1. Introduction and Summary

The main aim of this project has been to strengthen European Feminist Movement building at national level for migrant women through creating and facilitating transnational and national spaces for capacity building and dialogue as well increasing visibility.

During the past two and half years, WIDE+ and the increasing number of project partners have successfully contributed to this aim; on which they want to keep working on together. We are happy to look back at the actions done by this group of associations that consists of migrant and refugee women-led organisations including Community Based Organisations, networks, and feminist NGOs with migrant women group membership. With migrant women and girls, we mean refugee, trafficked, undocumented, and others on the move or arriving in Europe. We do not differentiate in our approach between different categories of women and girls that are or have been on the move between borders.

The project was designed as a follow up to a range of successful projects and other activities of WIDE+ members, which started in 2016. It was a direct follow up to the OSF funded 2018-2020 project: ‘Strengthening Innovative Solutions to protect Female Migrant and Refugee Rights’, which was coordinated by WIDE+. This work has resulted in a vibrant Gender and Migration Working Group that works at European level.
The European Working Group brings together WIDE+ member organisations and individuals, partner groups and networks and volunteers (young professionals, academics, activists) from across Europe. The current working group membership covers active organisations and individuals in Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Serbia, Italy, Romania, Germany, Denmark, Turkey, and Sweden. Among the members of the Working Group are: NGO Atina in Serbia, Red Latinas, Mujeres Con Voz, Alianza por Solidaridad in Spain, International Women Space, LAFI and Gabriela in Germany, GADIP in Sweden, KULU Women and Development Denmark and WO-MI in Denmark, Voices of all Women in the Netherlands, Chaska International in Belgium, ADRI Association in Italy. There is an extended network of allies around the working group and individual volunteers can join as well. The working group is coordinated by WIDE+ secretariat member Nurhidayah Hassan and supported by WIDE+ coordinator Gea Meijers in financial and administrative issues.

Strong social ties and knowledge exchange empower migrant women activists in multiple ways. This enables more activism to promote their rights. Given the huge challenges faced by migrant women’s groups and activists, cooperation at the transnational level provides very welcome support that addresses needs. This project, as with the previous ones, has underscored the urgency for self-organized female migrants and feminists to work transnationally together. We see this is the increased (interest in) participation in the working group’s activities and the many activities that are completed. The group sets its own agenda, and this has been a very active one.

The project contains national movement building activities, especially events, transnational spaces to meet, (trans)national capacity building, and visibility actions through media actions. This was outlined in the project proposal, which reflected the needs of the working group members. **In the past two and halve years we have achieved these objectives that we had set with this project**

The national-based events were held in Serbia, Spain, Denmark, and Germany. The national events brought together migrant women and others for learning, exchanging, and collaborating. They were designed to build networks, coalitions or an association and offered spaces to engage deeper in the specific topics discussed during the events. While each national event may tackle a myriad of issues, they all contribute to the promotion of migrant women’s rights.

The transnational aspect of the project brings together the different partners of the project through regular monthly meetings, e-communication through newsletters, mailing list, and social media, which remains ongoing after the project, though to sustain its level of activism and grow we are seeking new funding sources. The coordination body, the WIDE+ Migration and Gender Working Group, decided over all activities including the several transnational capacity building activities.
2. Outcomes realized

The pandemic presented many challenges, notably in preventing direct access to migrant women in need and increasing responsibilities and risks for migrant women. Migrant women were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, having greater caregiving burdens and some struggled with gender-based violence during lockdowns. WIDE+ members and partners have reflected on the impact of COVID-19 after the first few months collectively, which has been documented.

This project has also been hugely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The flexibility shown by OSF allowed us to continue with the project, while re-designing the strategies towards including more activities that do not require larger face-to-face meeting. As a result, a lot of transnational capacity building shifted to online activities, especially during the first phase of COVID-19. Similar challenges were faced by our groups at national level.

The circumstances of COVID-19 which had prevented (larger) in-person gatherings over extended period of times, and created experiences of personal difficulties and losses, meant that our originally planned activities had been accommodated to more online action and less focused on face-to-face meeting. Thus, the activities changed a bit in the format, but the outcomes it aimed to achieve have been realized and remained the same. Also, the timing of two years was extended by half a year for the same reason.

Given this context, we will describe all activities completed through matching the with the planned outcomes. We will list the output and a narrative reflection, without mentioned previously planned activities that were specific in timing, format, and outline.

2.a. OUTCOME: Enlarging our collaboration at national and transnational level

RESULT: PARTIALLY ACHIEVED, new members have joined, but our objectives are much more ambitious

Increasing or sustaining movement building at national and transnational level was the key objective of this project. What has been achieved is that at the end of the project more groups are working together transnationally, national movement building has been successfully carried out and there is an increasing number of allies and partners around the work that we have carried out. In terms of the transnational collaboration there is now a very active European Working Group with 15 members or partners. The group carried out the strategic planning for the project, made the decisions and implemented the project. New members that joined this group in 2020 were: International Women’s Space, Germany, Lex Femmes, Sweden and Alianza por Solidaridad, Spain. Groups that joined in 2021 and 2022 were: LAFl and Gabriela in Germany, WO-MI in Denmark, Voice of all Women in the Netherlands, Chaska International in Belgium, and ADRI Association in Italy.
Around the working group there is a wide network of allies that we have worked with and that has significantly grown during the project, such as PICUM and WAVE at the European level, or associations that we connected to through webinars such as Melissa Network and LAWRS among some of the few. We have also exchanged with a few foundations, like the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM) regarding migrant women’s activism. These connections enable strategic ad hoc exchange or collaboration during the project and for the future.

At the beginning of the project, we had set out that, “The new partners we will start to collaborate with, will not only be other women migrant groups or activists. We aim to also include other ‘minority’ women groups, like Roma and LBT women, if feasible and depending on group dynamics. They will also represent different ages (for instance, reaching out to young feminists) and work with different forms of expression— not only from grassroots activism and European advocacy, but also from art-ivism (using art and performance as activism)”.

We achieved this in some ways, though differently as we had planned. Firstly, WIDE+ as a network has more strongly anchored active promotion of LGBTQ+ rights in its network, with several online capacity building events. In the working group this has not been a very active focus. However, there are a lot of young migrant women involved and some of the new groups work with artivism, such as LAFI. Some of our individual members bring this in as their expertise and we are working to better integrate this into the activities. We have incorporated illustrations in some of our work for visibility and dissemination.

Given our ambitions, we have not yet reached the full potential of our collective work. We believe that if we can invest more capacity, much more groups would be interested to join, and we could be useful for them. For example, WIDE+ has been working to reflect on the migration experiences from women leaving Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine in the past months, which would be important to integrate in the working group.
2.b OUTCOME: National spaces for movement building

This outcome has the following

- **At minimum 4 national meetings are facilitated and organized** to give a boost to self-organized migrant women’s movement building in different countries.
- The project will offer **support to other national meetings organized by the project partners**, such as offering an international speaker or participant to come or sharing reports from these meetings.

About the meetings:

- They bring together at least 10 feminists from (mainly) self-organized migrant women groups and those who work (or want to work with such groups).
- The main contributors and shapers for the programme are migrant women.

RESULT: ACHIEVED

Summary

The following 5 national activities were organised, each containing different kinds of meetings and other actions that are explained below. Each meeting was part of a cohesive process that build or sustained the network-building of the group at national level, enabling them to strengthen themselves as collective force. Each partner developed a project proposal that was discussed in the working group and then approved. We did not receive any proposals that were rejected; some were altered following collective reflections. The meetings were online and face to face (the transnational events organized that were part of these activities are mentioned in the next session). After listing the project, we will briefly explain them:


National Activities in Spain: Two Rounds of School for Political Training

The School for Political training has been a very important project for the network that helped enable this collective network to continue. It was launched in 2020 also to celebrate 10 years of the network.

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Due to its success, it ran a second cycle in 2021. All meetings were held online, given the COVID-19 situation. And, in the second cycle limited funds played a role (the project was able to finance two cycles). The general objective of this political school is to increase migrant women’s political participation and improve their capacity for political advocacy in Spain. The pedagogical methods of the School for Political Training are based on the principles of Popular Education and the processes of Feminist and Reflective Participatory Action-Research.

**Background to the School of Political Training**

The Red Latina Network was formed following a process of communication and coordination between organizations of Latin American women in Spain, it is a national network established by and for immigrant women. Their main goal is to empower themselves and defend their rights as migrant women through dialogue, learning and sisterhood. They position themselves as political subjects endowed with rights, claiming active citizenship for migrants. Currently, the network is made up of 14 associations based in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Zamaia, Donosti, Granada, Seville and Galicia. Since its inception, it has carried out training sessions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of its members through joint reflection, in order to improve their capacity for political influence.

The network decided to organize a School of Political Training for migrant women in order to enhance this community’s political participation. The network assessed that an open debate on the political participation of migrant women in the country was both urgent and necessary. A workshop organised as part of the 4th Network Meeting in 2018 brought to light the importance of the political participation of migrant women and described the obstacles to migrant women’s participation as well as the strategies women use to overcome certain obstacles.

Since migrant women actively participate in every aspect of life (personal, family, social, work, community) they can and should also participate politically in all of these areas.

It was concluded that since migrant women actively participate in every aspect of life (personal, family, social, work, community) they can and should also participate politically in all of these areas. After a Political Forum in 2019, to which allied associations and political parties were invited, the Latina Network concluded that a training session on political participation and citizenship geared to all the members of the Network was necessary in order to raise awareness of this issue.

From the public report of the first School of Political training

The first cycle of the school for political training covered two main topics which are 1) participation and citizenship and 2) migrations and forms of violence, and there were 2 sessions per module (2 hours per session). Through a survey members and partners of the network could sign up. A total of 49 women participated, representing the 14 associations in the Network. To complement the school and to enable collective reflection and celebration in a time of COVID-19 that had hit Spain particularly hard, with very strict measures as well, 2 webinars were organised one transnational and one national: the COVID-19: Structural Violence against and Resistance of Migrant Women in Spain. A report from the School and the webinars was made available in English and Spanish.
The second cycle of the school in 2021 had 5 sessions, examining international, European and Spanish State instruments relating to migrant women’s human rights. The aim was to facilitate the knowledge and use of instruments of law on migrant women’s human rights for political and social participation. The approach followed again the methodology of feminist popular education, with active listening, experience, and exchange of knowledge in a safe environment, with pre-reading, video viewing and reflections from different perspectives. It was concluded that the challenges ahead are enormous in the work to overcome the gaps in access to rights in conditions of equality and non-discrimination, and to convert these legal and political instruments into actions to demand access to rights without discrimination. Activists from 18 allied associations (of Red Latinas) and 11 migrant women attended the trainings. It concluded with a transnational webinar that is mentioned in the other section. A report in English and Spanish is available as well.

From the responses of the school’s post-session evaluations, it can be deduced that in general the training proposal of the School for Political Training and its facilitators are valued positively. The high degree of knowledge of the themes, the methodology and the clarity of the exhibition stands out for participants. For the future, several of the participants suggest that at least one session be held in person, which will help the collective learning. Red Latinas together with WIDE+ have fundraised for such a meeting, though some additional co-financing is needed.

National Activities in the Netherlands/Germany: Leave No Woman Behind: Empowering Refugee Women in Trier, Germany

This project that the Working Group decided to support is another kind of example of movement-building. While in the previous situation it was about sustaining and developing a national network, this project has been about building a new association from a group of migrant women individuals that want to support their migrant women community. It came about through personal contacts between two women refugee leaders. Voice of All Women (VOAW) is a grassroots organization in the Netherlands that is committed to women’s rights and that seeks to enhance the resilience, autonomy, and agency of women from marginalized communities. The founder of this association got to know Shahla Maihandost, an Afghan refugee feminist who is based in Germany who used to be a political active feminist in Afghanistan and fled the country five years ago.

VOAW aimed to empower marginalised refugee women in Germany by training them to train others in raising awareness about harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence and through connecting the women with local organizations/initiatives. Mrs Maihandost volunteered to be the leader caretaker of this new group with several volunteers around her. In this process these women regain their strength, and become a role model for other Afghan, Iranian and other Farsi speaking women who face difficulties being new and a refugee in Germany. VOAW, together with WIDE+, is in the process of assisting Maihandost in setting up her own NGO in Trier, Germany.
Such migrant women (or those of migrant origin) are also victims of domestic and gender-based violence. VOAW has a methodology regarding empowerment and raising awareness about taboo themes. This methodology also involves taking women out of isolation and connecting them with other women and local organizations. Part of VOAW’s methodology is the Popular Education method, from Paulo Freire. It is a people-oriented and people-guided approach to education.

Despite being self-led and unregistered, Maihandost, with the support of VOAW, designed 5 workshops around the topic of human rights, gender-based violence, family and children’s rights. These workshops were held on 14 February, 26 February, 8 March, 9 March and 10 March. Around 20 women attended each workshop. VOAW provided in-house trainings to her and a few volunteers that enabled her to give these dialogue meeting on taboo topics with migrant women from the local community in Trier.

Overall, there was positive feedback from the migrant women about these workshops, and they felt empowered to know their rights and deepen their knowledges in the different topics. They have requested for frequent sessions on these topics.

**National Activities in Denmark: Amplifying Migrant Women’s Voices – Exchange of Experiences**

KULU concluded early 2020 a very successful project of building dialogue and connections between different stakeholders, KULU as a mixed network in Denmark (that includes migrant women and development cooperation associations), and migrant women groups. Sadly, due to COVID-19 KULU was not able to build further on these series of events (partially supported by the previous OSF project). This project carried out in 2022, when larger face to face meetings finally could be held freely, meant a restart of this process of building alliances.
Two meetings were organised to strengthen the ties between feminist migrant networks and other feminist organizations and in this relation, advance the network building and capacity building of groups and organizations that are concerned with women’s and migrant human rights.

KULU organised the first meeting, “Amplifying Migrant Women’s Voices - Exchange of Experiences”, which was a debate session held on 12 May 2022 and was a collaborative effort between KULU and Wo-Mi. This was a new collaboration. The collaborative effort between Wo-Mi and KULU in terms of developing the concept, sharing knowledges and experience has strengthened the ties between the two organizations and further opened for a shared network of feminist organizations.

Wo-Mi internally consists of migrant women and engages directly with migrant women, they are a resourceful partner as they sit on a lot of knowledge on the challenges met by migrant women. The speakers that contributed at the event introduced new ways of engaging and acts of solidarity through the concept of artivism. Combining arts with activism can be used as a tool to strengthen the movement of migrant women organizations in Denmark. This concept provides for a new lens that can expand the dialogue and learning process between the organizations.

The second session organised by KULU was, “Migrant Women’s situation in the Labour Market in Denmark” on 17 May 2022. It was a shared effort between Babaylan Denmark and KULU. Babaylan is a network of Philippine migrants that has a strong history of political engagement. Babaylan is a force in the landscape of feminist migrant organisations in Denmark and had a strong representation and engagement at the second event. They had also invited one representant from the Filipino Association in Denmark who participated and added interesting inputs to the debate.

At this event, different actors were present to uncover the access, challenges, and barriers of migrant women to the Danish labour market. The debate was set on disseminating the situation of migrant women in the Danish labour market with a special attention to the hotel-and restaurant industry and a broad spectrum of actors was present. The debate touched upon the boundaries in access to labour migrant women are facing. It was discussed how these are broken down by both employer and municipality and the actors shared their best practices, which contributed to a constructive debate on the issue that can disseminate into future partnerships and dialogue between migrant women’s networks and actors representing the private labour market.

The meetings brought together 30 participants, consisting of migrant women, feminists, and other members of civil society in Denmark. The advancement of network building and capacity building of feminist and migrant women’s organisations have been carried out in the sense of a strong collaboration between KULU, Wo-Mi, and Babaylan. KULU has developed follow up projects, focusing meetings on the impact of storytelling and artivism, for which it raised funds together with WIDE+. In this way it will be able to build on the achievements of these meetings, next to the gained knowledge. A more elaborate report is attached, and video have been prepared and shared. A short video in mobile format can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/h0ajVLMuEPs. In full format. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBUQSx4EiCQ
National activities in Serbia: Expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women

ANNEX 1 provides a detailed report of the national activities, which we included to show the coherence between different activities and the aimed changes in societies. Key elements of the supported project were: two (transnational) webinars, a report based on a survey, capacity building for the advocacy group of migrant women within Atina, and ongoing communication and advocacy.

Conclusion

Four associations in total received support through the OSF grants, each with a different kind of project. All projects contributed in different ways to movement building at national level and helped the associations to cope with the impact of COVID-19. Red Latinas was enabled as large network of migrant women associations to continue their networking and build their capacity; KULU could restart their alliance-building with migrant women groups and stakeholders and could strengthen their own network; VOAW could help support the formation of a new community-based organisation that want to formalise; Atina could build their capacity through knowledge creation and strengthen the work of the migrant women advocacy group.

2.c OUTCOME: Transnational Spaces for Reflection and Dialogue

RESULT: ACHIEVED

Regular meetings

Through the migration and gender working group, the partners of this project have met 17 times online to plan and reflect together. The meetings are held at a monthly frequency, except for summer months and holiday periods. The meetings are being held to give each other updates about the project activities and to also reflect on other issues they are working on in their respective organisations. The meetings were inspiring, energizing and over time, the group formed close bonds with each other.

Group Photo of a meeting in session of the Gender and Migration/Migration and Gender Working Group

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In-person Capacity Building Space

After the pandemic situation stabilized, the group did manage to have 1 in-person meeting in November 2021, from 25-27 November, in Berlin, to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and to also have a strategic meeting evaluating the project and future activities. The theme of this meeting was “Migrant Women’s Resistance Against Violence”. It was a joint organisation with WIDE+ and International Women Space, a partner of the working group. A report on this meeting can be seen here.

Purpose of the meeting:

- Connecting members of WIDE+ gender and migration working group (WG) and other feminist organisations.
- Strengthen capacity and analysis around gender-based violence against migration women and girls.
- Evaluate the collaboration in the Gender and Migration working group and assessing needs and wishes for future collaboration.

Organisations that participated in the meeting included Red Latinas (Spain), NGO Atina (Serbia), GADIP (Sweden), International Women Space (Germany), KULU (Denmark), ADRI Association (Italy), and Voice of All Women (the Netherlands). The meeting was also attended by invited organisations like Women Migrants (Denmark), Gabriela and Ban Ying (Germany), and members of Marche Mondiale des Femmes Belgique (Belgium). Over the 3 days of meeting, 50 people, including migrant women activists, feminists and representatives from foundations attended the meeting.

The programme consisted of joining an international Feminist March in which Jennifer Kamau from IWS held a brief speech (see WIDE+ twitter) on 25 November. There was on this day a welcome dinner. The next day, 26 November, focused on the WIDE+ WG with a capacity building session on the Istanbul Convention with Laura Albu, a visit to the IWS office including a small tour of Kreuzberg district and a WG Strategic Planning Meeting.

On the last day of activities, 27 November, there was room for exchange with participants from Berlin with a public all day event. This event included a Panel Dialogue on the impact of the pandemic on violence against migrant women, presentations on climate justice, gender, and migration as well as the impact of labour migration on children. And the day formally ended with a world café session on strategizing resistance against violence.

Evaluation

The group concluded that the OSF project has been instrumental to their advocacy and capacity building in pushing for migrant women’s rights in their national contexts, and they are keen to collaborate more at the European level.
Some quotes:

- “The meeting allowed me to know the colleagues, their organisations, and their work better. It made me feel like we are a team and that we have the same goals. It encouraged my desire to work at the European level and showed me that it is possible with a team so committed to social justice”.
- “It was incredible to feel such a great energy, meet everyone face to face and hear about all the inspiring work other women are doing”.
- “Important to meet other migrant women to create strategies that generate an impact and inclusion of issues about the reality of migrant women”.

Online Training

While movement-building remains a key objective of the project, capacity building through training sessions is also important as a way to learn and create new knowledges and actions together. Online became the default modality when the pandemic arose but working online has its pitfalls as well. The pandemic saw an increase of online gender-based violence which includes acts like trolling, cyber stalking, zoom-bombing, etc, and has disproportionately affected migrant women. Together with a Catalan cyberfeminist collective, Donestech, the group conducted two workshops on “Digital Security for Migrant Women, and other Women’s Rights Activists”, on 10 & 17 February 2021, and a webinar on “Tackling Online Gender-Based Violence Through EU Laws and Policies” on 25 February 2021.
The two workshops had around 40 attendees in total, consisting of migrant and refugee women not only based in Europe but also in Latin America (the session was in English and Spanish). Digital security is a new topic for the group, and many were very keen to delve deeper into this topic given the digital attacks on women’s human rights defenders of late.

Related to the workshop topic of digital security, the group also wanted to engage in a discussion around the legislative and policy frameworks of online gender-based violence. The group invited several experts around this topic, including Member of the European Parliament, Dr Sylwia Spurek, who is the rapporteur for the legislative report on “combating gender-based cyberviolence in the EU”. The webinar provided an overview of the European and international legal framework in tackling online violence against women and girls. According to a report by the EU Parliament’s FEMM Committee, in Europe 1 in 10 women have experienced cyber violence since the age of 15. It is crucial to highlight migrant women and girls are also more vulnerable to online violence, in particular, online hate speech that are racist or xenophobic in nature.

With this newly established connection to the FEMM Committee of the European Parliament, the group, together with feminist NGO Creación Positiva (a member of WIDE+) also managed to provide a robust set of recommendations to this legislative process, specifically to provide a comprehensive and specific definition of online gender-based violence, to ratify the Istanbul Convention at the EU level, and to earmark funding for women’s right groups and migrant women groups who work directly with women on the ground to counter any form of gender-based violence. These recommendations were taken up by the FEMM committee and included in the final legislative report. This is a good example of successful advocacy efforts from the group, and we would like to continue actively advocating for women’s rights, and migrant women’s rights in various policymaking spaces such as being a member at the “Expert Group of the European Commission” for migration policies.

**Webinars**

Several international webinars were organized on different topics to build capacity through sharing experience and knowledge. All webinars also showcased the agency and voices of migrant women as experts and activists:


In total, more than 400 people attended these webinars and of all webinars there is either a report or the actual recording available to learn about the topics discussed. Most of the webinars was in two languages held, mostly English and Spanish and some in Serbian and English. Most speakers in the webinars are migrant women activists. In one of the webinars, “Positive changes in the lives of women and girls’ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers - victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence”, a government representative was invited as a speaker. For the webinar, “Tackling Online Gender-based Violence Through EU Laws and Policies”, a Member of the European Parliament was also a speaker. The first two webinars were made possible through the leftover of the previous OSF support project, which foresaw in organizing transnational webinars. It included on MEP in one of the webinars as speaker. The webinar on global care chains was financed by another grant completely, and speakers included members of associations that later joined the gender and migration working group. The last webinar, an online dialogue between migration women leaders and staff in private foundations, included live drawing.

Through these webinars, the working group and partners established new contacts with policymakers and start building connections with different stakeholders for future advocacy actions.

Illustration by Latin American feminist, Margarita Rebolledo Hernández for WIDE+ online dialogue, “Resourcing Migrant Women’s Activism in Europe”.

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Publication

One of the main topics discussed in the working group is the lack of funds that each migrant women group faces. Whether it is due to the lack of capacity to fundraise (notably for EU funding which has a complex application procedure), lack of available funds that provide long-term, multi-year core support, and the lack of representation of migrant women in grantmaking spaces, this topic is a recurrent one in our group.

Given this context, the group embarked on a review of an EU-level funds that reach migrant women groups in Europe. In 2022, together with the webinar, “Resourcing Migrant Women’s Activism”, the group also launched a paper, “Migrant Women in EU Policies: Tracking EU Funds”. In this paper, we assess the support in programmes towards migrant women in the EU, specifically the financial support to migrant women’s associations. Overall, the rights of migrant women, one of the most marginalised groups in European societies, have not been prioritised by the EU and its Member States. While there is limited data available, this review study has synthesised findings from various sources to make these important conclusions.

The review paper has been disseminated widely to all WIDE+ members and partners. A Spanish and French translation are being prepared and disseminated as well. At the same time, the group has also reached out to MEPs from the FEMM and LIBE Committees and the Human Rights Sub-committee of the European Parliament.

The working group is keen to continue engaging in this topic with policymakers to ensure that their voices are represented in the decision-making processes that will ultimately allow easier access to funds for their work in the social justice arenas.

2.d OUTCOME: Ongoing Capacity Building

In more detail the planned ongoing capacity building we envisioned were:

- We have fundraised together for additional joint activities with another donor, and participants will have been enabled to increase their own fundraising activities.
- We have experimented with a transnational system of peer-to-peer support among partners/participants in the project, in which members with more experience in one domain, share their experience with others and provide for a certain duration ongoing advice and moral support.

RESULT: partially ACHIEVED, with COVID-19 and all the idea of the peer-to-peer support was dropped from our plans.
Fundraising

Our capacity building in fundraising was shaped through an online dialogue meeting between 2 migrant women leaders and 2 staff members of private foundations (including a European network). We made a report of this meeting as well and social media messages that were shared with the working group and widely through the ongoing WIDE+ communication strategy.

We worked several times together with members and partners to apply jointly for EU grants and are currently working towards applying for a grant from a foundation. It has been challenging to find suitable calls from private foundations. One joint application was successful with the EU. One joint application between a couple of members of the project took a lot of time and build our capacity a lot in terms of fundraising skill. This was an application in 2020 for the Daphne programme on addressing gender-based violence with migrant women. We re-applied with a new project (with similar methodology) in 2022.

Currently we have one follow up project as a result from our joint fundraising. Through the EU Erasmus+ programme WIDE+ will coordinate with 7 associations and other associations as experts face to face capacity building (national meeting and 3 international trainings) on promoting migrant women as civic/political actors (promoting them in what the EU calls ‘democratic life’). The project will result in two publications and a series of multi-media ‘treasures’.

We are seeking funds from one or more private foundations to complement the grant of the EU and to enable a sustainable basis for the coordination of the working group and it’s supporting the members. We will also continue fundraising within the EU programmes.

WIDE+’s Migration and Gender Working Group joined a feminist march on 25 November 2021, in Berlin, Germany, to demand for an end to all forms of violence against migrant women.
Peer-to-peer support cancelled, instead small emergency grant

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this mini-project was cancelled. Instead, with the changes in the formats of the project, we decided in the beginning of the project to provide a small emergency support grant of 2000 Euros to migrant women domestic workers in Spain. This was an addition to support provided by several or our partners and a reply to the huge impact of COVID-19 on the migrant women workers in Spain that were faced with exclusion in overall support measures of the government.

We supported the alliance of regularization in Spain, which had become a very large alliance to demand the inclusion of migrants into receiving basic rights and support. This regularization campaign demands for the Spanish government to approve the ‘Royal Emergency Decree for the Administrative Regularization of Foreign people in Spain’. All our Spanish members and partners were part of this large coalition of civil society, associations, and people to push for the demands of the campaign, to ensure that no one is left behind.

2.e OUTCOME: Media Action Plan

In more detail the planned Media Action Plan we envisioned were:

We will have widely disseminated not only the outcomes of the capacity building efforts and meetings through the websites and social media of all associations involved. But we have also developed and shared other articles, vlogs, etc. of different policies and ways of working of self-organized migrant women groups to different audiences. This dissemination will be structured into a media action plan.

RESULT: ACHIEVED

Learning and sharing of information and increasing visibility about the project is made possible through e-newsletters, mailings, blogs/websites, social media messages including campaigns. We did this through the organizations’ channels including social media (integrated in newsletters and other communication forms the associations used). We have not done a quantitative evaluation of the visibility of all the involved partners given that it can be very timely and difficult to monitor the viewing and engagement rates of each message on the different media around the project.

We can say something about the growth of the WIDE+ visibility in which the gender and migration working group is one of the few active working groups. We did a summary statistic to show impact over the years 2019-2021. WIDE+ twitter impressions grew from 32.500 views in 2017 to 66.000 views in 2018, to 142.000 views in 2019, it stabilized in 2020 with around 140.000 views and an engagement rate of around 1,4 % and it has grown again in 2021 to almost 230.000 views with an engagement rate of around 2,1 % (up to 30 October of this year). Our number of followers is growing with currently over 1400 followers. Our Facebook outreach dropped from over 20.000 views and 1300 engagements in 2019 to 11.000 views and
1200 engagements in 2020 and it increased again to 15,000 views with around 2000 engagements. These are all organic impressions since we do not use any commercial services for social media outreach. Members and partners receive regular news from WIDE+. This e-newsletter is opened by 30 to 50% of the readers.

In terms of content, in addition to posting information relating to the project activities, information on other actions by all associations was shared as well. Part of the work is dissemination of partners’ results like the amazing publication based on qualitative research: “Pull the Thread: Stories of Migrant Women Survivors of Sexist Violence” by Red Latinas and AIETI – it can be read here: https://tirardelhilo.info/ (in Spanish).

We experimented in 2020 with video messages as well, and published a video message from our migration working group to start the 16 days campaign against gender-based violence. And we published another kind of video statement on International Migration Day. We continued with this kind of communication in 2021 and 2022, with messages on International Women’s Day in 2021 and 2022 (the one for 2021 was an overall one for WIDE+, including the gender and migration work) and on International Migration Day 2021.
3. Impacts and Challenges

Impacts
An essential feature of this project is that we follow what groups and associations want to work on, supporting activities for which they cannot obtain any or full level of funding to undertake their activities. With the ultimate goal of movement building in our mind, we work from a bottom-up and flexible approach. What we have learned is that for the partners and members in this project, our collaboration is about supporting political transformation. In other words, they see this project to advance standing up for migrant women’s rights at national and European level. The activities are also aimed to advocate for change with politicians, other decision makers, other civil society, and a general public to empower migrant women in demanding change.

Movement building at transnational level support similar processes at national level and vice versa
Through this project, very close bonds and relationships have been established between the project partners. The strong sense of solidarity and sisterhood that is needed in movement-building has been nurtured. There is a lot of interest from the project partners to continue working together, especially at the European level to influence policymaking in advocating for the rights of migrant women in different areas. We have been thoroughly inspired by the closeness of the group and energy in furthering the partnerships. Different types of migrant women groups (NGOs versus grassroots) work well together, as every partner were able to calibrate their expectations and worked well together.

The support provided to national projects helped the groups to increase, start building or sustain their objectives in national movement building in their country and of their association.

From the feedback of partners, the conclusion is that the methodology of having a European work group to work together transnationally and to support work on national level is having impacts of movement building on both levels, reinforcing each other in their impact.

Making migrant women agency visible at European level
One thing we were able to do only through collaboration, is making migrant women more visible at national and transnational level. Because the different activities of the partners had garnered great visibility, there is a lot of interest from other migrant women groups to join the project or working group. This is an opportunity for further collaboration and to increase the visibility of migrant women activism in Europe.

Supported [in part] by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Human Rights Initiative of the Open Society Foundations
**Increasing the adaptability and resilience of migrant women groups**

As much as the pandemic had hampered possibilities of in-person work, it has also brought out the group’s adaptability and resilience. The group adapted quickly to the changing online modalities, learnt from each other, and incorporated different analyses of the pandemic in their work/activities. For instance, the funding from OSF enabled Red Latinas to change their plans and conduct online trainings and engage with migrant women throughout the pandemic.

Capacity building has been the main strategy to build resilience. There are many good examples of migrant feminist work that we can learn from. Learning transnationally gives us a completely new dimension. Training, sharing of work done by others, etc. gives us new knowledge and insights. Transnational capacity building has an “eye-opening” effect. We have discussed this and other impacts more elaborately in the [publication](#) we prepared about the previous project supported by OSF, which had many similar strategies on which we have built in this project.

**Challenges**

In our view we are implementing the project to achieve its objectives, but from a different methodology (more online). Funding continues to be a big challenge for our partners. While this project has provided some financial support for the activities, many of the activities were reliant on the work of volunteers or low experts’ fees. Migrant women activists view political and advocacy work as work that needs to be fairly paid, and unfortunately this can only come through with long-term and core funding. We know that there are foundations that understand these struggles. Many migrant women groups, especially those that work at the grassroots level, struggle with having sufficient funds to ensure the sustainability of their work. Fundraising will be one primary theme that the group will work on in 2022 onwards.
ANNEX 1: NGO ATINA’S FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

on Expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building across Europe 2021

Project context

NGO Atina was implementing the project "Expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building across Europe 2021" in the period January 1 - December 31, 2021, in partnership with Women in Development Europe+ (WIDE+), and with financial support of the Open Society Foundations (OSF).

Project activities and results

Objective 1: Improved understanding of the importance of international legal and political instruments related to the position of migrant women, within relevant state institutions and feminist movement in Serbia

Objective 2: Knowledge-share of Serbian experiences to international partners on the asylum protection of migrant women (New Asylum law)

Objective 3: Promotion of the migrant women’s rights in general and in relation to COVID-19 situation in particular

Objective 4: Promoting migrant women activists to further work together, through reaching out to possible new members or allies, and offering capacity building to current members as they will be a part of the Advocacy Group of migrant women in all components of the project

Partnerships and cooperation

Lessons learned

Beautiful and powerful voices from the field
During the reporting period, NGO Atina has been intensively working on increasing the advocacy agency of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls in Serbia, as well as on the creation of new possibilities for them to take active leadership and participation in decision-making processes. The context in which the project was implemented was particularly affected by a continuous pressure exerted by state institutions on civil society organisations in Serbia, the coronavirus pandemic, and the strengthening of right-wing organisations that were mobilising around the idea to expel all the migrants from the country, and not allow them to exercise their rights.

During the 2021, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in Serbia had to react on several occasions because of increased occurrences of discrimination such as hate speech, harassing and humiliating treatment towards the migrants. In the report that was published “Attitudes of citizens toward discrimination in Serbia”, migrants i.e., asylum seekers represent a group that experienced the greatest social distance, even before the pandemic started. From the practice of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, it can be concluded that words and expressions used in forms of discrimination such as hate speech, harassing and humiliating treatment, aim to cause fear in individuals and groups, to create intolerance and hatred toward them, and often represent a call for violence against persons due to some of their personal characteristics. Based on noted cases and their developments, as well as those cases reported by Atina’s team, the Commissioner concluded that every individual has the right to express their opinion and personal views, which is the basis of any free, democratic society, but at the same time, freedom of speech, regardless of the way in which ideas and views are presented, must never be an excuse for discrimination.

At the same time, NGO Atina faced internal risks regarding the care for the quality of services provided, safety and security, as well as life per se in Serbia. The space for activities of civil society organisations kept shrinking in 2021, with extremely backward ideologies and anti-movements (anti-feminist, fascist) constantly emerging. NGOs, especially women’s rights organisations, were also perceived as a threat to the regime which was in every way trying to keep women’s voices away from the public discourse, as well as from the subjects of importance to women. In addition, a divided state politics that have been hesitant in whether to move Serbia closer to the EU or Russia created a discord within the citizens and caused damage to civic space.

To ensure greater stability, Atina made resiliency a new pillar of its strategic plan which has been of great assistance in clearly articulating its needs and demands. This also helped Atina’s team to systematically change things that were affecting them and to better formulate some of the challenges and possible solutions as well. The first aspect of this process was centred on the creation of a broad communication plan that would include internal, external and crisis communication, along with specific communication pillars. That action provided a clear guidance in all communications efforts and kept the focus on ensuring continuous engagement and intentional messaging both within the organisation and to the outside actors/partners and local and wider community. The second aspect was aimed at the staff wellbeing and support. Given the nature of work itself, as well as the difficult circumstances that further exacerbate its effects, this was of utmost importance and was kept as the crucial aspect of the organisation’s efforts and cultivated consistently. It also consequently provided for greater effectiveness in work and helped Atina develop its full potential.
Another important milestone has been achieved during the reporting period. Namely, the first child from the refugee and asylum-seeking population has been enrolled in preschool. Despite the fact that the Law on Asylum offers the possibility of free primary and secondary education, this was never done in Serbia before. This example represents a significant step in the integration of migrant children into society, but has also served as a learning process for all the actors involved. There has been an evident lack of cooperation between state institutions that usually served to hinder any attempts to enrol children before. That is why civil society organisations have been advocates and mediators in this process, and essential for its success.

**Project activities and results**

Thanks to the partnership with WIDE+, NGO Atina managed to collaborate with other feminist migrant organisations from across Europe, which wasn’t the case before and to jointly advocate for the improvement of the rights of women migrants and asylum seekers, but also to mainstream this topic in the national framework.

Each aspect of the project was adapted to the changes in circumstances and conducted with the utmost care and with the focus on creating a substantial and sustainable change for the better in migrant women’s position and overall situation.

The main goal of the project, which was to expand the space for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building, has been achieved through work on the following objectives and activities:

**Objective 1: Improved understanding of the importance of international legal and political instruments related to the position of migrant women, within relevant state institutions and feminist movement in Serbia**

To reach the objective and tackle the issues that most affect migrant women in Serbia, NGO Atina organised two webinars during the project implementation.

The first webinar was held on June 10, 2021, entitled *“Ending trafficking and violence against girls and women in the context of global migrations”*. The main goal of the webinar was to gather civil rights defenders and CSOs representatives from Serbia and abroad, active in the thematic areas of migration, women’s, child, and general human rights, preventing violence and trafficking, with a specific goal to understand UN CEDAW documents in this respect and utilise them for advocacy actions, with a particular emphasis on the CEDAW General recommendation No. 38 and migrant experiences of the Balkan route countries.

At the same time, the intention of this event was to indicate practical obligations of the state parties, individual institutions, and organisations regarding this CEDAW recommendation, with which many of the actors in Serbia are not even familiar. The shared knowledge was to help organisations exert pressure and improve advocacy aimed at state authorities to intensify efforts in prevention and suppression of trafficking in migrant women and girls residing in their territories. Another issue tackled by this webinar was directed toward the obligations of the states into the enlargement of the
European Union, given that many countries in the region are in various stages of pre-accession negotiations. Improved understanding of the importance of international legal and political instruments related to the position of migrant women, within state institutions and feminist movement in Serbia, should remain the priority of NGO Atina’s work in the years to come.

As the project envisaged 40 participants of the webinar, and this event gathered 115 direct participants and nearly 4,000 indirect ones who were watching the livestream on Facebook, this is considered an added value to the project and to its overall result.

Speakers at the event were Dalia Leinartė, former chair and member of the UN CEDAW Committee, professor at Vytautas Magnus University, and fellow commoner at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge; Hajar Mohammadi, Women’s rights advocate from Sweden, who had personal experience of migrations; Dubravka Vranjanac, Programme Coordinator in Save the Children, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Despoina Syrri, Founder of the Symβiosis-School of Political Studies from Greece. Facilitator of this event was Milan Aleksić, from NGO Atina.

The webinar gathered 115 participants, representatives of relevant international and local organisations, competent national institutions, and other individuals active in supporting refugees and migrants and fighting for women’s rights and human rights in general. The event was also livestreamed on NGO Atina’s Facebook profile, where it reached 3,954 persons and had 408 engagements (https://fb.watch/dNxENzadji/).

Speakers were selected to cover different aspects of women and girls in migrations and to reveal challenges encountered on the ground in the countries of the Balkan migration route. Dalia Leinartė was invited to provide an in-depth view of the work of the CEDAW Committee and deep dive into the General Recommendation No. 38. A full report on the webinar can be requested (and will be made available soon).
The **second webinar** was organised on December 17, 2021, on the topic of *‘Istanbul Convention and the position of migrant women in the situation of long stay’*. The webinar was held ahead of the International Migrants Day, which is marked on December 18, the day when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of Their Families in 1990. Biljana Branković, an expert and member of the GREVIO Committee of the Council of Europe, spoke on this occasion, followed by the presentation of NGO Atina’s Coordinator of Direct Support Programme Andrijana Radoičić Nedeljković.

The webinar was attended by 42 professionals from the organisations Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN), UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Centre for Youth Integration, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), IDEAS, Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC), Info Park, Atina, representatives from the Ministry of the Interior – Asylum Office, Police Unit for the City of Belgrade, and several students from the Faculty of Law and Business Studies in Niš who are interested in this topic. The webinar was facilitated by Jelena Hrnjak from NGO Atina.

This webinar was predominantly focused on the position of migrant women and girls in relation to the Istanbul Convention, as well as on the situation in other European countries in this regard. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) was ratified by Serbia in 2013 (Article 60 of the Convention), and there were some adjustments in the legislation since to align with the requirements of the Convention. However, certain aspects remain problematic, and just one among them is the availability of services to refugee women who are accommodated in reception and asylum centres. In the report for Serbia, GREVIO also pointed out that there were problems in the access of CSOs to reception and asylum centres, and that this was a serious problem which needed to be fixed, as it was directly related to the access to services.

In addition, the webinar served as an opportunity to present NGO Atina’s analysis *“Isolation within isolation”*, which reflected on specific risks and needs of migrant women who were in the situation of so-called long-stay during the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency in Serbia. The presentation was done by Andrijana Radoičić Nedeljković, who is also one of the authors of the analysis. A full report on the webinar can be requested (and will be made available soon).

**Objective 2: Knowledge-share of Serbian experiences to international partners on the asylum protection of migrant women (New Asylum law)**

The knowledge-share encompassed creation of an analysis named *Isolation within isolation* to reflect on the position of migrant women who are in the situation of so-called long-stay. The long stay is a de facto situation in which most refugees and migrants find themselves in Serbia, as well as in other transit countries. This situation is caused by different administrative, political, and practical changes on the migratory route and may last for several years, which altogether marks it as a semi-residence situation, making the transit country a semi-final-destination country for migrants. However, given that such a temporary and undefined situation can be particularly challenging for
vulnerable individuals and groups within the migrant population, the analysis addressed specific risks and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this analysis was to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls from the refugee and migrant population who were residing in asylum and reception centres during the state of emergency, as well as to present the refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women and girls’ perspective on the pandemic. The first part of the research relied on the survey of 30 participants, refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeking women on their lives before the pandemic, in the country of origin, and during adolescence, which was collected through questionnaires and focus groups. The second part of the research was conducted through a questionnaire among 30 professionals who work directly with the refugee and migrant population. The purpose of collecting this data was to create a comparative analysis and outline the long-term isolation to which refugee women are exposed, and to replicate this isolation by the power system, when it comes to preventive measures that apply to refugee women.

The research hypothesis was as follows: factors that are recognised as resilience of refugee women, based on which superficial conclusions can be drawn that they have endured isolation easily (or more easily than the general population) - although, in the case of those residing in reception and asylum centres, the isolation lasted longer - in fact, represent their response to the trauma.

Out of the 30 refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women who participated in the research, 12 were accommodated in the reception centre in Šid (near the border with Croatia), 10 in the asylum centre in Krnjaca (which is in capital of Serbia - Belgrade), and 8 of them in Bosilegrad (near border with Bulgaria). Considering the total sample of 30 respondents, the limitation of the research is that the results cannot be generalised to the entire migrant population, but in relation to the number of women migrants residing in Serbia, this sample was certainly not negligible and important conclusions can be based on it.

Of the total research sample, the highest number of women came from Afghanistan (25%), followed by Iraq, Burundi, and Syria (17% each), Iran (13%), and Cameroon, Cuba and Morocco (4% each). This demography of the sample provides for a wide range of different experiences, and the fact that the respondents were accommodated in different centres throughout Serbia gave this research additional significance.

The results of the research show that 53% of migrant women had restricted freedom of movement during their childhood, while the same percentage agreed that they were not allowed to freely express their opinion within the family. On the other hand, 30% of them did not have the freedom to choose whom they would marry, while as much as 40% were not included in family planning decisions. Given that 52% of the respondents agree that the available services have decreased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and the state of emergency, citing predominantly unavailability of education/work opportunities and legal assistance, these women and girls were left without support, and without any way to seek security for themselves. This is especially important given that 82,76% of them felt that the risk of violence increased during this period, and 75% said that the restriction of movement had a negative effect on their lives.
As the greatest source of risk, the respondents point out fear, which is related to uncertainty, insecurity, isolation, stopping/postponing asylum procedures, and inability to continue their journey due to the state of emergency caused by the pandemic. The exposure of women from the refugee and migrant population to the risks of violence and exploitation is also discussed in the GREVIO report for Serbia, which undeniably indicates that both women and girls, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are at risk, but also suffer from gender-based violence. It is evident that institutions make minimal efforts to prevent various forms of violence, especially sexual violence and forced marriages, to which refugee and migrant women and girls are most often exposed.

Despite this unfavourable situation, women migrants recognise their strengths and develop resilience factors that allow them to adapt more quickly to new crisis situations. The resilience factors identified in these women represent their response to the experienced trauma. The impact of the pandemic on them was great, stressful, and threatening for their mental health, even though they have previously developed defence mechanisms that enable them to overcome such a situation faster.

Migrant women also recognise that the range of services available during the pandemic has been significantly reduced, primarily in the areas of education, legal aid, psychosocial support, as well as accommodation, and the access to CSOs that aided and support to the migrant population. The inability to access services in a timely manner, along with the ban on movement, contributed to the rise of gender-based violence against these women, and they identified this as one of the most significant problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Isolation within isolation certainly had multiple negative implications for women and further aggravated their already unfavourable position, while at the same time the state’s response to this crisis remained inadequate.

**Objective 3: Promotion of the migrant women’s rights in general and in relation to COVID-19 situation in particular**

Promotion of the migrant women’s rights has been continuously carried out throughout the project implementation. In addition to the two webinars, the first of which was also livestreamed on Facebook, and the presentation of the conducted analysis on the position of migrant women who are in the situation of so-called long-stay in Serbia, Atina’s team has also been addressing this issue both through participation in webinars, media interviews, and through actions which aimed to shed light on the current situation when it comes to the public stance on the presence of migrants and refugees in the country. Also, promoting migrant women activists to further their work together, through reaching out to possible new allies was a key priority not just for Atina’s members but also for members of the Advocacy group of migrant women.

On February 25, 2021, Jelena Hrnjak, NGO Atina’s Programme Manager, was a speaker at the Webinar: “Tackling Online Gender-based Violence through EU Laws and Policies” organised by WIDE+ and Creación Positiva. On this occasion, she spoke about the position of women refugees and asylum seekers, and the risks of digital GBV violence which affect this group. Speakers at the Webinar were also Sylwia Spurek, a Member of the European Parliament, Laia Serra Perello, from the Catalan Association for the Defence of Human Rights, Spideralex from Donestech, and Seyi Akiwowo from Glitch. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev5DMlfzRoo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev5DMlfzRoo)
At the initiative of NGO Atina, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality recommended that city public transport company GSP “Belgrade” remove posters expressing hatred and intolerance toward migrants from public transport vehicles as soon as possible, as well as to inspect the vehicles daily in order to remove any discriminatory content, and to inform the Commissioner of the measures taken to implement this recommendation. NGO Atina had previously addressed the Commissioner on March 10, 2021, pointing out that posters were seen on the city line 96, which express hatred and intolerance toward migrants, including “Stop the settlement of migrants in Serbia”. [http://atina.org.rs/en/disturbing-posters-against-migrants-have-been-removed-belgrade-buses](http://atina.org.rs/en/disturbing-posters-against-migrants-have-been-removed-belgrade-buses)

Marijana Savić, founder and director of NGO Atina, was among the panellists at the webinar "When Pandemics Collide: COVID-19 and Gendered Inequities of Health among the Forcibly Displaced", organised by the Columbia Global Centres and the Committee on Forced Migration on April 23, 2021. This panel explored the extent of issues women impacted by forced migration have been facing since the beginning of the pandemic, with perspectives on challenges and solutions from those directly on the ground delivering services to women. At the panel, Marijana Savić shared perspectives from Atina, described the services Atina provides, and shared how the pandemic has impacted Atina’s beneficiaries who are most affected by issues of forced migration, as well as how Atina has worked to meet challenges that have come because of the pandemic.

Atina published a report on the WIDE+ convening in Berlin, December 25-27, 2021. This gathering was the first face-to-face meeting of the WIDE+ members after two years, and as such represented a significant steppingstone in the future work of the network. It has also been an incredible opportunity to reconnect, experience first-hand the work of other organisations, but also to share all the achievements of each member organisation in supporting migrant women and girls. [http://atina.org.rs/en/right-live-free-violence](http://atina.org.rs/en/right-live-free-violence)

Jelena Hrnjak, Atina’s Programme Manager, spoke for a weekly newspaper Vreme about the work with migrants and refugees, particularly the most vulnerable members of this population - women and girls, victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking, and exploitation. [http://atina.org.rs/en/despair-compass](http://atina.org.rs/en/despair-compass)

**Objective 4: Promoting migrant women activists to further work together, through reaching out to possible new members or allies, and offering capacity building to current members as they will be a part of the Advocacy Group of migrant women in all components of the project**

NGO Atina’s Advocacy Group consists of 9 women survivors of gender-based violence, human trafficking, and exploitation from the population of refugee and migrant women. Their first, short-term, goal was to address as many professionals in Serbia as possible, and to actively advocate for changes in protection policies related to their rights.
The Group maintained regular meetings with decision-makers, trying to support them in better understanding the position of women migrants and asylum seekers. Their long-term goal was to become a mandatory and unavoidable body for influencing decision-making processes in the country when it comes to improving both the asylum and social protection system. For Atina, the main goal from the very start was to provide these women with an alternative - to help them feel safe and lead dignified lives.

During the reporting period, women and girls’ members of the Advocacy Group participated in 10 events (4 conferences and 6 meetings). One prominent appearance of a member of the Advocacy Group of refugee women was on June 10, 2021, at the webinar “Ending trafficking and violence against girls and women in the context of global migrations” organised by NGO Atina within the project and dedicated to professionals from different areas. This event gathered 115 participants from Serbia and Europe.

The Advocacy Group also held 6 meetings with representatives of competent and relevant institutions, aimed at discussing issues important for the position of women and girls’ survivors and their access to rights and services.
At all these meetings, members of the Advocacy Group shared their experience and knowledge on different aspects of the position of migrant and asylum-seeking women in Serbia, and discussed the necessary steps to be taken in order to improve their access to rights and services. Such gatherings represented an important part in the empowerment of these women, who were also very active in providing inputs and comments on various procedural acts, as well as on the reports that Atina prepared for international actors on the situation in Serbia. Based on this, measures aimed at not only providing direct support to refugee and asylum seeking women and girls, but also at enabling their integration into the local community were also introduced in the relevant strategic and action documents.

Additional five women have expressed interest to join this group, which is the evidence of this method’s success and pointed out to the need for persons with this experience to be included in as many decision-making processes as possible, as well as in processes within which all other actors could learn from them.

**Partnerships and cooperation**

Throughout the project implementation, NGO Atina has maintained long lasting cooperation with all relevant Ministries and bodies in Serbia, as well as local, national, and international organisations. During this period, Atina has also intensified and strengthened its cooperation with the Ombudsman, an independent and autonomous government body responsible for monitoring the work of state institutions and organisations, as well as the protection and promotion of rights and liberties.

Of particular importance in this regard is the fact that the Ombudsman has extensive experience in procedures to control the regularity of work of competent authorities in cases of implicated human trafficking, both when it comes to citizens’ complaints and on their own initiative. The new Law on the Protector of Citizens (Official Gazette of RS, No. 105/2021) cited the Ombudsman as the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking as was envisaged by the revised Action Plan for the negotiating Chapter 23.

As part of its efforts to ensure that refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls in Serbia receive appropriate and adequate service, Atina carried out advocacy actions through reporting on the position of this group, and pointing out the challenges and shortages in the provision of support. In line with that, NGO Atina regularly participated in the creation of reports for the GREVIO expert group of the Council of Europe, which oversees monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the state parties, both individually, and jointly with other CSOs in Serbia led by SOS network of Vojvodina.

Atina has also participated in two joint reports for the UN CEDAW Committee on the position of refugee women and girls, one led by the SOS network of Vojvodina, and the other one by the Platform of CSOs for the cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms. This Platform has enabled Atina to participate in numerous consultative meetings and other activities aimed at upgrading the protection of human rights and improving the position of particularly vulnerable groups, such as refugees and migrants. In addition, at the beginning of 2021, Atina contributed to the joint report on the urgent recommendations from the 2019 CEDAW report on Serbia, addressing the position of refugee women and girls.
NGO Atina continue to address international actors on the position and needs of refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls in Serbia, such as the European Commission, through its annual inputs for the EU progress reports on Serbia, GRETA expert group of the Council of Europe in charge for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, or the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child, in the process of preparation of its General Comment No. 25/2021, on the Rights of Childs in Digital Environment.

Lessons learned

Indeed, in Serbia, no one asks even the women who are nationals about the most important things that concern them directly, nor do they make any decisions. They are often abused in political campaigns and for political purposes, but no one takes them seriously. And migrant women especially - they live “next to us and not with us”.

There is no initiative like the Advocacy Group of migrant women in Serbia, except for this one under the auspices of Atina. Migrant women themselves are currently unable to launch their own, independent initiatives and to take up more space and run their own organisations, due to the uncertainty of their position and the fears in which they live. But what is certain is that organising them in this way really has an impact not only on the civil sector but also on citizens and the public. In addition, state institutions now cannot say that there is no mechanism for the participation of these women, and the women cannot say that they do not know how to advocate for their own rights. This group will yet show its strength in the years to come.

This project has shown that more voices of women, and especially women survivors should be heard, since their appearances, talks and discussions make significant impact in the process of policy design and advocacy for the access of their rights and necessary services. More of these women need to be involved in planning and realisation of the actions aimed at the improvement of their position, but also the position of other vulnerable groups of women.

In line with that, it can be said that individualistic approach to life and problems may overshadow the fact that the real strength also lies in togetherness, in joint approach and agency, and that it is necessary to continuously increase group work within the Advocacy group. This conclusion is particularly based on the work and actions of the Advocacy group of refugee women that were taken throughout the project. It is the women from the Advocacy Group who said that, because of their involvement in the work of that group, they felt they had more space, and believe their voices are stronger when united.

The joint efforts of these women through the operation of the Advocacy Group positively contribute to their individual empowerment and significantly enhance the prospects of their integration into the local community. Also, Advocacy group is the highlight of Atina’s work, because in order for it to exist, there had to be a long-term investment in the capacity of these women so that they could be ready for actions within the group.
Many lessons have been learned from the COVID-19 situation as well, above all human rights and especially women's rights must be conquered over and over again. The life of a woman, victim of violence, in many ways resembles a permanent state of emergency due to several factors. Many of these women were socially isolated even before the crisis caused by the pandemic. They are quite familiar with the feeling of distance from everyone, unfortunately even without the coronavirus pandemic, especially women victims of human trafficking who have been deprived of freedom of movement and decision-making. Victims of violence have certain rights which are often not available to them.

The COVID-19 crisis has also proven that institutional responses designed to protect and support refugee women and girls are not enough and that without civil society organisations, the mobilisation of citizens, the private sector, and volunteers, it is not possible to provide an adequate response and meet their needs. The most striking, however, is the fact that the first impulse of the system is to always defend itself and refuse to change, and to take greater responsibility for its citizens.

Finally, it must be noted that the state has not yet begun developing positive and proactive employment and integration programmes for asylum seekers and refugees. On the contrary, the official response to refugees only encompasses solving the consequences and providing for basic needs, with the simultaneous absence of reaction to extreme right-wing factions and attitudes in public discourse. In this way, the illusion of accepting refugees is being maintained, which provides funds to the state apparatus for the implementation of migration policy, while a clear message of non-acceptance and non-welcome is sent to refugees in Serbia.

Part of the refugees who came to Serbia are fleeing persecution in their country of origin, and have personal funds, intended to start their own small businesses. However, the first issue that arose was the fact that the ID cards for asylum seekers (issued by the Asylum Office, which is a part of the Ministry of the Interior) are not recognised by parts of the system that have no contact with refugees, such as the Business Registers Agency. The intervention of civil society organisations was necessary to establish communication between the Ministry of the Interior and institutions for economic issues (National Employment Service and the Business Registers Agency). On the other hand, with the economic crisis and declining production and services, refugees and asylum seekers were the first ones to lose their jobs and found themselves at a greater risk of labour exploitation. In addition to minimal progress in creation and adoption of strategic and operational documents, it cannot be said that any substantial changes in the state’s response to migration have occurred.

**Beautiful and powerful voices from the field**

“The world of migration from inside and outside are two different stories. When you meet a migrant woman she will talk to you and share her experiences, thoughts and feelings through the narrative that you can handle, but her unique experience is deep inside her, it is written in every step that she has made to be where she is now, it is written in her dreams and her fears, in every breath she took before she fell asleep in some unknown place on her road, while she was scared of being raped, robbed, or separated from her family,” *member of the Advocacy Group*
“Refugee and asylum-seeking girls and women and girls need strong allies all over the world from every field - we need governments not only to adopt the strategies but also to implement them! We need international bodies and mechanisms to find a way to monitor those improvements, and to define the sanctions! We need CSOs and women activists to fight with us in conquering our social, economic, and political rights all over again and prevent their neglect by the system and structure. We need every woman to see us and understand us as a woman - that is who we are! And that is our power,” member of the Advocacy Group

“Part of this journey is like: nobody is going to count me in. I am going to be a migrant, or a refugee, or asylum seeker, and I’m not even a second-class citizen. I’m not a citizen, I have no class, I have nothing. But being here, and being able to openly talk about these issues makes us brave enough to share it with the government, that definitely helps,” member of the Advocacy Group

“We girls and women in migration are here next to you, and we want to share experiences about our lives in Serbia with you, to hear each other and that is the only way for all of us to be a part of one society, and to support each other,” member of the Advocacy Group

“If you are travelling from Kabul to Belgrade, you will probably need 6 hours; for me it took two years of a dangerous migration path,” member of the Advocacy Group

“My message to other women, especially refugees, is to be who they are. They are strong and they can do everything they want and need. They have the right to fight for their identity. Either refugees or not, they are still women, and a woman is something indescribable. Nobody has the right to stop them from being themselves. So, my message for them is just to be themselves, and to fight for their rights,” member of the Advocacy Group
ANNEX 2. KULU Women and Development’s FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT on Expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building across Europe 2021
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Intro

The project Expanding Spaces for Capacity Building and Exchange to strengthen Women Migrant Movement Building across Europe” is supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Human Rights Initiative of the Open Society Foundations via WIDE+.

The project has consisted of three components. Two sessions of dialogue/debate meetings and a communication plan covering these meeting. Further, the active participation of KULU-Women and Development in WIDE+’s working group Migration and Gender was required under the project line and has been met by the organization.

The communication plan has consisted of communication before, during and after the events. The events have been promoted on different social media channels, online media platforms, on KULUs website and footage has been shared afterwards. Finally, a video compiling central quotes and discussions from the dialogue meeting "Is the Labour Market the key to successful Integration for Migrant Women?", has been produced. An article in Danish sharing the many good outtakes of the debates will be included in KULUs newsletter. This report unfolds the two dialogue meetings and their outcomes.

ABOUT BABAYLAN:
Babaylan-Denmark (established in 1997) is a member of Babaylan-Europe (established in 1992). It is a network of Filipino women. Babaylan-Denmark works on several fronts: political, cultural-educational, and social to improve the situation of Filipinas in the Danish society. The organization has especially been involved in rights for au pair women and have taken several initiatives aimed at informing Filipino women of their sexual and economic rights. Babaylan-Denmark is a member organization of KULU-Women and Development.

ABOUT Wo-Mi:
The organization Wo-Mi (Women Migrants) is a newly established organization consisting of women migrants based in Denmark. The organization works with agendas on migration, decolonization and art-ivism. Wo-Mi is committed to expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building in Denmark and across Europe.

ABOUT KULU-Women and Development (KULU):
Kvindernes U-landsudvalg is a non-partisan development organization established by Danish women’s organizations in 1976 after the 1st UN International Women’s Conference in Mexico. KULU is an umbrella organization of 16 different women’s organizations, equality councils and other organizations plus 300 individual members. KULU has since its beginning worked to promote women’s and girls’ rights and empowerment in the Global South and internationally through information, advocacy, lobby, and project cooperation - in dialogue with women’s organizations and networks in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. KULU is partner with MUSONET in Mali and Femmes pour la Paix et les Droits Humains (FPDH) in DR Congo.
1. 1st meeting “Amplifying Migrant Women's Voices - Exchange of Experiences”

The dialogue meeting was held on the 12th of May 2022 and was a collaborative effort between KULU and Wo-Mi guided by the project’s intention to: “Expanding spaces for capacity building and exchange to strengthen women migrant movement building in Denmark and across Europe”.

The methodology shaping this event was to have migrant women voices leading and shaping the discussions. This was met by the participation of Wo-Mi’s representatives, and the speakers were all either migrant women themselves or working with issues related to migrant women, noticeably the organization Building Communities was present.

The event figured as part of Wo-Mi event-series "Amplifying women migrant voices". Taking departure in the use and practice of art and how this can be used as a canal for sharing migrant stories and experiences, the event was carried along by three female speakers that all are involved in advocating for migrant women's rights and increasing their visibility through activistic work.

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<th>Amplifying Migrant Women’s Voices – Exchange of Experiences 12th of May 2022</th>
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1.1 Presentations

**Claudia Mambe Rodriguez Ahlfors** (La mambe), therapist, musician, and owner of body-balance.dk and bruja.dk opened the event with a “ritual” singing and chanting for the good energy to flow. Mambe shared among other things, her personal storytelling as a migrant who first came to Sweden and then landed in Denmark. She also spoke of how she has become an artist in a very male dominated genre, working in the Danish music scene among many male performers and how she has continually fought against racism and sexism.

She also puts her energy into supporting artists (including musicians) in her country of origin, Colombia - that tirelessly demonstrate against injustices - and into Intebridging initiatives and finally economic support.

**Claudia Adeath** demonstrated her experiences with extending Mexican and Latin American Culture activities to Denmark through music and other arrangements.

As a member of a women migrant organization in Denmark, she also showed a visual storytelling consisting of photos of women migrants arriving in Denmark. Adeath shared with the audience the different stages of entering and facing the Danish labour market and the struggles that migrant women face. The storytelling portraying 11 women was based on a collective idea of migration that instead of focusing on the individual focuses on the collective challenges migrants face. In her practice, Adeath is concerned with offering new perspectives and narratives of migrant women that are defined by themselves.

**Silke Mechlenburg** represents Building Communities as the daily coordinator. At centre in the work of Building Communities is re-forestation and capacity building in communities in Guatemala. The initiative differs from other environmental projects, as the projects by Building Communities are not funded by the state but are fully based on private donations. Further, contributions go directly to the projects and there is no administration fee.

This way of approaching community projects sets spark to a debate about the conditions under which development happens and for whom. In this relation, Mechlenburg shares her concern with the neo-colonialist tendencies by which international aid or cooperation on e.g., environmental projects are affected. Many of the activities carried out by Building Communities are made possible with the contributions by migrant artists or collectives based in Denmark and this stands as an example of the capacity of activism.

**Martha Salazar** made an interactive performance with *¡hot potatoes!* This performance offered a space for the exchange of experience among the participants, in which everyone could ask open questions in relation to migration but was not met with answers. They instead acted as collective wonderings.

After the activity, the participants danced around to Bossa Nova music as a way of finishing the event. This added a sense of creating spaces for dialogue and further initiatives to build and expand movements among migrant women and all women.
1.2 Key points

- The panel emphasized a need for concrete initiatives to create real change for migrant women and amplify their voices in society. Here, the sharing of experiences by Building Communities constitutes an example of concrete initiatives that aim to accommodate the needs of the target group in a direct manner.

- Another aspect emphasized in the discussion was the need for bridging art-ivism with human rights, gender, and climate justice to generate greater awareness on the rights of migrant women.

- The need for creating spaces for migrant women which are not found in the established society and based on liberal ideas was voiced. Migrant women voices need to be represented politically and thus need to have its origin in decolonial feminist values.

1.3 Outcomes

The main desired outcome of this dialogue meeting was to strengthen the ties between feminist migrant networks and other feminist organizations and in this relation, advance the network building and capacity building of groups and organizations that are concerned with women's human rights. Further desired, was that the activities would provide capacity, dialogue, and learning.

The collaborative effort between Wo-Mi and KULU in terms of developing the concept, sharing knowledge and experience has strengthened the collaborative effort between the organizations and further opened for a shared network of feminist organizations. As the organization Wo-Mi consists of migrant women and engages directly with migrant women, they are a resourceful partner as they have insight and knowledge about the challenges met by migrant women.

The speakers that contributed to the dialogue introduced new ways of engaging and acts of solidarity through the concept Art-ivism. Combining arts with activism can be used as a tool to strengthen the movement of migrant women groups/organizations in Denmark. This concept provides for a new lens that can expand the dialogue and learning process between the groups/organizations.
2. 2nd meeting “Is the Labour Market the Key to Successful Integration for Migrant Women? Focus: Hotel and Restaurant branch”

This dialogue meeting took place on the 17th of May and was the final event in the series “Migrant Women Voices” that has been implemented by Babaylan-Denmark and KULU as part of a larger European project “Strengthening Innovative Solutions to Protect Female Migrant and Refugee Rights” in cooperation with WIDE+.

At the event different actors were present to uncover the access, challenges, and barriers of migrant women to the Danish labour market and share migrant women’s realities and strategies in capacity building of networks and organizations.

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<th>Is the Labour Market the Key to Successful Integration for Migrant Women? (Focus: Hotel and Restaurant branch) 17th of May 2022</th>
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1.1 Presentations

The dialogue focused on migrant women’s situation in the Danish labour market and whether the labour market is a key to a successful integration. The debate was well mediated by social commentator and director, Khaterah Parwani.

Parwani is dedicated to solving issues on social mobility and negative social control, and her organisation LØFT is specialized in guiding young people on these issues. Parwani has a lot of experience with participating in the public debate on integration and was therefore an eminent choice for moderating this dialogue meeting.

The event “Is the Labour Market the Key to Successful Integration for Migrant Women?” was carried out in collaboration with Babaylan-Denmark, a network/organization of Philippine women that has a strong history of engagement.

The debate was focussed on the situation of migrant women in the Danish labour market with a special attention to the hotel and restaurant industry and a broad spectrum of actors was present.

The panel consisted of five different representatives that covered the employer’s organisation, the trade union, and actors from the private sector, such as Kvinfo, the national research centre for gender equality and women’s rights, and a consultant specialized in integration. Babaylan Denmark had a representative from their board in the panel too.

Following the methodology of this project, a prominent presence of women speakers, in particular migrant women leaders, was an important measure in the organisation of this event. To have Hedelyn Reyes speak on behalf of Babaylan-Denmark and represent a strong network of migrant women from the Philippines in Denmark was therefore a great priority.

**Hedelyn Reyes** focused on the strong network that female Philippine migrants have established in Denmark and shared how the network has worked as an entrance to the Danish labour market for many. Sharing experiences as cultural wonderings and work-related issues has been an important turning point in feeling well integrated. Reyes focuses on the importance of different components in terms of integration and mentions here the three components: social, economic, and political integration and their equal importance to successful integration.

**Katina Ali Rasmussen** shared the challenges she meets in her work as a consultant focussed on integrational issues and is occupied with changing the narrative of integration and instead talk about how to include migrants in society.

**Kristian Nørgaard** talks briefly about the high percentage of migrants employed in the hotel and restaurant industry and the international work environment that follows with employees from all over the world. Nørgaard emphasizes that the importance of a thorough introduction to the labour market means everything in connection to good integration.
Different initiatives, such as collaborations between the municipalities and employers are created to help refugees and migrants into labour. But politically, there are several obstacles that makes it harder to employ those two groups of citizens. These are obstacles that reflect the Danish foreign policy and are aimed at making it a sticking point for migrants and refugees to get residence and work permits in Denmark and are frustrating from an employer’s point of view, reflects Nørgaard, since the industry has never been more dynamic, international, and open to hire as now.

Thorkild Holmboe-Hay shares the best practices on integration from a trade union perspective. Holboe-Hay represents Denmark’s largest and most powerful trade union 3F and reflects on how the labour market can function as a door leading to good integration, with important measures to secure this. One is that the employer needs to be under a collective agreement. There is also a responsibility resting with the employer to make sure that the workplace has a high range of diversity and further insist that employees always work in teams with Danish speaking colleagues as language plays a central role in integration, states Holmboe-Hay.

Ethnic profiling is a problem in the Danish labour market, and we cannot continue to bypass it according to Holmboe-Hay. Certain ethnic groups are linked to certain jobs, and this is something we need to acknowledge in order to change it and focus on all the offers there are in society to overcome this stigma.

Stinne Bech is concerned with the barriers that migrant women meet on the Danish labour market and refers to statistics and surveys done on the subject. Notably is the stigma on women from MENAD countries and the group’s high unemployment rate. There is a prominent discourse upon these women: “migrant women do not want to work”, but this group is more present at the labour market than before. The barriers meeting these women and other migrants are systemic and connected to the process they are in as migrants and refugees. The asylum process is long and full of instability, the qualifications you have from your home country are often not validated in Denmark or the qualifications cannot be translated to the labour market model as your work takes place at home as a caregiver. Your capital in relation to the labour can therefore be very small or non-existent, which can be a barrier when trying to enter the market in Denmark. Besides these challenges posed, wearing a hijab means statistically that you must apply for 60% more jobs than the white majority to be considered for a job.

What can work as a bridge between migrant women and the labour market are different mentee schemes that seek to equip minority groups with tools and counselling on how to use their qualifications professionally (e.g., the valuable qualifications you obtain as a caregiver at home), but also to translate all the unwritten rules of the labour market.
1.2 Key points

- Structural barriers for migrants on the labour market need to be addressed more and this was voiced by all representatives in the panel.

- Members of Babaylan voiced the issues they identify for migrant women on the labour market. Emphasized was the importance of organizing in groups and to have networks for migrant women that can support their inclusion into the labour market.

- Critique of the discourse on integration. The wording includes an uneven power dynamic and should instead be about including. Using this wording to describe the process takes some of responsibility away from the migrant/refugee as it is not solely their responsibility to become part of the society and labour market.

- The civil society plays an important part in including and integrating migrant women on the job market. It functions as an extended arm for the State and has potential and knowledge that the public society does not have. Having a network gives a “soft landing” into a new society and job market and it can work as a translator of cultural codes that are not shared by the public society. Mentoring schemes are mentioned by the panel as the best resource for migrants.

- Presenting and discussing the challenges and experiences of migrant women in a setting in which actors that have concrete influence on these challenges were present was very resourceful. This made a good baseline for the work on increasing the visibility and presence of migrant women’s voices in the public debate on integration.

1.3 Outcomes

Within the framework of network building and capacity building of feminist and migrant women’s organisations the event has advanced both measures. As prominent actors representing different agendas on the private labour market took part in the debate and listened to the challenges and barriers of migrant women and engaged in dialogue with the participants and the panel, the event provided for visibility of migrant women and laid ground to an important dialogue.

Both the presence and sharing of cases by present migrant women made the debate not only relevant but also expanded the topic, as it encircled multiple aspects of being a migrant woman in the Danish labour market.

The debate touched upon the boundaries in access to labour which migrant women are facing. It was discussed how these are broken down by both employer and municipality, and the actors shared their best practices, which contributed to a constructive debate on the issue. This will strengthen future dialogue and partnership between migrant women’s networks and actors representing the private labour market.
Babaylan is a force in the landscape of feminist migrant organisations in Denmark and had a strong representation and engagement at the event. They had also invited a representative from the Filipino Association in Denmark who participated and added interesting inputs to the debate.

The event strengthened the good and existing partnership between Babaylan and KULU and substantiated the opportunities for continuing dialogues around migrant women and their access, experiences, and the barriers they meet within the Danish labour market and in society.

This report is written by Emilie Canvin, Kvindernes U-landsudvalg/KULU-Women and Development

Images

Visual material from Amplifying Migrant Women’s Voices event (12 th of May 2022)

Credit: Martha Salazar
Visual Material from “Is the Labour Market the Key to Successful Integration for Migrant Women? Focus: Hotel and Restaurant branch. (17th of May 2022)

Credit: Emilie Canvin