

Programme « Society & Future »

Final report – “Description of the Research Project”¹

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TITEL: **Factors and dynamics affecting and explaining female migration and integration in Belgian society**

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¹ Art. 5.5.2 of the research contract.

* Completion of the report, summaries in Dutch, French, English and evaluation.

Links to sites where the work of the research team regarding the project is mentioned:

www.ua.ac.be/cemis
www.cedem.ulg.ac.be

www.hiva.be
www.ulb.ac.be/socio/germe/

Summary

The research focuses on cross-national and cross-cultural patterns of female migration and integration in Belgian society. This research shows the feminization of migration to Belgium and the socio-economic position of female migrants into Belgian society. Besides a static gender analysis it also stresses a dynamic gender analysis by studying the interactions between gender and migration: namely, how gender relations in the region of origin and Belgium lead to migration and - conversely - how gender relations are changing through migration processes and careers. The first part of this interaction (the influence of gender on migration) offers explanations for gender differences identified in a static analysis. The second part of the interaction (impact of migration on gender) forwards the change brought about by migration in gender identities. Here we highlight the impact of migration on gender relations in the region of origin.

For the dynamic gender analysis the sociological concept of social change is central. Gendered transitions at different levels (macro, meso and micro) are differently structured in the migration processes of men and women in the regions of origin and in Belgium. A second major conceptual approach to migration and integration was a longitudinal perspective in this study. Here we consider migration and integration no longer as sequential and distinct phases, but as a migration path or career. From this perspective, we analyze how identities should change over time (before - after migration and over time in Belgium) and this on several life domains (work and family). In this regard we approach identities as social constructions that shape and change in interaction with the surroundings and the broader transnational context.

While the statistical gender analysis of this research has proceeded on the basis of quantitative data sources (from (1) the Immigration Service, (2) Eurostat, (3) GDSEI (General Directorate of Planning and Statistics - formerly INS), (4) the National Register, (5) the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, (6) FPS ELSD (FPS Employment Labour and Social Dialogue and (7) Child and Family), happened the dynamic gender analysis through an additional in-depth qualitative ethnographic research in five geographically defined groups: 1) Philippines 2) Russia and Ukraine, 3) Romania, 4) Nigeria and 5) Latin American countries (Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia).

By a continuous interaction between research objectives and the empirical findings, we aim the construction of an analytical framework for gender-sensitive migration research. This framework includes the following elements necessary for a gender-sensitive analysis of migration and integration processes:

- gendered macro-structural factors that explain differences in migration and integration of men and women (= structures);
- gendered agency in the migration process, showing how women actively cope with the given structural constraints and opportunities (= agency);
- changes experienced in gender relations and gender identities through migration, in various areas such as employment and the family (= before - after);
- the evolution of gender identities through the immigration career in Belgium (= *trajectory*).

Given these elements of our analytic framework, we came to certain conclusions from the integrated quantitative and qualitative research components. We give these point by point below.

1) Conclusions regarding the different migration and integration patterns of men and women

Feminization of migration: the need for nuance - As with international migration patterns, the feminization of migration to Belgium is not an all-or-nothing issue. The data suggests there are refinements for different geographically defined groups and forms of immigration.

In 2009, more than half of all visas were issued because of family reasons (family reunification and formation). The group that migrates through this kind of migration is predominantly female. Women receive relatively fewer labour visas. With respect to asylum there is no significant gender difference: 51% of asylum applications come from men, 49% from women. Furthermore, the newcomers studied included more women (51.4%) according to data from the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, contrary to the overall foreign population.

A comparison between the groups regarding the ratio of men and women shows how the adult newcomers from the group Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are mainly women (2.8 women per man), followed by the Philippines (2.5), Brazil (2.4), the Spanish-speaking countries (Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador) (1.9) and Romania (1.3). For the Nigerian newcomers, there is little difference: 1,1 woman per man. The figures, however, are lacking for a sizeable group in qualitative ethnographic research. This concerns women who do irregular work as household help and nannies with families at home. The qualitative fieldwork indicates a proper representation of women in this and other forms of irregular migration (trafficking, prostitution).

A realistic representation of the female presence in migration, in other words, requires tapping into new, alternative quantitative data sources and additional qualitative material. Purely quantitative research appears not to conform to the role of women and would reveal more biases. The 'invisible' forms of migration especially break with the classic image of migrant women as 'passive followers', for example if they follow their husband for the purpose of family reunification. Women also migrate as the main actor when they are the main breadwinner for the family in their regions of origin.

Towards an explanation for the feminization and masculinization of global migration patterns - Masculinization or feminization of international migration should be understood as a combination of a number of structural factors at the macro level in both sending and receiving societies: historical events, macroeconomic trends, demographic transitions, political institutional characteristics, macro-economic shifts in gender systems and migration networks. The qualitative fieldwork shows that demand for cheap undocumented female labour in Belgium is one of the main explanations for the feminization of migration from the countries studied. The available work for women is more extensive, less risky and more stable than for men. Since the global economic crisis male employment in the construction sector has fallen. Employment for men is less certain, less stable and has, beyond its visible character, a higher uptake rate than female labour that is done with families at home. Demographic transitions such as the aging of the population in the West and the inclusion of women in employment (disappearance of a 'male bread-winner' and a 'double-earner' model); in addition, there is an increase in demand for household and medical and nursing staff within the care sector. These demands are partially filled by the voucher scheme, but leave a significant demand for care assistance unanswered. This demand for labour is associated with a difficult economic situation and a lack of job opportunities in the countries of origin. Women often feel forced to maintain their own/parental family in the region of origin

by means of labour migration.

Several of the studied groups confirms the so-called 'global care chain'. This is about the charging of care tasks by women of lower-income countries in post-industrial societies. To make possible the equal participation of women in Western Europe, there is a need for female labour forces from the East and the South. These women, who take up care tasks, often work irregularly, are underpaid and work below their diploma level. Often, they leave behind a family in the region of origin. Because of their absence, the care and upbringing of their own children is taken over by a paid help or a family member.

The above illustrates how macro-economic and demographic trends are gendered. The social position of women in sending and receiving societies, gender discrimination and gender transitions in the countries of origin and in Belgium also determine the extent to which migration is feminized. This not only applies to (irregular) labour but also to family migration. The fieldwork shows how dissatisfaction with the existing gender relations at home, together with an idealized representation of distant places and the people who populate them, contribute to transnational processes of partner selection.

Thus, it is dissatisfaction with the patriarchal gender systems and the perceived inferior status of women in the countries of origin, joined with the idealized democratic gender relations in Western Europe, that leads women to opt for a European man in the groups studied. In addition, some Belgian men are disappointed with what they consider the excessive emancipation and participation of Belgian women in society. This stimulates their quest for a 'traditional, family-oriented bride' which they hope to find in Eastern Europe, South-east Asia or Latin America. The gender-stereotyped images of online dating sites further contribute to these processes of choice and the gendered pattern of international migration.

Migration networks also contribute to the gendered pattern of international migration. The structuring role of migrant networks is crucial for undocumented female labour migration. The networks of these are highly gendered. By this we mean that specific female networks exist as well as specific male ones. The determining gendered impact of such networks can be found among the irregular migrants from Spanish-speaking Latin America, Ukraine and the Philippines. The study highlights the structural role of networks in the development of the migration project and the effective realization of that project (planning travel, actual travel, first asylum in Belgium and the further migration path). The networks provide an opportunity and determine the migration destination. These networks are less decisive for sponsors with a Belgian partner, where the individual migration happens rather smoothly. But this is difficult to generalize, since friends or family sponsors fulfill an important mediating role for the Filipino women. And for some studied groups, especially Russians and Brazilians, transnational networks are much less decisive for the individual migration route.

Finally, the political institutional framework (immigration) - and particularly the European context - either facilitates or hinders female migration to Belgium. We can observe a remarkable difference in migration opportunities between EU and non-EU countries (Romanian women versus the other women groups in this study). EU membership not only creates more migration opportunities for all levels of education, but the regulatory roads that are opened take a part of illegality away from migration.

The socio-economic position of migrant women in Belgium - Analysis of work permits shows an increase in the number of work permits issued to women between 2000 and 2006. The proportion of women who received a work permit increased from 21.8% in 2000 to 35% in 2006. Figures also show national differences. In 2000, 10% of work permits were for Nigerians, whereas for Filipino workers this was 55%. The proportion of women among Nigerians rose in 2006 to 38%. In Romanian labour migration, the share of women increased

from 38% to 63% and the Filipino workers remain the most female group with a share of 75%. Nevertheless, the employment rate (proportion of workers in the labour force of working age, 15-64 years) for the immigrant population in general is lower than the Belgian population and this is mostly due to the low participation of female migrants (employment rate women = 25.9%, employment rate men = 54.1%).

As with the representation of the feminization of migration (inflow), the available data sources fail to display the socio-economic position of migrant women in Belgium. Female newcomers can be found in well over half (57%) of the category 'other' of the Data warehouse Labour and Social Protection (KSZ), and not as jobseekers, self-employed persons or employees (compared to 30% of men). For the majority of female newcomers, these figures do not allow analysis of the socio-economic position.

One in three women of the study population was employed and a fraction (5%) registered as self-employed persons. This represented only regular migration. As already described, there are a substantial proportion of female migrants in the informal economy. The numbers say nothing about irregular work and do not provide an explanation for the observed gap between the socio-demographic background of women migrants and their actual socio-economic position. In line with previous analyses², the qualitative research informs us about the high level of education of many female newcomers, their work ambitions and aspirations and actual employment status in Belgium (high rate of unemployment, labour below diploma level).

Many respondents express a sense of 'unused potential'. The testimonies also highlight the rigidity of the categories of migration, particularly the dichotomy between labour and family migrants: there is hardly anything known about the labour market activity of family migrants and the family aspirations of workers. In this respect the data of the KSZ indicates the economically vulnerable family situation in which some female family migrants arrive. An analysis of the socio-economic position of the partner based on data from the KSZ shows the high unemployment rate of those who seek a partner abroad. The unemployment rate for the Belgian population is about 8%, while the share of unemployed among those who marry someone from abroad (all nationalities) is nearly one quarter (23.3%). This high score is largely due to the high percentage of unemployed people who marry someone from Turkey and Morocco. (These nationalities were not included in this study.) Further analysis of the employment situation of these groups shows that those who do work can often be found in precarious and low-earning employment. Although there is a discoloration of poverty³ and Social Services Departments are faced with a rising influx of newcomers the analysis of the data in the KSZ illustrates that for the analyzed years only a small percentage (4%) of the analyzed groups find their way to the Social Services Departments.

Agency or the active designing by women of their migration project within the given macro structural conditions - The above demonstrates how migrant women are not passive pawns who are blindly carried away by structural macro factors (as previously identified). The analysis of the qualitative material also makes clear how women - within the given structural conditions – shape their migration process and deal with opportunities and experiences of loss. Women play an active role both in the conception of the migration

² See: Riaño Yvonne & Baghdadi Nadia (2007), 'Je pensais que je pourrais avoir une relation plus égalitaire avec un Européen. Le rôle du genre et des imaginaires géographiques dans la migration des femmes', in: *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 26(1): 38-53; Corluy Vincent, Godin Mary, Marx Ive, Rea Andrea & Verbist Gerlinde (2008), *La situation socio-économique des personnes ayant bénéficié de la procédure de régularisation en 2000 (loi du 22 décembre 1999)*, Rapport de recherche, Bruxelles: Université Libre Bruxelles (ULB), GERME & Anvers: Université d'Anvers (UA), CSB, www.ulb.ac.be/socio/germe.

³ See: Van Robaeys Bea, Vranken Jan, Perrin Nathalie & Martiniello Marco (2007), *De kleur van armoede, Armoede bij personen van buitenlandse herkomst*, Leuven: Acco.

project, the migration decision, the travel arrangements, and the participation in networks, the sending back of remittances and their participation in Belgian society. The qualitative fieldwork qualifies the stereotypical image of female migrants as passive and dependent objects in migration. However, the enterprising and active roles of women should not blind us to the particular vulnerability of female migrants. To what extent do (free) choices exist for women who work for the survival of their families far away from them?

However, there is recognition of agency and its exercise demonstrates how “*agency does not take place in a vacuum but in specific social contexts*”⁴ and “*how individuals and groups do not express their agency in one way or reason.*”⁵ It is rarely an all-or-nothing issue, with fluctuations in the perception of freedom of action in various areas and throughout the life span.

2) Conclusions regarding the interactions between gender and migration

A central premise of the project is the structuring impact of migration on gender identities. For this the investigation desires to incorporate a longitudinal perspective. Given that migration is an important transition in life that causes shifts in a person’s identity, it is important to use an integrated approach to migration and integration processes, to aspects of pre- and post-migration and of sending and receiving countries. The concept of identity within this intersectional theoretical framework considers identity as dynamic and multidimensional.⁶ This consideration allows us to analyze how aspects of identity or intersections of identity dimensions (such as gender, ethnicity, social class, and legal status) are more/less salient in life transitions. This more dynamic conceptualization of identity helps to explain empirically established shifts in identities. Moreover, the analysis of the structuring impact of migration on different dimensions of identity was done by firstly looking at shifts in these dimensions before and after migration and then by analyzing how these dimensions of identity and gender are formed and changed in interaction with the immediate surroundings (the partner) and wider society (Belgian society of labour, macro-gender system, public opinion and stereotypes). The ‘before’ and ‘after’ approach in this research enables us to analyze the entire migration process so that a longitudinal perspective is present in the analysis. Here we notice how the original goals, which are written in the region of origin and at the conception of a migration project, are adjusted by later experiences in Belgium. By giving attention in the analysis to changes between there and here, between then and now and between different areas of life such as employment, family and participation in voluntary associations, the dynamics and impact of migration are exposed.

The impact of migration on gender relations appears far from unambiguous and is different for every woman in the final analysis. The cross-sectional analysis allowed for the identification of a number of beacons in the migration trajectory, for example by statute (e.g. (ir)regular) way of migration (by way of family reunification, education, employment) or family situation. These allow the construction of a number of general migration trajectories. We

⁴ See p. 74 of Leming Laura M (2007) ‘Sociological Explorations: What is Religious Agency?’, in: *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48, p. 73-92.

⁵ See p. 86 of Vanderwaeren Els (2010), *Vrouwen doen aan ijthād. Hybriditeit als creatieve ruimte bij interpretaties van islam*, doctoraatsthesis, Antwerpen: Universiteit Antwerpen (UA), Faculteit Politieke en Sociale Wetenschappen.

⁶ Zie Wekker Gloria & Lutz Helma (2001), ‘Een hoogvlakte met koude winden. De geschiedenis van het gender- en etniciteitsdenken in Nederland’, in: Botman Maaïke, Jouwe Nancy & Wekker Gloria (eds.), *Caleidoscopische visies. De zwarte, migranten en vluchtelingenbeweging in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, pp. 25-50; Van Mens-Verhulst Janneke (2007), *Intersectionaliteit in Vijf Veronderstellingen*, online: <http://www.vanmens.info/verhulst/wpcontent/Intersectionaliteit%20in%20vijf%20veronderstellingen.pdf>

emphasize that many variations exist in these trajectories or routes. In what follows, we check these migration trajectories on the basis of gender shifts that occurred in terms of work and family, where both are evidently influencing each other.

Identified migration trajectories of women: labour – A first identified trajectory for women is migration because of family reunification with an indigenous partner. Contrary to expectations, women experience a dependent and secondary position within the couple due to this form of migration. They often describe two phases: after an introductory period in Belgium and a primary focus on family life, they want to participate fully in Belgian society. Their inflow and movement on the Belgian labour market is difficult. Many women who come for reasons of family reunification suffer from a sense of ‘untapped potential’. The fieldwork identifies a major bottleneck in the orientation and guidance of highly-skilled migrants and marriage migrants in particular. The reception, orientation and training of newcomers into the labour market are particularly suited to low-skilled migrants. Highly educated family migrants are often only perceived by the integration services within the context of the family and their individual professional ambitions appear secondary. The partner living in Belgium is believed to accompany their life partner. In some cases, having a Belgian partner gives an advantage (e.g. legal status, access to employment, knowledge of Belgian society). However, it places women in a dependent position. The study shows in addition that a (too) dominant position of the Belgian partner may affect the careers of women who migrate for family reunification.

A second migration trajectory of women can be found among highly educated women whose migration was part of their study or for a highly skilled job. If one returns to the region of origin after the study or if one migrates from a pre-existing employment contract, migration seems to add professional and personal benefits. When one wishes to enroll in the Belgian labour market after the study, however, or if one migrates without a pre-existing contract, the labour market difficulties are shared with the migrants for family reunification: nearly all of them experience professional devaluation (high diploma level, low wages) and related personal de-emancipation. If women place themselves at the centre of the migration project and migrate individually for their personal development, then they experience professional devaluation as more problematic. As with women who migrate for family reunification, the aspirations before migration and the degree of acquaintance with potential obstacles determine the experience of the change in position resulting from migration.

We find a third migration trajectory for women coming from countries belonging to the European Union (EU) (Romania in this study). EU membership and the regular labour-related opportunities have a protective effect on the labour market position in Belgium. While migration generally has a negative effect on the ‘objective’ – and not the perceived – employment position of the groups studied, the migration of Romanian women has a positive effect in many cases on the ‘objective’ socio-economic position. Membership has led to more regular migration opportunities for unskilled (vouchers), medium-skilled (nurses) and highly educated women.

A fourth migration trajectory for women is that of women who are irregularly employed as domestic workers or nannies and who migrated to pay for the maintenance of the family in the region of origin. If there is family – especially children – left behind in the region of origin and women migrate, not for themselves, but for their children, professional devaluation is significantly less often perceived as problematic. This is the case for many women irregularly employed in Belgium as domestic workers. The experiences of these women differ from those of medium or highly educated women interviewed who consider their irregular unskilled labour in Belgium as an individual project and who had a relatively good socio-economic position before migration.

Identified migration trajectories of women: family – The migration of women in the context of family reunification has a fundamental impact on their position in the family and on

gender relations. In the case of family reunification, it is only after a certain procedure that women can legally live with the Belgian partner and develop a relationship since the current legal situation does not allow getting to know each other in a spontaneous way. People in this situation of family reunification have the sense that they have to marry quickly to get to know each other. The migration of women in this case is associated with a transition from being single/unmarried to being married. As demonstrated, women then fall into an unequal power relationship. The intentions of both partners are initially often focused on building a stable communal life. However, the actual experience of inequality within the couple put a great strain on those relationships.

Within the studied groups, women who migrated irregularly as part of a couple were often seen to experience the impact of migration positively with respect to the dominance of women within the family, mainly because there are currently more (irregular) employment opportunities for women in Belgium. This labour migration rewrote the traditional gender relations because the increased job opportunities for women often gave the role of breadwinner to them. Men could not fulfill their typical role as wage earner due to the low employment opportunities in Belgium. They were seen to undertake more household tasks than in their regions of origin. These shifts in gender relations are a cause of tension within the family. These gender shifts often lead, over time, to a varied migration project between men and women: women evolve from an initially temporary to a more permanent perspective, while the efforts of men focus more on the regions of origin. Moreover, having children in Belgium and the objective of offering them a stable future promotes the incorporation of women into Belgian society.

Where mothers migrate by themselves, a form of transnational motherhood appears. Again we observe the influences on gender relations described in the previous section. It is not surprising that the significant shifts in gender relations because of the transnational family ties and the long absence of mothers create intra-familial tensions. The initially temporary migration of women often also receives a more permanent character and sometimes both partners start a new family life.

3) Policy recommendations

Federal level

- Need for statistics to map the migration routes of female migrants to enable a policy evaluation and further policy development. As demonstrated, the available administrative databases only allow a limited view of the influx of female migrants and their socio-economic position in Belgium. In particular, longitudinal (quantitative) data are needed, allowing an approach to migration from a life-cycle perspective and to identify bottlenecks in the migration trajectory. Further, any policy change must be preceded by a review of past adjustments and by a comparative study with other EU Member States. In particular, we are thinking of the regulations regarding family reunification.
- A facilitation of the issuing of short-stay visas (tourist visa), during which couples can get to know each other better. At present couples take refuge in an introductory period after the procedure of family reunification (i.e. a marriage), because a tourist visa is so difficult to obtain. Because of the general restrictions on migration couples almost have to marry first to get to know each other.
- The categories of Belgian migration policy, and particularly the dichotomy between 'labour' and 'family migration', do not correspond to the dynamic nature of a complete migration trajectory, which shows an overlap and shift between different policy categories across the life-cycle. Policy consideration should be given to the work aspirations of family migrants and the family aspirations of migrant workers.
- The labour migration policy requires a better adaptation to the needs and shortages in the labour market. Despite increased unemployment in Belgium, there are also increases in the demand for labour migrants to fill the pressing shortages in the Belgian labour

market. The survey shows particularly high demand for female domestic labour, child- and elderly care. In the medical sector there is a need for nurses. These needs are at odds with the restricted regular migration opportunities and have the perverse effect that a large proportion of women work in precarious working conditions. Such an environment is also a fertile breeding ground for 'trafficking', which, in recent years, has taken the form of economic exploitation. In this respect, the 'domestic services' sector for women is a sector at risk.

- A distinction needs to be made between different types of work permits B which are the key feature of Belgian migration policy. There should be a distinction between short-term, temporary contracts (three months) and renewable (one year) contracts. The research shows that the initially temporary nature of many undocumented female workers becomes a permanent situation because of the restricted legal opportunities for short-term, circular labour migration. Efforts to obtain a permanent residence permit are not aimed at a permanent settlement but only to make commuting possible. Based on this and the previous finding, we recommend creating opportunities for short-term (three months) labour migration within the household work, child- and elderly care sections. This allows migrant mothers to return on a regular base to the family in the region of origin.
- In the light of the structural adjustments of the labour market to present day realities, it is necessary to approach labour migration as an important source for managing demographic trends (e.g. the aging of the population).
- Belgium can acknowledge the more positive approach to migration suggested by signing international instruments. Belgium never signed the Convention No. 97 on migrant workers from the International Labour Organisation in 1949. Nor did Belgium endorse the International Convention for the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their families, as stated on December 18, 1990 by the United Nations.⁷ The signing of these conventions would be a sign of appreciation of migration as a process of economic development, as opposed to the current tendency to criminalize migration. We recommend that Belgium actively participate in the convention concerning work in accordance with human dignity for domestic workers, launched at the conference of International Labour in June 2010, and for approval to be sought at the conference of International Labour in 2011. This is in order to ensure that Belgium takes measures on the legislative level for the effective protection of fundamental human rights of domestic workers.⁸

Regional

- The regional level can take into account the observed rigidity of the federal immigration categories. Many women who migrated for family reunification were inadequately oriented and guided in relation to work. In general, those women are addressed in the context of family life and marriage. However, people are not only migrating in the context of marriage, they also want to set up a life in Belgium. Today, the main responsibility for integration of the newcomer rests with the Belgian partner. Many women testify that a better orientation on arrival would have made their integration process more effective and efficient.
- In this context, we observe a gap between the discourse in Europe for attracting highly skilled labour and the effective use of the available workforce. Most highly skilled female migrants interviewed suffer from a feeling of 'untapped potential' and a feeling of being unable to live up to the Belgian labour market.
- Newcomers must participate as soon as possible in Belgian society. The migration and integration policies have to eliminate the barriers to full participation. Several central cities are guilty of not performing promptly and properly various controls of accommodation for

⁷ International Convention for the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their families, adopted in New York on December 18, 1990, UNTS No. 39481.

⁸ The full text of the research commission of decent work for domestic workers for the conference of June 2010 (CTD/D.227, 06/14/2010) can be found at: [http://www.ilo.org/ilc / ILCSessions/99thSession/lang--fr/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/99thSession/lang--fr/index.htm).

example, in the context of the law of residence and the state registration law. Because of this, foreigners who own a residence permit, can not work, settle down and have a normal life.

- An easier recognition of foreign qualifications and work experience. On the other hand, an assessment has to be made, in consultation with the newcomer, of the usefulness of an approval of qualifications for the further trajectory in Belgium. The opportunities for working in line with the diploma are potentially low in Belgium, so much time and energy goes into something that cannot subsequently be exploited. A realistic orientation should happen in consultation with the newcomer and centred on the needs of the Belgian labour market.
- The development of welfare initiatives to support and mediate between young immigrant couples and couples of marriage migration who have to develop their relationships in a context of migration, and whose integration is challenging or who have relationship problems. They often have differing expectations of the relationship and of the partner. This puts additional pressure on relationships. Also, the dependent residence status of the marriage migrant puts relationships under pressure. Moreover, many immigrants (and a priori marriage migrants) experience difficulties in finding their way to any existing assistance. There is a need for specific counseling that reinforces partners in a constructive dialogue.
- Newcomers (women and men) need to be informed and sensitized as to their rights. The integration courses can address the rights of women, the rights and services around partner violence or abuse, the right to assistance and immigrant associations to prevent them becoming victims in very vulnerable situations out of ignorance.