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**CREATIVE MULTILINGUALISM: FROM PRACTICE TO
RESEARCH TO EDUCATION (MEinART)**

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DELIVERABLE 31

**REPORT ON CURRENT POLICIES
AND PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE MEASURES**

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1. Introduction

The present Deliverable 31 “Report on current policies and perspectives of inclusive measures” is one of the two Deliverables of the Work Package 6 “Guidelines and Recommendations”. As usually, in research projects that also claim a social and political dimension and/or extension, deliverables with guidelines and recommendations present actionable, evidence-based suggestions to stakeholders to pursue project’s goals, after the end of the lifetime of the project. D31 acts as a final outcome of the MEINART project, designed to guide decision-making in the fields of social integration and educational inclusion. MEINART’s recommendations take into consideration and draw on outcomes from research undertaken in other contexts by organisations like UNESCO or UNHCR but tests them and adapts them in the context of Greece.

The ambition of this Deliverable 31 is to show concrete conclusions from the research and educational interventions of the project and try to give concise and tangible advice to decision making on research, society and education for refugee women. The present report is articulated around two big topics (society and education) and 4 units, two for each topic. The first one (Chapter 2) aims at clarifying gender inequalities and challenges that particularly affect refugee women. The second one (Chapter 3) proposes social and political measures to face these inequalities. The third unit (Chapter 4) showcases educational inequalities, gaps and challenges for the education of refugee women, and then the last section (Chapter 5) comes with recommendations for educational sectors of priority and teaching measures.

2. Gender inequalities and migration

Our research and education work with refugee women for the MEINART project shows clearly that **gender influences the refugee experience**, in each of its stages. Many women and girls often face gender-based **discrimination**, as laws and policies frequently reinforce existing gender inequalities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Gender shapes every aspect of migration: motivations for leaving, access to information, their journeys (especially for those women travelling along dangerous and irregular routes over land or sea), and integration into new communities.

Discrimination can occur due to various factors such as race, ethnicity, nationality, language, or religion. When these aspects intersect with gender, the **effects of discrimination** can be more pronounced and complex. To effectively address these layered inequalities, it is essential to implement laws and policies that respond to the gender-specific needs, challenges and risks migrant women face. These laws and policies should recognize and cater to the needs of *all* individuals by promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Women and girls make up roughly half of all international migrants. Women also represent around half of all migrant workers sending money back home (remittance senders). Women may migrate to improve their livelihoods and economic prospects, among other reasons. For many, migration enhances their autonomy, agency and independence by offering opportunities for a

better life. However, as a UNHCR report in 2018 points out, migration also can expose women and girls to **serious risks such as exploitation, trafficking in persons, forced labour, and gender-based violence**. These risks are particularly pronounced for migrant women and girls who travel without documentation, such as passports or visas, and those forced to take dangerous routes, often relying on people smugglers who may exploit or abuse them.

When it comes to employment prospects, **inequalities in labour markets and society** leave many migrant women with limited access to information, jobs, resources, and decision-making power compared to men. Millions of women and girls around the world still face significant barriers to accessing education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Furthermore, one in three women worldwide has experienced sexual violence or violence committed by intimate partners at least once in their lifetime. For migrant women and girls, the risks of gender-based violence throughout their migration journeys are alarmingly high, yet data on the issue remains insufficient. Additionally, many migrant women, especially those who are undocumented or in an irregular situation, do not report exploitation and abuse to the authorities for fear of arrest or deportation.

The violence that migrant women encounter is rooted in a lack of safe migration pathways, multiple forms of discrimination, and structural inequalities. These risks are made worse by inadequate access to information and services, as well as language barriers. Rising poverty and the inability to gain access to decent work has also led some migrant women to accept risky economic opportunities, leaving them more exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation.

Refugee women face many **barriers to access social services**, such as health care, housing, and education. For women migrant domestic workers access to these services is further hindered by isolation and informal employment. Sexual and reproductive health services, like family planning, prenatal care, and sexual health education, are a fundamental right for migrant women and girls but their access is frequently restricted by legal or social barriers, which can result in life threatening complications or even death. Transgender, gender diverse, undocumented refugees, and those with irregular migration status face even greater challenges and are often deterred from seeking help due to fears of discrimination, detention, and deportation.

Migration policies impact women differently than men, as they often fail to consider the specific needs, challenges and situations of vulnerability experienced by women, which fuels gender inequalities. Safe and regular migration options remain out of reach for many women, with gender-based discrimination determining who, where, and how people migrate. This leads many women to turn to unsafe and irregular migration routes, increasing their risks of trafficking, violence, and exploitation. The lack of gender data on the experiences of migrant women exacerbates these issues, leaving their needs overlooked in policymaking. Gender-responsive migration policies focus on empowering women through safe and regular pathways, legal protections, and inclusive decision-making. By addressing systemic barriers, these policies boost gender equality and enhance women's autonomy and opportunities.

3. Equality policies and measures for refugee women

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has established a set of policies to advance gender equality among refugees. The main directions are:

- Equal and meaningful **participation** in decision-making
- Individual **registration and documentation**
- Equal access to and control over **food, core relief items and cash-based interventions**
- Equal access to **economic opportunities, quality education and health services**
- Comprehensive **prevention and response services against gender-based violence**.

Migration policies must be inclusive and gender-responsive, specifically by addressing the needs and realities of women, including the fact they disproportionately shoulder caregiving responsibilities.

It is crucial to strengthen labour protections for migrant women across all sectors but especially informal ones, such as care and domestic work, to reduce exploitation, gender-based violence and discrimination. Women must have access to accurate and gender-responsive **information** that enables them to make informed choices about migration, including the risks and challenges of doing so. Establishing or expanding services for migrants by offering **language training, skills building, and counselling**, can strengthen migrant women's integration in countries of destination and on their return. For refugee women who are survivors of violence, free and safe access to shelters, health services and trauma-informed counselling is critical to support their rehabilitation.

Responsibility for integration policies is shared between the national, regional and local levels in the majority of Member States of the European Union. While integration is dealt with at national level in some cases, the majority highlight the importance of involving municipalities, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in policy implementation.

Migrant women lack awareness of their labour market rights and incentives to seek education and work opportunities. Other challenges include discrimination, a lack of social networks, limited access to childcare and other family constraints.

Overall, the need for specific integration policies tailored to migrant women is acknowledged, but just a few countries have developed dedicated policies that address the integration of migrant women, primarily in relation to accessing the labour market, civic integration, language training, education and health. Other specific policies address housing, protection from violence, prevention and protection from human trafficking, countering anti-discrimination and racism, and integration through sport. During the implementation of the MEINART project, our research team **witnessed a deterioration** of living conditions, access to services and possibilities for integration into the host society for refugee women in Greece.

4. Barriers to equal education for refugee women

Access to education is a fundamental human right. It is essential to the acquisition of knowledge and to “the full development of the human personality”, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states. More than that, education makes us more resilient and independent individuals. Yet for millions of women and girls among the world’s ever-growing refugee population, education remains an aspiration, not a reality.

Limited access to schooling perpetuates and magnifies the challenges of life in exile: finding work, staying healthy, holding on to dignity and hope. It also limits the potential of refugee women and girls to rebuild their lives, protect themselves against abuse and take a lead in shaping the lives of their communities.

Without an education, refugee women and girls are denied the confidence to speak out to contribute to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world. As refugee women come from troubled parts of the world, it is vital that they are given the keys of education to unlock their potential as leaders of peace.

Enabling refugee girls to get access to quality education requires action right across the board, from national education ministries and teacher training institutions, to communities and classrooms. This will not be easy: forced displacement has accelerated in recent years, straining facilities and infrastructure in countries that host refugees, many of which were already battling to provide adequate services to their own people. It is now time for the international community to recognize the injustice of denying refugee girls and women an education.

Ensuring that refugee girls gain access to education is crucial to their empowerment and to the future prosperity of their families and communities. If all refugee girls can get an education, their families and communities are more likely to improve their social and economic position. The higher the level of education they manage to attain, the greater these benefits could be.

School means routine, normality, purpose, and time away from the pressures and burdens of refugee life. This is crucial for girls, who are vulnerable to exploitation and to sexual and gender-based violence. By learning about their rights and how to claim them, refugees are empowered. Education strengthens their resilience in the face of the huge challenges that confront people who have been forced from their homes.

Education is also **protective**. It reduces girls’ vulnerability to exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and child marriage. According to UNESCO, if all girls went to school, child marriage would fall significantly. For refugee girls and women facing the increased risks that come with forced displacement, education is particularly important.

UNESCO research shows that **educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school**, especially their daughters, and are more likely to support them in attaining a secondary and tertiary-level education. The further girls progress with their schooling, the more they develop personal qualities that will help their communities to flourish as they strive to adapt to their host countries or as they rebuild their own homes. Furthermore, UNESCO research shows that one additional year of school can increase a woman’s earnings by up to a fifth. If all women received a primary level education, child deaths from diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia would

fall, as many studies show. These threats are especially acute in displacement situations. Educated women are more likely to be aware of where to find professional help – some of it life-saving – when pregnant or as new mothers, while the further they progress with their schooling the more aware they are of the benefits of nutrition and sanitation.

If we continue to neglect refugee girls' education, the **consequences** will be felt for generations. It is time to make it a **priority**.

A major **obstacle** to both refugee boys and girls attending school is **cost**. According to UNHCR field staff, school fees, the price of uniforms, books and other learning materials and transportation are barriers to education for boys and girls alike. Even small costs can seem problematic for people who have suddenly had to abandon their livelihoods and are often denied the right to work.

But refugee girls are often at an even greater disadvantage in terms of “opportunity costs” – losses in terms of income and of domestic duties. Collecting water or fuel, taking care of younger siblings or older relatives, household chores – these are all tasks that fall heavily on girls, while marrying daughters off removes them as a family “expense”.

Refugee girls may also have to battle social and cultural conventions and expectations. Some communities believe there is no need to educate girls, especially in places where child marriage and teenage pregnancy are the norm. Furthermore, if sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence is common in the communities that surround them, it is often found in school as well. Taken to extremes, religious hardliners have threatened and attacked girls, including refugees, who dared to defy them by attending school.

A school is made yet more unwelcoming if there is a **lack of access to sanitation, clean water and private toilets**. For example, menstruation leads girls in sub-Saharan Africa to miss four days of school every four weeks. Without clean water and toilet facilities to wash clothes and uniforms, the provision of menstrual hygiene products, and sensitivity to the subject among both school staff and their classmates, it is easy to see why girls, both refugees and from the host community, would be forced to miss school. All this creates a self-perpetuating system that works against girls: the fewer girls who are educated, the fewer female teachers there will be who can buck these trends and act as **role models**.

Even in the **European Union**, many things are yet to be done. In general, a gender perspective is missing in the majority of national policies and measures. The dual approach to gender equality, which involves gender mainstreaming throughout the policy process as well as specific actions to remedy gender inequalities, is rarely implemented in the policy areas of migrant integration and education. The European Union (EU) has been committed to this dual approach since 1995. The majority of national policies were designed using a gender-blind ‘one-size fits-all’ approach, and women and girl third-country nationals are not recognised as target groups facing gender-specific challenges.

There are important **gaps in the availability and use of reliable and comparable sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics** on third-country nationals. Data broken down by sex and other characteristics is the first step for gender mainstreaming. This data helps tailor education and training measures that respond to the distinct needs of different groups of women and men third-country nationals. Without gender statistics, policymakers' efforts to design, implement and evaluate gender-responsive policies and measures are seriously constrained. This

affects every stage of the policy cycle, from gender analysis to gender planning, to selecting relevant indicators to measure progress and enable gender-sensitive monitoring of migrant integration outcomes.

5. Inclusive measures for the education of refugee women

As one of the founding values of the European Union, gender equality should contribute significantly to integration policies and measures, including these of education and training.

EU and the Member States can do much more to ensure the effective integration of women and men, girls and boys third-country nationals. The application of gender mainstreaming in all stages of the policy cycle would ensure migrant integration and education policies address the specific needs of both women and men. Here are some **suggestions for the four stages of the policy cycle: define, plan, check and act phase.**

Define phase

- Improve the collection of reliable and comparable sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on third-country nationals.
- Conduct a gender analysis to assess existing inequalities and identify the integration needs of diverse groups of migrants by looking at how gender interacts with migration status, age, race, education level and other characteristics.
- Carry out gender impact assessments of migrant integration and education policies at the EU and Member State level.
- Consult migrant women and men during policy development, implementation and evaluation. Consultations should also include civil-society organisations, particularly grassroots initiatives in the fields of gender equality and migrant integration.
- Engage local authorities in needs-based planning, implementation and evaluation measures.

Plan phase

- Include gender-specific objectives, targets and indicators in policies, programmes and projects on migrant integration and education in line with domestic and international commitments.
- Ensure gender-sensitive budgets are in place. These should provide dedicated and consistent funding for the implementation of gender-sensitive measures for migrant integration through education and training. This should include but not be limited to initiatives supporting women in vulnerable situations.
- Explicitly target women as beneficiaries in funding instruments for migrant integration and earmark funds for measures supporting their integration, including through education and training.

- Safeguard funding for independent civil-society initiatives, particularly women and/or migrant-led organisations.

Check phase

- Use available measurement frameworks, such as Zaragoza indicators and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) monitoring framework (SDGs 4, 5 and 10) to monitor the implementation of policies, track progress and ensure accountability in efforts to achieve gender equality, education and migrant integration goals.
- Evaluate integration programmes for migrants from a gender perspective to ensure that the content and responsible institutions are gender sensitive.

Act phase

- Build gender equality competence and awareness among policymakers by introducing mandatory training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Strengthen capacity to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data on third-country nationals.
- Enhance capacity of teachers and educators by providing mandatory training on gender equality, diversity and intercultural competences.
- Strengthen intercultural competence of employers and staff working with women migrants, including work and guidance counsellors. Provide training on unconscious bias towards women migrants and refugees.
- Develop and support awareness-raising campaigns on gender and migrant stereotypes in education for host communities. Include gender equality, diversity and intercultural competences in school curricula to build mutual trust between third-country nationals and host communities and counteract racist and sexist attitudes.
- Promote the sharing of good practices on gender-sensitive integration through education at both EU and national levels to stimulate better outcomes for the beneficiaries of these initiatives, the Member States and the EU.

Based on the findings of our research and educational applications within the framework of the **MEINART project**, we align with the **recommendations of UNHCR** in the report “Her Turn: 7 ways to Help Refugee Girls Go to School”:

1. Schools must make space for girls

It is girls who most often lose out in the competition for a place in the classroom. More school places for refugee girls – and for their peers in the communities that host them – are desperately needed. Refugee children around the world are affected by a shortage of school places, particularly at secondary level, where the shortfall is acute. Donors and agencies alike need to support policies that ensure inclusive and equitable access as the way to redress the balance. By boosting capacity, we will also benefit girls in host communities as well as refugees, bringing long-

term advantages and improved resilience to successive generations in areas that need help the most.

2. No girl should miss school because the journey to school is too far or too dangerous

Refugee girls need better protection from harassment, sexual assault and kidnap on the way to school. Community action to protect refugee children with support from local authorities should be a priority. Long journeys to secondary school are a deterrent for many children, particularly girls. Improved transport, such as the provision of all-girl buses, can determine whether refugee girls are allowed to go to school by their parents or not.

3. Schools must be adapted to girls' needs

No girl should have to miss school because they lack menstrual hygiene products, access to clean water or private and safe toilets. When separate toilet facilities are not provided for girls, they are less likely to go to school. Schools need support to provide these basic facilities and products.

4. There can be no room for gender-based bullying, harassment and violence in schools

Male and female teachers require ongoing training to ensure they promote best practice and guard against behaviour that will deter girls from setting foot in the classroom. Teachers are in the perfect position to promote and instil ideas of gender equality and mutual respect among girls and boys.

5. Refugee families need incentives and encouragement to keep girls in school

If refugee adults are able to work and support their families, they are more likely to let their children stay in school. Frequent parent-teacher meetings can help parents understand their role in facilitating effective schooling. The provision of light and sustainable energy to refugee homes or shelters can also enable many girls to go to school. It also means they can do their homework or catch up on their studies after nightfall.

6. Refugee female students need more female teachers

There is an urgent need to recruit and train more female teachers from within both host and refugee communities. Girls and boys need female role models, but girls are more likely to be encouraged and motivated by the presence of an educated woman in the classroom.

7. With some extra help, girls can catch up and power on

Extracurricular activities provide remedial, enrichment or mentoring services to enable girls to catch up (where necessary), boost their studies and thrive both academically and emotionally.

While these should not be seen as an alternative to regular school, they can help to improve academic performance and, as a result, self-confidence.

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