

EPSU Women's and Gender Equality statement:
Towards labour market integration of refugee women
Adopted at the WGEC meeting of 7 November 2016

There is an unprecedented and increasing number of men, women and children seeking asylum in Europe. There is a high degree of gender inequality for asylum applicants across the European Union. On average one third who apply for asylum in the EU are women. The UNHCR has reported that, as of January 2016, women and children account for 55% of those reaching Greece to seek asylum in the EU. Women and children face an increased risk of insecurity during the journey from home and upon their arrival, including domestic violence. There are reports that women and children are engaging in forced paid prostitution to pay smugglers to continue their journey to seek asylum in the EU. Many women have lost their lives. Additionally, reports reveal that there is discrimination of women applying for asylum considering their claims as not credible.

The EPSU Women's and Gender Equality Committee therefore stresses the urgent need for

- women refugees being registered individually and issued with the documents which guarantee their personal safety and access to public services
- targeted solutions to ensure the full integration of women refugees and asylum seekers, by preventing all forms of exploitation, abuse, violence and trafficking also during their journey
- addressing specific forms of gender-based persecution of women and LGBTI, which is still too often not recognised in asylum procedures
- raising gender equality concerns regarding health and strengthen the access of women and girls to comprehensive health care. This should include access to contraception; comprehensive and safe abortion care and child health services; sexually transmissible diseases (SIT) and HIV prevention, treatment and care services; mental health and psychosocial support; and through increased availability of female doctors, nurses, midwives and interpreters.
- accessing public services- health and social services, education, migration, housing
- guaranteeing psychosocial care for women who have experienced gender-based violence
- the importance of accessible, affordable, high-quality childcare and care for refugee women
- mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions would enable better opportunities for jobs, integration and family reunification
- facilitating labour market participation of women refugees and asylum seekers, including language classes, literacy programmes, lifelong learning and training
- full access to employment that matches the needs and abilities of refugee women and full recognition of professional qualifications obtained abroad
- access to housing that meets the needs of refugee women and girls guaranteed by the host countries
- ensure resources are available for undocumented migrants during transition to the labour market to achieve equal economic independence

The EPSU Women's and Gender Equality Committee also emphasizes that

- public services are key to successful labour market integration
- chronic underfunding of public services, in particular migration asylum processing services and understaffing risk to undermine equal treatment
- trade unions are key players in empowering women refugees in integrating them into the labour market

Areas of Action at EU level

All EU migration and asylum policies and measures should take into account gender in their design, implementation and evaluation.

The Commission and the Member States have to make funding and other resources available that provide assistance, promote inclusion, labour market integration, and monitor the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in the EU, particularly in respect of addressing the barriers and vulnerabilities experienced by women, girls and children.

Local and regional authorities play a vital role in the inclusion of women refugees and asylum seekers, especially with regard to their inclusion in the labour market

Member States should be encouraged to collect disaggregated data and analysis based on age, sex and other relevant factors

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EPSU affiliates are requested to send this statement to their respective ministries dealing with gender equality.

The EPSU secretariat will forward the statement to the European Commission and relevant Members of the European Parliament