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# Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Italy



**WE-EMPOWER** project is a transnational collaboration of seven migrant women-led and women-led organisations in Europe. The project aims to encourage and empower migrant women to participate in political and democratic life, with the overarching goal of protecting migrant women's rights. The conducted research aims to shed light on the state of migrant women's participation in political and democratic life in Italy.

## NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN ITALY

- According to the official data (ISTAT, 2012), migrants living in Italy represent **7.5% of the population (4,570,317 million)**.
- In 2020, **most migrants residing in Italy were women (53.6%)**.
- Among migrants coming from Eastern Europe there is a **higher female percentage (60% Romanians and 78% Ukrainians)**, employed especially as domestic workers.
- By October 2022, 172,405 refugees from Ukraine had arrived. Most of them are women (91,788) and children (51,101)

## MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

**Mercedes Lourdes Frias**, from the Dominican Republic, is the former councillor for immigration in the municipality of Empoli

**Cécile Kashetu Kyenge**, Italian politician and ophthalmologist, was the Minister for Integration in the 2013–14 Letta Cabinet, and Italy's first black government minister. She proposed a law that would give citizenship to the children of immigrants if they were born on Italian soil. She was elected in 2014 to the European Parliament where she was a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

**Associazione Differenza Donna/Donne Migranti** welcomes and hosts migrant women who arrive in Italy for family reunification or for work; they include women who are victims of violence in their country of origin, and in Italy and need to be accompanied on a long journey that requires the reconstruction of a psychophysical identity.

**Associazione Stella** supports migrant women's access to the labour market in Italy. It supports migrant women in creating and improving their CVs, upskill themselves and gain access to training opportunities.

**ADRI – ASSOCIAZIONE DONNE ROMENE IN ITALIA** has been involved in promoting Romanian migrant women's rights, raising awareness of their important role in the economy and society. ADRI also carries out advocacy at the EU level –contributing to several European parliamentary written questions regarding the problems faced by migrant women and transnational families, and also on data collection on the children left behind.

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **The increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum legal regimes** of Italy, which prevent access to a residence permits;
- **Access to the right to vote** at the local and national level that is linked to the migrants' country of origin. Third-country nationals who are not EU citizens do not have voting rights in Italy;
- Unequal gender relations and **gender-based discrimination**;
- **Lack of access to the labour market leads** to the lack of migrant women participation: In 2020, only one in two migrant women worked, and they are poorer than the European average;
- **Unfavourable treatment**: Migrant women are often employed as domestic workers, caregivers, and cleaning staff in offices and businesses. At the same time, there is a "paradoxical" exclusion of migrant care workers from political and public debates on the securitisation of migrants;
- A **systematic lack of attention** to issues of concern to migrant women;
- Migrant women are predominantly represented through a cultural lens, portrayed as **'the Other'**;

## MEASURES TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- Increase **efforts to include migrant women in politics or public decision-making**.
- Introduce **migrant councils** that involve migrants and are primarily driven by them in order to improve the living conditions of migrants and ultimately influence migration policies.
- Introduce **more NGO-run projects that push for greater migrant participation**, and the involvement of migrants as direct actors of change through processes of participation and active citizenship.

