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Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Europe

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The aim of this paper is to examine the participation of migrant women in political and democratic life¹ in Europe. Within the framework of the WE-EMPOWER project,² participation in political and democratic life refers to having the right to vote, stand as candidates, join political parties, and having the right, opportunity, and space to influence public decision-making processes that contribute to the development of a society.

Participation in political and democratic life is an important aspect to the integration of all migrants, especially for migrant women who still lack visibility in society. Effective participation of migrant women is necessary so they can contribute their ideas and proposals to the development of the societies they live in. However, there remain many barriers to migrant women's visibility and voices in public and political spaces, and this is why it is important to have a deeper understanding of the context around migration, migrant women, and their participation in Europe.

Overall, there is a lack of research into migrant women's participation at the EU level, with limited cross-national data to give a clearer picture on this issue. Nevertheless, this paper fills in some of the knowledge gaps around the topic of migrant women's participation in political and democratic life.

¹ Democratic life involves being actively engaged in community and social life, expressing active citizenship, such as participating in non-governmental associations and organisations that are concerned with the public and political life of the country.

² The WE-EMPOWER project is an EU-funded ERASMUS+ project, which aims to enhance the participation of migrant women in political and democratic life. It is a transnational collaboration of seven migrant women and women-led organisations based in Europe.

I. Migrant Women in Europe

The WE-EMPOWER project adopts an inclusive definition of migrant women – for us, the term **‘migrant women’** refers to **ALL women, including gender non-conforming persons, who have been displaced between countries, trafficked, have moved from a third or European country to a destination in Europe, or women who are second-generation migrants.** Therefore, this definition includes women, or gender non-conforming persons, who are third-country nationals, asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented migrant women, women with migrant parents and mobile EU citizens. While we take an inclusive approach to the definition of migrant, we recognise that migrant women differ in experience, resources, and vulnerabilities.

In the EU context, the definition of migrants differs from the one our project uses, as the EU’s definitions are mainly based on migration management policies. While it is not within the scope of this paper to have an in-depth normative discussion on the use of the term ‘migrant’,³ it remains useful to understand the different terms used to describe people who undertake migration, whether by choice or by circumstance. A **third-country national** refers to anyone who is not a citizen of the EU, and who is not a person enjoying the EU right to free movement, as defined in Article 2(5) of the Schengen Borders Code. A **migrant** is a person who has established their residence within the EU for a period of at least 12 months, having previously resided in another EU Member State or a third country.⁴ An **asylum seeker** refers to a third-country national or stateless person, who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol, where a final decision has not yet been taken (European Commission, 2022). A **refugee** is someone whose asylum-seeking application has been approved and has therefore been granted refugee status.

Migrants constitute a significant proportion of the population in Europe. Looking at EU- level data, based on Eurostat data from 2021, there are 447.2 million people living in the EU (Eurostat, 2023). Third-country nationals, or non-EU citizens, make up around 5% of the population of the EU, or 23.7 million. If we include mobile EU citizens, this figure will increase to almost 10%. In 2021, 2.3 million people immigrated to the

³ To read more about the debate on an inclusivist versus residualist approach on the term ‘migrant’, you can visit: <https://meaningofmigrants.org/the-case-for-being-inclusive/>

⁴ See the full glossary of migration terms, *Migration and home affairs*, by the European Commission, 2022 (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/migrant_en)

EU from third countries, with a slightly higher percentage of men than women, with **55% for men and 45% for women.**⁵

In the last five years, several key trends around migration have been observed in Europe. Notably, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has affected the picture of migration in Europe and reshaped the debate around the migration and asylum policies of the EU. The EU has invoked the **Temporary Protection Directive**⁶ for the first time in history, to create a proper and coordinated migration response to Ukrainians fleeing the war. The wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has also led to an increase of Afghans fleeing the country and seeking protection in European countries. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had increased risks and challenges for migrants and refugees, with specific impacts on migrant women. For example, during the pandemic, migrant women faced increased risks of gender-based violence, carried heavier caregiving burdens and lacked access to information and integration resources (like online language classes) (EMN, 2022).

Based on the diversity of countries that migrants come from, the different migratory pathways and the varied reasons for migrating, it is important to underline that migrant women are not homogeneous. Women migrate to the EU for many different reasons. They migrate as spouses, students, labour migrants, or as asylum seekers. Gender is a significant factor that influences migration decisions. While migration is often framed as a choice that can advance gender equality, it also exposes women and girls to higher risks of violence and vulnerability, especially for migrant women who are undocumented. The challenges that migrant women face in Europe are often a direct result of their resident status or push factors to migrate. Therefore, it is essential that migrant women are provided with the opportunities to participate, to highlight these issues and to influence the process of finding solutions.

⁵ Note that data collected from Eurostat only counts immigrants who have been residing in a Member State for at least 12 months. In addition, only some Member States include asylum seeker or refugees who are residents of at least 12 months, in the data on migration.

⁶ Temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin. It was adopted following the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, in 2001. (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en)

II. Barriers to Participation for Migrant Women

Several international frameworks such as the CEDAW convention and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) outline that all women, including migrant women, should not be discriminated against in all spheres of life, and should have the right to participate in policymaking and hold public office (Article 7, CEDAW).⁷ Despite this, migrant women face a range of obstacles when it comes to participation in decision-making processes.

The lack of electoral rights is one barrier to political participation in Europe. When it comes to participation in terms of electoral rights, it depends on whether migrant women are EU citizens or third-country nationals. Evidently, mobile EU citizens have more rights in this respect – in European elections, they can vote in their home country or in the host country; they can also vote in municipal elections and in some Member States they can stand as candidates in the host countries. On the other hand, migrant women who are third-country nationals are generally not allowed to cast ballots in municipal, national, or European elections. However, there are some exceptions such as in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, where third-country nationals can vote in municipal and regional elections if they have a certain number of years of residence. In France, Austria, Germany and Italy, the right of third-country nationals to vote is being debated and requires constitutional change (ECIT Foundation, 2020).

Currently, there is no cross-national disaggregated data available to show whether migrant women exercise their electoral rights (if they have any) and generally, there is a lack of information about their voting patterns or motivations to vote. However, within the WE-EMPOWER project, one of the partner associations, Red Latinas has conducted a nationwide study in Spain⁸ on the political participation of migrants in the country. The data was collected through the application of a self-administered survey completed by 1,351 migrants. Three categories of migrants were surveyed – migrants who have been naturalised, migrants with the right to vote, and migrants without the right to vote.

⁷ See “The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)” of 18 December 1979: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article7>

⁸ Red Latinas is a Latin American and Caribbean women’s network based in Spain and is a member of WIDE+. The survey that Red Latinas conducted will be published sometime in 2023 and will be available on WIDE+ and Red Latinas websites.

The study found that there is a lack of political education (for instance, knowledge of electoral system) among migrants, more so for migrant women. However, more migrant women are active in citizen participation, such as joining cultural groups and education-related entities.

According to a report by the Council of Europe (2020), there is a **severe lack of participation of women in political and public decision-making from under-represented groups that include migrant women, Roma women, LGBTQI women, and women of colour**. The report assessed the participation of women in regional assemblies and local governments in European countries. In this report, participation refers to “more than voting or standing for election Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society” (p. 5). The goal of participation is to be able to influence decision-making in a community, and this can be done either “through tools of public influence and participation, or as community representatives elected to a local council” (p. 24).

The report highlights some barriers that migrant women experience when it comes to participation. These include **experiencing high levels of discrimination, an unequal share of caregiving responsibilities, barriers within political parties, lack of targeted measures for inclusion and participation, and lack of accessibility to participation mechanisms** (COE, 2021). It also highlights how women from under-represented groups face major difficulties in progressing in political parties or being placed on electoral lists (Ibid.).

Similarly, a report by the European Parliament in 2021 on “Intersectional discrimination in the EU: Socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin American and Asian descent”,⁹ highlights the notion **of intersectional discrimination faced by women in the EU, based on the notion that people experience several forms of discrimination, including gender identity, race, ethnicity, and migrant background**. In this document, intersectional discrimination is understood as being different from the mere sum of multiple discrimination. In the case of intersectional discrimination, “the grounds of discrimination are intertwined, which creates a unique type of discrimination” (p.4). This intersectional discrimination contributes to migrant women’s experiences of poverty, trafficking, gender- based violence, barriers to health-care, and social exclusion.

⁹ To read the full report, *Intersectional discrimination in the EU: socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin American and Asian descent*, European Parliament, 2021 (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0190_EN.html)

For example, migrant domestic workers, primarily women, are often made vulnerable due to poor working conditions, low salaries and violence and harassment at work. Another example is that many migrant women who are third-country nationals, often have residence permits tied to those of their spouses/partners, which deters them from reporting abuse/violence or even being active in political and democratic life. The alarming rate of hate speech and online violence that women politicians and public figures face in Europe¹⁰ is also a big deterrent for migrant women to be politically and publicly active.

Migrant women also lack visibility in the media. In general, migrants are not only under- represented in the media, but when covered, migration is often portrayed in negative and conflict-centred terms (Eberl et al., 2018). A report by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (2017) found that only 21% of stories covered by European media¹¹ on asylum and integration featured an individual migrant or refugee. The report also found that migrant women are even more invisible – only 27% of the 21% stories that mentioned migrants was about migrant women. When migrant women do feature in the media, representations are often limited and stereotypical. (Lünenborg and Bach, 2009).

In Europe, media representation of migrant women is often reduced to essentialist binaries (Lünenborg & Bach, 2009). For example, oversimplified categories are constantly used in the media to create stereotypical representations of Muslim women, with veiled Muslim women depicted as being "un-European". In 2021, the Council of Europe had to remove images from a social media campaign¹² that aimed to promote diversity and included an image of a woman in a hijab. Ultimately, the over-representation of a particular religious group of migrant women, limited to a few stereotypes, contributes to the stigmatisation of all migrant women.

Overall, the lack of electoral rights, intersectional discrimination, and lack of positive media representation can potentially result in further exclusion of migrant women and alienate them from participation in society.

¹⁰ The study, *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe* by IPU-PACE, 2021, shows an overwhelming percentage of female MPs in the European Parliament suffered various forms of abuse and online violence. (<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe>)

¹¹ To read the full report, *Changing the Narrative: Media representation of refugees and migrants in Europe*, by Churches Commission For Migrant in Europe (CCME) and Communication For All (WACC) Europe, 2017 <https://www.imap-migration.org/narrative/publications/changing-narrative-media-representation-refugees-and-migrants-europe>)

¹² To read the full article, *Council of Europe removes hijab diversity campaign tweets amid backlash*, by Euronews, 2021 (<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/11/03/council-of-europe-removes-hijab-diversity-campaign-tweets-amid-backlash>)

III. Participation of Migrant Women in Political Life

When it comes to assessing the participation of migrant women in elected or political bodies, there is very little data. However, what is clear is that there is a **visible lack of representation of women, migrants, and ethnic minorities in political positions**. At European level in the last five years, the two countries with the highest female representation in their national parliaments were Belgium and Denmark (see Figure 1), yet gender parity has not been achieved (EIGE, 2022).

To give another example at the national level, Germany which has one of the most diverse national parliaments in Europe in terms of migrant, female and LGBTQIA+ representation (Stowers, 2022), still lacks presence of migrant women in the parliament. Based on desktop analysis conducted by Gabriela Germany as part of this series of study papers, it was found that the representation of women with migrant backgrounds remained marginal in the last two federal elections, in 2017 and 2021. Female MPs with migrant background represent only 5% of MPs in the German Parliament while they make up around 13% of German population (see page 66 of this report).

At the European Parliament, while the proportion of women in the European Parliament increased to 39.3% in the current term (2019-2024) from 36.4% (2014-2019) (European Parliament, 2019), further steps must be taken to achieve gender parity.

Figure 1: Representation of females at national parliaments in Belgium and Denmark, 2019-2022¹³

Country	Representation rate of female politicians in national parliaments by years			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Belgium	42.4%	43.3%	43.8%	43.8%
Denmark	39.7%	39.7%	41.3%	43.4%

¹³ Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2022. Representation rate of females at national parliaments in Belgium and Denmark. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl/wmid_natparl/datatable

In addition to the lack of gender parity at the European Parliament, the racial/ethnic¹⁴ representation rate remains low (ENAR, 2019).

While racial/ethnic minorities make up around 10% of the population in the EU according to ENAR, they represent only 5% of Members of the European Parliament (MEP), or 36 MEPs. In the current term, of 36 MEPs from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, 17 are women. Given the lack of information and data on the representation of migrants in the European Parliament, ENAR's study acts as a proxy for us to understand migrant women's representation in this elected body. It is likely that there is a strong correlation between women who belong to these ethnic communities and the fact that they are migrant women, according to our definition of migrant women. **Thus, it is safe to say that the equal representation of migrant women is severely lacking in the European Parliament.**

Based on national surveys conducted in 2016 in six EU countries (European Website on Integration, 2016), there is a divide in terms of migrant representation between northern and southern Europe: the further south, the fewer members of parliament (MPs) of immigrant origin. This data is not gender-disaggregated. In Italy, 2% of MPs are migrants; in Greece, 1% are migrants; and in Spain, fewer than 1% of Congress members are migrants.

There are a few examples of female politicians with migrant backgrounds who have achieved success in terms of reaching high-level positions in public office. For example, Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius, a Kurdish-born Justice Minister in the Netherlands, is in Mark Rutte's current cabinet. In Spain, Rita Bosaho, who was born in Equatorial Guinea, became the very first black member of the Spanish Senate in 2016.¹⁵ Currently, she is the director of Director- General for Equality of Treatment and Ethnic-racial Diversity at Spain's equality ministry.

In France, Lebanese-born Rima Abdul Malak was appointed as Minister of Culture in France by President Emmanuel Macron in 2022.¹⁶ In Norway, one of the most prominent politicians is Hadia Tajik, who is of Pakistani origin. She was the Labour Party's deputy leader for seven years,

¹⁴ Racial or ethnic minority refers to a person whose race/ethnicity is non-dominant within society. In ENAR's analysis of the 2019 Elections, the report accounted for MEPs of African, North African, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Roma, national minorities (eg: Hungarian in Romanian, Russian in Lithuania) and others

¹⁵ To read the full article, *Podemos' Rita Bosaho becomes Spain's first female black MP*, The Guardian, 2015 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/21/podemos-rita-bosaho-becomes-spains-first-female-black-mp>)

¹⁶ To read the full article, *President Macron appoints Rima Abdul Malak as France's new minister of culture*, The Art Newspaper, 2022 (<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/05/23/president-macron-appoints-rima-abdul-malak-as-frances-new-minister-of-culture>)

and she was the first woman of a minority background to be named the most powerful woman in Norway by Kapital magazine. In Italy, Cécile Kyenge, who was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, became Italy's first black cabinet minister in 2013. From 2014 until 2019, she was a Member of the European Parliament. She mainly worked on issues related to migration to Europe.

IV. Participation of Migrant Women in Democratic Life

There has been greater visibility of migrant women in democratic life, compared to their direct political participation. Often, community-based, migrant women-led groups are the first responders during crises (as evident from the COVID-19 pandemic), they have expertise in a range of issues such as gender-based violence, and/or building support systems for migrant women. Still, much work is needed for migrant women to be included in decision-making on issues that affect their communities.

According to data from the European Website on Integration (2021),¹⁷ **women-led migrant organisations represent just 12% of migrant-led organisations at the national level. This percentage increases at regional and local level, where 19% of migrant organisations are led by women.** Migrant women's organisations are also more active in Northern and Western Europe, where they also started organising earlier than in the Southern, Central, Eastern, and Baltic regions (ibid.). Their work often focuses on combating sexual and gender-based violence, lobbying and advocacy. Many of them include intersectional approaches in their work, combining support services with political activism for different communities of migrant women. Access to core, long-term, and flexible funding to migrant women's organisations remains a big issue for them (WIDE+, 2022).

Currently, there are only three migrant women-led or women-led organisations that work at the EU level to promote the rights of migrant

¹⁷ See the full article, *Mapping key migrant-led organisations across the EU*, by the European Commission, 2021 (https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/special-feature/mapping-key-migrant-led-organisations-across-eu_en)

Examples of migrant women-led organisations that are part of WIDE+ migration and gender working group

Red Latinas, Spain - <https://redlatinas.es/>

Red Latinas is a network of associations of Latin American and Caribbean women living in Spain. They aim to make migrant women's contributions to society visible as subjects of rights, and to exercise their active citizenship.

International Women Space, Germany - www.iwspace.de

IWS is a feminist, anti-racist political group based in Germany formed by migrant, refugee, and non-migrant women.

Voice of All Women, Netherlands - <https://voiceofallwomen.org/>

Voice of All Women is a grassroots organisation that is committed to women's rights and that seeks to enhance the resilience, autonomy, and agency of women from marginalised communities.

women. They are, European Network of Migrant Women (ENOMW),¹⁸ New Women Connectors,¹⁹ and WIDE+ (the coordinator of the WE-EMPOWER project). In 2016, WIDE+ convened a Migration and Gender working group that comprises migrant women-led organisations and feminist organisations working throughout Europe to promote the rights of migrant women. The working group remains very active and works on advocacy, movement-building, and capacity-building for migrant women.

¹⁸ The European Network of Migrant Women is a migrant women-led feminist, secular, non-partisan platform that advocates for the rights, freedoms and dignity of migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women and girls in Europe. (<https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/>)

¹⁹ New Women Connectors is a migrant women-led Pan-European platform working to promote the engagement of migrant and refugee women in policy-making processes. (www.newwomenconnectors.com)

V. Measures to Promote and Improve the Participation of Migrant Women

As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of cross-national data to fully assess migrant women's participation in Europe. Moreover, there is no explicit strategy by the EU to promote the participation of migrants or migrant women.

In 2020, after the launch of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum,²⁰ the European Commission also launched an Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027²¹ that recognises the contribution of migrants to the EU and it aims to address barriers that migrants, both newcomers and citizens, face in different areas of

integration, including education, employment, access to healthcare and housing. In the Action Plan, the term **'migrant' is defined inclusively to also include EU citizens with migrant backgrounds, citizens who are naturalised and/or have foreign-born parents.**

Importantly, this strategic document has a strong gender dimension, where **it proposes concrete actions around integration for migrant women**, a stark contrast to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The document states that "migrant women and girls face additional obstacles to integration compared to migrant men and boys, often having to overcome structural barriers linked to their being both a migrant and female, including facing stereotypes" (p. 7). Recommendations related

Other relevant EU policy documents

- **The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025:** It sets as key objectives, among others, achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics, and combating gender-based violence.
- **The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025:** It outlines how racism can be combined with discrimination and hatred on other grounds, like gender and migration status.

²⁰ The New Pact outlines the EU's agenda on migration in the coming years. The Pact includes five legislative proposals, which will be binding EU law, if accepted by the Parliament and Council, and four non-binding recommendations that have been adopted by the European Commission. To read the full document, *New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, by the European Commission, 2020 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0609>)

²¹ To read the full document, *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion*, by the European Commission, 2020 (https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf)

to migrant women include having more migrant women participate in the labour market, better access to healthcare services, and equal participation in society.

Member States are primarily responsible for implementing social policies and actions around integration of migrants, while the EU shares a limited competency that cannot overrule national regulations. Therefore, the Action Plan proposes support for Member States through mobilising EU funding, best policy practice guidance and fostering partnerships. With regard to the participation of migrants, the Commission set up an **Expert Group on the views of migration, asylum and integration** and encourages Member States to involve migrants and migrant organisations in the design, implementation, and evaluation of integration policies (p.22). Overall, **the Action Plan does not outline specific recommendations to increase migrant women’s participation in political and democratic life.**

Within the Expert Group that has been formed after the launch of the plan, there are 12 individuals, eight of whom are women, and 11 migrant/refugee-led organisations, of which at least three are migrant women-led.²² Anila Noor, founder of the Pan-European migrant women-led organisation New Women Connectors, and a member of the Expert Group, says that migration policies are often designed without a feminist or gender lens, and ignore the realities that migrant women face in Europe.²³ While she applauds efforts to increase migrant women’s participation, she observes that there is still a distanced relationship between migrant women and policymakers. She argues that migrant women should be included in all steps of decision-making and not simply called on for (short-term) consultations. Additionally, consultations as a form of participation have a very limited impact on legislative proposals (Desille and Tommasi, 2023).

There are initiatives to include migrants in local policymaking at the city and national levels in Europe, through the development of migrant councils or consultative bodies. For example, 47 cities signed the “Integrating Cities Charter”, a set of commitments initiated by Eurocities,²⁴ “to provide equal opportunities for all residents, to integrate migrants,

²² More about the Expert group can be viewed here: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3734>

²³ This intervention by Anila Noor was taken from a panel discussion on the “Political Participation of Migrant Women in the EU”, organised by WIDE+, within the framework of the WE-EMPOWER project, on 22 March 2023 in Brussels.

²⁴ EUROCITIES is a network of more than 200 cities in 38 countries, and provides a platform to share knowledge and ideas, to exchange experiences, to analyse common problems and develop innovative solutions. (www.eurocities.eu)

and to embrace the diversity of their populations that is a reality in cities across Europe". While this is a non-binding action, it signals a commitment by policymakers at the city level to include migrants in local decision-making processes.

Alexandra Weerts, Senior Project Coordinator at Eurocities explained²⁵ that developing migrant councils is a useful way of including migrants in decision-making. Cities like Leipzig in Germany ensure gender parity in its migrants' council. The council is made up of 22 members (16 are migrants, and six are representatives of political parties). Since 2021, members of the council have been elected by the migrants living in the city.

Still, the effectiveness of migrant councils or consultative bodies as a participatory mechanism that influences policymaking depends on multiple factors such as political will, resources (funding and knowledge), and regular follow-up after consultations (Eurocities, 2022). There is also largely an absence of any legal obligation on public authorities to consider including the recommendations of such consultative bodies into integration policies (Golubeva, 2012).

In terms of increasing the representation of migrant women in politics, there are no known actions at the EU level. There are, however, different measures being recommended to increase the number of women in politics, including mandating gender quotas, and providing training, mentoring, funding, and other assistance to female candidates, particularly young women, and women from under-represented minority groups (European Parliament, 2021).²⁶ The Council of Europe (2021), which brings together much more countries than the Council of the EU, also recommends collecting disaggregated data and supporting research into women from under-represented groups in political life and analysing representation of women and men at national and regional level with an intersectional perspective. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe underlines some measures to promote women's participation from under-represented groups, such as setting up and funding some leadership and mentorship programmes, strengthening women's rights organisations by providing financial support and promoting the creation of women's networks or caucuses in national parliaments.

²⁵ This intervention by Alexandra Weerts was taken from a panel discussion on the "Political Participation of Migrant Women in the EU", organised by WIDE+, within the framework of the WE-EMPOWER project, on 22 March 2023 in Brussels.

²⁶ To read the full brief, *Women in politics in the EU: State of play*, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2021 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)739383](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)739383))

Conclusion

Enhancing the participation of migrant women in political and democratic life is a necessary step to building inclusive and democratic societies. The participation of migrant women as an under-represented group can positively contribute to public governance, transparency and accountability (Desille and Tommasi, 2023). While this can be done through different participatory mechanisms, like ensuring gender parity in migrant councils and consultative bodies and having quotas to ensure women from migrant backgrounds are represented in elected bodies, it is also crucial that migrant women can develop and lead spaces where they can share their expertise and knowledge and be engaged in decision-making processes.

To this end, it is therefore just as crucial that migrant women-led organisations have access to core, sustainable and flexible funding from governments, donors, and the EU (WIDE+, 2022).

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