



A model for gender-sensitive integration strategies

PITCH Country report – Slovenia

ZRS KOPER and Municipality of Koper



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Deliverable information

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List of abbreviations

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
ZRS	Science & Research Center Koper





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Executive summary

The objective of WP3 was to design a programme of activities tailored to each local context and the needs of 30 migrant women participants and to implement the programme during a six-month period to conclude which practices have a potential of sustainability and can contribute to migrant women's integration. The developed Activity Cluster programme consists of three clusters: Upskilling, Awareness-raising, and Social. In each cluster, several sub-activities were designed, covering various topics related to work, education, awareness of rights and duties and social interaction in the local environment. After the implementation of the programme, it was concluded which activities were the most successful and what could be adapted to improve local integration of migrant women.





Activities implemented in Koper, Slovenia

Description of the activities and evaluation

A3.1. Preparation of profiling toolbox and selection of cultural mediators

The first step in this phase was the development of guidelines to help partners test local integration strategies. ZRS Koper designed a profiling toolbox with contribution of all partners, following this structure:

- *Guidelines for the use of participatory and ethnographic methods of data collection and activities and for dealing with cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication.*
- *Topic list that can serve as a guideline for talking to migrant women about their needs, interests and wishes during the Cosy Corners activity (A3.2)*
- *Profiling questionnaire to identify participants' learning needs in the 4 focus areas of the PITCH model.*

A personalised roadmap to integration template to match the results of the profiling questionnaire with the relevant activity offers (as developed in A3.3) and translate them into a concrete personalised activity programme, namely the personalised roadmaps to integration.

The toolbox contained four separate parts that served as a guide for the organisation of Cosy Corners and the creation of the personalised roadmaps to integration. They were also helpful for the staff of the partner organisations and the cultural mediators.

Another important step was the selection of the cultural mediators to be involved in the PITCH project. ZRS selected four cultural mediators based on the most common language groups of migrant women in Koper, which were identified during the desk and field analyses conducted in the earlier phases of the project. ZRS recruited two mediators for the Albanian-speaking group, as most of the participants were from Kosovo, one for the Russian/Ukrainian-speaking group and one for the Bosnian-speaking group. The mediators were selected from among the women who had either previously worked with NGOs known to the ZRS or on the recommendation of employees of the Morje Intergenerational Centre, an existing meeting place for migrant women that offers Slovenian language courses.

A systematic one-day preparatory session was organised before the cultural mediators were introduced to the group of the selected 30 (in the case of Slovenia there were eventually 33) participants. In this introductory session, the purpose of the Cosy Corners, the Activity Clusters and participation in the project were explained, the profiling toolbox was examined in detail, the role





and interpersonal dynamics of the mediators were addressed, and the payment modalities were discussed. After a PowerPoint presentation, the mediators asked questions and gave their feedback. The session continued as ZRS and MOK members led the mediators on a short walk through the city center to the Morje Intergenerational Centre, where the Cosy Corners and later the one-on-one meetings with each participant would take place. A tour of the premises was provided to ensure that it was comfortable and easy for the mediators to provide support and build trust with the participants.



Images 1. Activities implemented in Slovenia





During the implementation phase of the personalized roadmaps to integration one of the cultural mediators for the Albanian-speaking group had to leave the project in September 2023 due to her pregnancy, so the ZRS recruited another Albanian-speaking woman, recommended by a local stakeholder for her experience in translation and pedagogical skills, to take her place.

Similarly, in December 2023, a cultural mediator for the Russian and Ukrainian language group decided to no longer participate in the PITCH project for personal reasons and a sudden change occurred. However, ZRS Koper and the Municipality of Koper agreed that it would be best to keep one of the participants, a highly motivated and already speaking Slovenian from Russia, who joined the project late (and had difficulties to reach the required 50 hours of minimum attendance for all clusters), involved in the project, but to give her a more active role and use her as a cultural mediator. She felt honoured and gladly accepted her new role.

A3.2 Rapport-building and profiling of the women during “Cosy-Corners”.

The Cosy Corners were carefully designed by ZRS Koper and MOK to ensure that it is easy and interesting for migrant women to participate in the sessions. Therefore, in April and May 2023, Cosy Corner meetings were held on Tuesdays and Fridays at 9.00 a.m. at Morje Intergenerational Centre. Flyers and formal and informal invitations were sent out in advance to inform potential participants about these events and their goal – to assemble a group of 30 active participants in the PITCH project who will follow their personalized roadmaps to integration and participate between 50 and 161 hours in activities that will help them integrate.

To encourage mothers' participation, childcare was provided for each session at the same location in a different classroom. Snacks and drinks were also provided at each session. In total, 43 women participated in at least one Cosy Corner and 23 of them were active (they participated in at least 5 sessions).

One of the challenges during the Cosy Corners was the heterogeneity of the participants. The women came from different age groups, different countries and with different levels of education. For this reason, it was difficult to maintain a good pace during the explanations and when completing the profiling questionnaire.

Another challenge was that there were three different language groups in the same classroom at the same time, which sometimes caused distractions, or some information was not properly understood. On the other hand, this bringing together was a good introduction for the mediators and the migrant women to get a feeling for the topic, the importance and the aims of the project, such as promoting multiculturalism and integration strategies in local areas.





The challenges were overcome through constant and efficient communication with the cultural mediators and by adapting the agenda and topics to the number of participants and their characteristics. Sometimes smaller groups were formed, and the mediators took turns explaining and helping with translation.

Nº of the Cosy Corner	Date	Nº of attendees	Link to the informal Cosy Corner feedback
Cosy Corner 1	April 7, 2023	16	Link
Cosy Corner 2	April 11, 2023	13	Link
Cosy Corner 3	April 14, 2023	12	Link
Cosy Corner 4	April 18, 2023	14	Link
Cosy Corner 5	April 21, 2023	9	Link
Cosy Corner 6	April 25, 2023	8	Link
Cosy Corner 7	May 5, 2023	14	Link
Cosy Corner 8	May 9, 2023	16	Link
Cosy Corner 9	May 12, 2023	9	Link
Cosy Corner 10	May 16, 2023	11	Link
Cosy Corner 11	May 19, 2023	13	Link

A3.3. Development of PITCH activity-clusters

The ZRS has prepared a total of 6 activities. 1 activity was developed for the "Digital skills" path within the Upskilling cluster – "Safe use of the internet", 2 activities were developed for the Rights and duties path within the Awareness raising and guidance cluster – "How to prevent abuse and avoid violence" and "What women should know about reproductive rights", 2 activities were developed for the Neighbourhood walks" path within the Social cluster – "Neighbourhood walk 1 and 2" (including exploring the city, using public transport, visiting key stakeholders etc.) and 1 activity for the "Social Cafés" path within the Social cluster – "Intercultural board game event".





ZRS also alternated and modified some of the training materials suggested by other partners. Instead of 20 hours for language skills, 40 hours of Slovenian language have been implemented in Koper, Slovenia, for level A1 (designed especially for Albanian-speaking women) and 40 hours for level B1 (mainly for Russian and Ukrainian-speaking group of participants). Therefore, a total of 80 hours of language skills were taught.

In order not to make the Upskilling cluster too extensive, 15 hours were offered instead of 20 hours for digital skills, and the same for Employment skills. In the Entrepreneurship path, 10 instead of 20 hours were organised.

Some activities were combined thematically and covered more than just one path at the same time, e.g. Social Café 3 and 4 overlapped with employment skills. The hours were divided according to the requirements of the training programme and the project application.

The ZRS also swapped some recommended activities with those requested by the local women, e.g. sewing workshops were added to the activity list, and some topics were taken from one cluster and covered in another, e.g. gardening was discussed as part of the career guidance path instead of Social Café, while some activities were not delivered at all in Koper because there was not enough interest, such as social media account creation, app use, theatre, dancing, digital storytelling and banking systems.

A3.4 Finalisation of personalised roadmaps to integration

Personalized roadmaps to integration were presented to the mediators in the 1-day preparatory session and explained in detail. They were also presented to the women who took part in the Cosy Corners and were partially completed by some of the women with the help of the cultural mediators.

In each individual session with the participants, the roadmaps were explained in detail, in such a way that the women could understand the logic and purpose of the document, and in communication with them about their preferences, availability and possible limitations. An individualised and personalised approach was taken when developing the personalized roadmaps to integration.

It was a challenge to explain what the roadmap table represented – for some migrant women the numbers of hours were confusing, or they could not understand the categorisation of paths and activities within each cluster.





A3.5. Implementation of the Personalised Roadmaps to integration

Cluster	Content	Dates	Number of attendees	Average satisfaction rate (last question of the evaluation)
Upskilling Cluster	Language skills B1/A1	3.10.2023 / 5.10.2023 - Key vocabulary	12/16	10
		10.10.2023 / 12.10.2023 - Finances	9/14	9
		17.10.2023 / 26.10.2023 -Digital terms	10/12	10
		24.10.2023 / 9.11.2023 - The echo of stories	10/15	10
		7.11.2023 / 30.11.2023 - Walking through history	7/11	10
		14.11.2023 / 7.12.2023 - Running errands	13/11	9
		21.11.2023 / 14.12.2023 - Declentions	12/16	10
		28.11.2023 / 21.12.2023 - Employment	13/10	10
		5.12.2023 / 18.01.2024 - Filling out forms	9/16	9
		12.12.2023 / 25.1.2024 - Education and school system	11/15	10
Digital skills	8.1.2024 - Safe use of internet; Digital certificates	8	9	
	15.1.2024 – Canva; Excel	6	10	



		17.1.2024 - Using e-mail; Creating basic documents + Google Forms	7	10
	Employment-related skills	4.12.2023 - Writing a good CV*	22	10
		20.12.2023 - Visiting Employment Service*	19	10
		9.02.2024 - Role-play for job interview; CV	9	10
		23.2.2024 - Gardening, self-sufficiency, and environment	11	10
		29.2.2024 - Visiting Career fair	11	9
	Entrepreneurial skills	29.11.2023 - Entrepreneurship 1	17	10
		12.1.2024 - Business entities	9	9
		29.2.2024 - Visiting career fair*	11	9
Awareness-raising /guidance cluster	Rights and duties	11.1.2024 - CSD - basic rights; civic orientation	17	10
		1.2.2024 - Your rights in the labour market	7	10
		13.2.2024 - Reproductive health and rights	12	10
		29.2.2024 - Visiting Counselling Center	19	9

		5.3.2024 - Violence prevention and support services	28	10
		4.3.2024 - Legal Aid Workshop	13	10
	Active citizenship	16.1.2024 - Event organization; Volunteering	14	10
		19.01.2024 - Active citizenship + Lego workshop	13	10
		30.01.2024 - Migrant councils in municipalities	14	9
		*23.2.2024 - Gardening, self-sufficiency, and environment	11	10
		16.02.2024 - Dare to share	11	10
		11.3.2024 - Dare to share 2	19	10
	Career/training guidance	10.10.2023 - Peer-to-peer mentorship - sewing 1	3	8
		20.11.2023 - Adult education centre	10	10
		24.11.2023 - Adult learning - sewing 2	3	8
		8.12.2023 - Peer-to-peer mentorship - sewing 3	3	9
		23.2.2024 - Gardening, self-sufficiency, and environment	11	10

Social cluster	Neighbourhood walks	20.11.2023	10	10
		20.2.2024	11	10
Social Cafés		23.10.2023: Exchange of recipes	10	10
			10	10
		8.11.2023: Board games		
		4.12.2023: Writing a great CV*	22	10
		20.12.2023: Visiting Employment Service*	19	10
		23.1.2024 - Democratic café	12	9
		15.2.2024 - A personal exchange	16	10
		27.2.2024 - Visiting Creative centre and pottery class	19	10
		8.3.2024 - Movie watching	21	9
		12.3.2024 - Sport activities	23	10
	19	9		
	15.3.2024 - Round table			

In Slovenia, 33 women completed the Activity Cluster Programme of at least 50 hours, 48 activities with a total duration of 208 hours were carried out. The most frequently requested activity was learning the Slovenian language at two different levels, A1 and B1. The women expressed their wishes several times to employees of the ZRS and the MOK as well as directly to the teachers of the Adult Education Centre (Ljudska univerza Koper).

The biggest challenges in implementing the personalized roadmaps to integration were mainly logistical. It was difficult to keep to the schedule and to organise the actual attendance time of each participant in the sessions as originally planned in the roadmaps. Several adjustments had to be made, and the schedule had to be very flexible. If not, enough women signed up for a particular



activity, it was sometimes postponed or changed in order to stimulate interest and provide personalised and interesting, but also informative content. Another problem was the attitude of the participants, which was mostly very positive and supportive, but there were also some cases of impatience of the women who already knew the Slovenian language quite well towards those who did not. This meant that the mediators sometimes had to translate whole sentences, and some participants became impatient and annoyed. Another challenge was keeping track of the required documentation and evaluation. The evaluation in particular was very difficult as it was very repetitive and took more time than expected, and many women did not really concentrate but quickly ticked the boxes in the questionnaire and rarely wrote down comments. The informal feedback proved to be much more valuable and realistic than the formal feedback. During the PITCH programme of activities, causing disappointment, for example, during the sewing workshop, where an Albanian-speaking participant took on the role of a group mentor and taught other women how to sew, one of the »student« participants from Russia was very upset because she thought the level of teaching was not high enough and not professional enough, although it had been explained beforehand that the workshop was for informal knowledge sharing and would only last three hours.

The main achievements after piloting the PITCH model and implementing the personalized roadmaps to integration were that the women opened and felt more comfortable approaching other people, experts and other women. They also built trust with each other and with representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Tolerance among them increased greatly after participating in various social activities, arts and crafts, and rights and responsibilities events. The women became better informed about the opportunities around them and the willingness of the local community to help and accept them. Another achievement related to language skills – two of the participating women passed their A1 exam in Slovenian after one had previously failed.

They were not the only ones to learn something new during the activities for migrant women. The members of the partner institutions learnt new information about their local environment that they may not have known before. The design of the Activity Clusters and their implementation meant extensive participation in the process and deepened the expertise of the migration and integration experts. As the women became more and more involved in the project, they often expressed how grateful they were for this opportunity and how important the PITCH project is. One of the cultural mediators explained: „This project was the missing piece of my destiny here in Koper. “On two occasions, a participant took the time and resources to bake a cake for the project, which not only meant that talents were discovered, but also showed how much participating in the project meant to them.

Another achievement of this phase is the sustainability of the project. At the end of the implementation phase, some of the PITCH participants signed up for a free pottery course that they had learned about during one of the Social Cafés, which means that they will continue to be an active member of their neighbourhood. Six other women signed up for a free Slovenian language





course for Albanian-speaking migrants, vulnerable groups and less integrated people, which is part of an ongoing project that started in April 2024 and is run by the Adult Education Centre (Ljudska univerza Koper), one of the actors they met during the six-month implementation of the Activity Clusters

A3.6. World café: participatory feedback collection

On 14 April 2024, the World Café took place as the final event of implementation of the personalized roadmaps to integration. The event was attended by 24 people (3 ZRS employees, 3 representatives of the Municipality of Koper, 4 cultural mediators, 2 representatives of relevant stakeholders in the region and 14 migrant women involved in the PITCH project). Several participants were also members of the Advisory Committee. One participant, a representative of PiNA - Association for Culture and Education, participated via Zoom.

The main results and activities of the six-month pilot phase of the PITCH project were presented, sustainability and dissemination were discussed, an update of the website with useful information for migrants in one place was presented (<https://www.novivkopru.si/>) and conclusions were drawn during a structured discussion in smaller groups.

It was noted that integration initiatives such as the PITCH Activity Clusters are in high demand and the municipality of Koper agreed on the importance of such programmes. One of the migrant women from Kazakhstan asked if she could say something and gave a short speech in Slovenian, thanking the project for saving her from struggling with postpartum depression and giving her the opportunity to gain insight into so many different organisations and integration opportunities in Koper. It was a very touching moment that emphasised the importance and successful implementation of the PITCH project.





Impact analysis

The impact assessment took place on three parts of the programme. 1st wave before the implementation of the roadmaps began, 2nd one in the middle of the Activity Cluster programme, and 3rd one after the completion of the personalized roadmaps to integration.

After the three waves of evaluation, it became evident not only from the impact assessment, but also from informal discussions and observations about the group and individual dynamics, that the PITCH Activity Clusters were a positive aspect in the lives of participating women. Some of them were quite reserved in the beginning, however, in the middle of the implementation of personalized roadmaps to integration, they already became chattier, it was observed that they smiled more and shared more about their personal lives. A change was also evident from the three impact assessments, namely the level of understanding and using Slovenian language increased. Indirectly, women's confidence in participating in conversations also increased.

In the first wave of evaluation, most women rated their existing skills and knowledge, related to work, employment, awareness of rights and duties and interaction in local community with 2 or 3 on a scale from 1 to 4, however, in the second wave, this rate already increased to 3 and 4, mostly 4. This suggests that the Activity programme was effective early on and only after a small number of hours dedicated to inclusion of the women, they already felt a measurable increase in their perception of their integration. In the third wave evaluation, most of the women rated their (readiness for) integration in the local community with 4 out of 4. The level of their feeling of being well accepted in the local community also increased from the average about 3,5 to about 4,5 from 1st wave until the 3rd wave.

Several women (coming from Bosnia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, and Russia) expressed that not only did they learn Slovenian language but gained immense knowledge on services available in the area, importance of being aware of your rights and duties, importance of having access to information, and the benefits of having contact with other women in the local community.

The women's average overall satisfaction with the project activities was 10/10 in all three waves of evaluation.





Conclusion

In WP3, a *profiling toolbox* was developed by ZRS Koper and shared with all partners to provide guidelines for the selection of cultural mediators to work with migrant women and to assemble a group of 30 migrant women to participate in the PITCH programme.

During the “Cosy Corners” in April and May 2023 - 11 thematic sessions to assemble 30 migrant participants, 43 women participated in at least one session and 23 of them were actively involved in more than half of them. During the six-month implementation period of the Activity Clusters, six cultural mediators were involved in the PITCH project, covering three different language groups: Albanian, Russian, and Bosnian. 33 women completed the Activity Cluster Programme of at least 50 hours. A total of 48 activities were implemented with the duration of 208 hours. The most requested activity was learning the Slovenian language at two different levels, A1 and B1.

In the phase of developing *Activity Clusters*, the ZRS prepared a total of 6 activities. One activity was developed for the Digital skills path within the Upskilling cluster – “*Safe use of the Internet*”, 2 activities were developed for the Rights and duties path within the Awareness-raising and guidance cluster – “*How to prevent abuse and avoid violence*” and “*What women should know about reproductive rights*”, 2 activities were designed for the Neighbourhood walks path within the Social cluster – *Neighbourhood walk 1 and 2* (including exploring the city, use of public transportation, visiting important stakeholders, etc.) and 1 activity for the “Social Cafés” path within the Social cluster – “*Intercultural board game event*”.

The main challenges encountered in the implementation of the personalized roadmaps to integration were mainly logistical. It was difficult to keep to the schedule and to organise the actual hours of each participant at the sessions as originally planned in the roadmaps. Several adjustments were made, and the schedule had to be very flexible.

The main outcomes were that the women became better informed, improved their Slovenian language skills, became more confident and felt more comfortable approaching other people. Another achievement of this phase is the sustainability of the project.

On 14 April 2024, the final event of the six-month period of pilot-testing and implementation of the personalized roadmaps to integration, World Café, took place. It was attended by 24 people. The main results and activities of the six-month pilot phase of the PITCH project were presented, sustainability and dissemination were discussed, an update of the website with useful information for migrants in one place was presented and conclusions were drawn.

These activities, which serve to educate, raise awareness, and improve social interaction among migrant women, were warmly welcomed and appreciated in Koper, Slovenia. The existing local integration strategies are not holistic and do not have a long-term plan. Therefore, such initiatives





are urgently needed and supported by the Municipality of Koper as well as other relevant stakeholders and migrant women to be continued in the future.



