hand, if Austria responded very well to the integration of Arabic and Turkish in their public services, at the same time, difficulties for Ukrainians and other TCN women have been pointed out. This constitutes an obstacle, because not only the service might not be available, but it can discourage any interest. In fact, some interviewers and professionals expressed that many migrants prefer the online services to avoid contact with the foreign language and uncomfortable situations.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the newly arrived women might feel lost in navigating the system, overcoming social barriers and personal limits. This is why it is important to build a strong network or support system. Thus, when we think of training on soft digital skills we should consider different factors, such as the different ages that entail different needs and skills, the lack of support system that prevents women to know which opportunities are available and the skills we want to boost should be relevant and transverse. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration the family commitments that might exist or immediate earnings or not enough time available to spend on training and the lack of faith on a training's usefulness and the lack of confidence in being able to upskill. The content that has been recommended to include is the online safety (catfishing, fraud, etc.), the Microsoft Office tools, the online communication (instant messaging, video-call, emails, etc.), the cloud-based system, the creating CV and establishing online presence (personal branding).

According to the educators and the professionals, the range of knowledge and needs changed across these factors. Generally, women between 18 and 35 years old have a good level of digital literacy and in their previous work or current work, they were familiar with carrying out some tasks related to soft digital skills. But the recognition of their qualifications is a very difficult process, while the downgrading of their roles is a common scenario too. Plus, women that are more than 35 years old usually present a lower level of digital skills, but adaptability and flexibility to learn if the job requires it. It is also important to point out that the association with country of origin refers also to the cultural diversity that defines habits and inclinations. If this factor intersects with the presence of other family members, it is likely that women will take care of the household or childcare reducing their chances of engagement in educational paths.

The last two elements that emerged from this analysis are the emotional side that consists in gaining confidence to try the chances in finding better opportunities and the adaptation to the digital-job market. Therefore, strengthening women's confidence and motivation is a crucial aspect for their success in the society and at personal level. Lack of confidence leads to less interaction with the public and to give up a priori. Also, the access to the digital labour market is linked to skills that are developed also through exchange and experiences



due to the fast-paced environment with new skills and requirements. Thus, eventual training must be up to date with the everyday needs, job-market and the pillars of digital literacy recognized at the EU level. The analysis presented here pointed out the need to address the target group with tailor-made approaches.

The Integration Fund (AIF) has already mentioned how gender roles and patriarchal norms preclude equal access to the labour market and the digital one. Additionally, often the TCN women might find themselves with scarce social support and network systems that prevent them from leaving the household for work. As often happens, if the woman oversees the childcare, the time to dedicate to jobs, education or training is less. Generally, it seems that integration policies also focus more on women as part of a family, rather than focus on their vocational training and education as independent individuals.

7. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Through the primary and secondary research carried out by the consortium of DIGITS project, several conclusions have been drawn about the digital skills of TCN women currently living in Greece, Poland, Germany, and Austria. For the completion of the four national reports and therefore this transnational report it was valuable for the research teams to have contact first with the TCN women themselves and then with the relevant professionals and stakeholders. Across the content of the transnational report, it seems that there are common points about the digital background, daily barriers, interests and especially the need for a transnational digital training programme for the socio-economic integration of TCN women in European countries. More specifically, from the online surveys, interviews and focus groups of the four countries participating in the field research, it is evident that the majority of TCN women lack basic digital skills and face digital exclusion. This picture is also confirmed by the literature review that thoroughly presents the main challenges in the field of daily and family life, labour market and digitalization of the social services for TCN women in a contemporary society after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Undoubtedly, TCN women face multiple barriers such as lack of language skills and sometimes illiteracy, lack of skills and qualifications recognition and difficulties in obtaining a qualification due to early school dropout, technophobic attitudes and conservative cultural background that strictly excludes them from education. Also, poverty, lack of financial resources and technological equipment are daily challenges for TCN women especially when they are mothers and have taken over the full care of children and household without support. This is where the gendered dimension of the phenomenon of digital exclusion of TCN women manifests itself, as they are subjected to patriarchal norms that do not allow them to work and gain economic independence, having a social and professional life in which their skills are recognized, and equal rights with men within society. All these serious challenges and the intersection of more factors prevent or hinder their access to the labour market and the full realization of their opportunities for professional and social advancement.





Besides, many of our interviewees confided that they need digital services in a safe digital environment for them to avoid racist and sexist comments as they are often victims of xenophobic discrimination. Indeed, through all the discussions arose the deep need for TCN women to actively participate in the digital world, in which they can directly and free of charge apply for asylum and obtain a residence permit in the country. Beyond the desire to use digital services, a large percentage of women want to be educated, to acquire the appropriate resources for their entry and advancement in the modern labor market and their financial independence. Certainly, the migrant or refugee women who acquire digital skills and use smartphones or tablets can easily search for work online, support her work through social media and expand their network. These parameters are decisive for these women to discover their abilities, claim professional opportunities and adequately respond to the digitization of public and private services after the global pandemic.

For all the above reasons, migrant-receiving countries should create and then promote a digital soft skills training program that responds to all age groups, cultural backgrounds, and digital knowledge of learners. The DIGITS consortium, considering the needs, expectations, demand of the labor market and the level of digital literacy of the TCN women who will participate, is proceeding with the creation of educational material for the digital education and support of the trainees via the capacity building web platform. It is important for participants to learn how to use the e-government platforms, create a professional profile on social media, have effective online communication and be safe and responsible online. Digital inclusion is in a way mandatory and remains a channel of communication and information exchange that will give a better quality to TCN women's daily life.

The common goal of all partners is to increase motivation, professional empowerment and help TCN women to gain self-confidence, overcoming stereotypes and discrimination. The project also provides them with a new circle of acquaintances, a flexible training group and an adaptive online environment.





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