



# **KMOP DISCUSSION PAPER No.101**

**National Report on the Educational Counselling Services and Vocational Training of Immigrants in Greece.**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the present report is to present on one hand the state of the art regarding the integration of immigrants in the Greek labour market, with emphasis on gender issues, and on the other to outline the relevant career counselling and vocational training services provided that are aimed towards immigrants. Furthermore, the report presents good or promising practices regarding immigrant vocational counselling and training that have been applied in other European countries and which could be applied in the case of Greece, as well as other countries. The findings presented were obtained through literature research, as well as two focus groups, one with immigrants and a second one with experts and professionals in the field. The report constitutes part of the international survey that was conducted in the framework of the European Project “Move On - Migration & Gender: Vocational and Educational Counselling”, which aims to support the skills and abilities of professionals offering educational and vocational counselling to immigrants of EU countries, with particular emphasis on gender and diversity issues. The ultimate goal of the project is to increase the employability of immigrant and refugee groups throughout the EU.

*Keywords:* Immigrants, immigrant labour market integration, immigrant vocational counselling and vocational training services in Greece.

## **Introduction**

The present document is an executive summary of the Greek National report prepared as part of the project's Intellectual Output 1, titled "State of the art gender and diversity sensitive educational and counselling methods". The main report comprises two parts. First, it tries to depict the situation regarding immigrant integration in the labour market in Greece, with emphasis on gender issues, as well as the corresponding vocational counselling and training services addressed to immigrants. Second, it presents relevant good or promising practices pertaining to the provision of counselling and training services to immigrants and have already been applied in other European countries, which could also be utilised in the case of Greece and other countries.

The national report is part of the international research conducted in all project Move On's partner countries and is aimed at presenting good practices that constitute the state of the art in the field of career counselling services and professional orientation, and specifically the practices that place emphasis on gender and cultural diversity issues. The findings of the research will contribute to the creation of an educational course for continuing professional development, certified by IARS International Institute, which will be addressed to professional offering career counselling and professional orientation services. The educational course will take into account gender and cultural diversity issues.

## **Methodology**

In order to record and analyse the current situation in Greece regarding the integration of immigrants in the labour market and the provision of career counselling and vocational training, and, at the same time, to determine and classify good or promising practices of career counselling services that take into account gender and cultural diversity issues from various European countries, qualitative research was undertaken according to the following methodology:

- Desk research: This type of secondary research, based on Greek and international literature, was considered necessary in order to fully understand and record the Greek situation regarding the subject at hand and determine similar career counselling service provision methodologies for immigrants, which could be utilised in designing the training material of the present project.
- Field research through focus groups. Two focus groups were organised, one consisting of 5 immigrant men and women and 5 experts and professional in the field (see Appendix – Focus group participants). The goal of the first focus group was to note down the experiences and investigate the needs of immigrants in Greece concerning their labour market integration. The second group was focused on eliciting the opinions of experts and professionals on immigrant needs as regards their training and employability and the relevant services provided.

The findings of both the desk and the field research contributed to the classification of various practices as good or promising, based on specific criteria.

## Literature Review Findings

### Immigration in Greece – Statistics

Greece received a large number of immigrants during the ‘90s, mainly as a result of the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. Most immigrants came from Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, followed by groups from African and Asian countries; this trend continued at an equally high rate during the ‘00s. According to the 2011 census (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2014a) the immigrant population in Greece was 912,000, which composed 8.4% of the total population of the country, compared to 7% in 2001 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2011). The main countries of origin of these immigrants are Albania (52.7%), Bulgaria (8.3%), Romania (5.1%) and Pakistan (3.7%), while 11.9% of this population originated in undetermined countries or did not have a specific country’s citizenship.

Regarding gender, according to the 2001 census data, men compose 54.5% and women 45.5% of the immigrant population. However, more recent data indicate that this difference has somewhat declined, as shown in the following table published by the Ministry of the Interior in 2014 (Anagnostou and Gemi, 2015).

<b>Gender distribution among immigrants, 2010-2014</b>		
	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>54,8%</b>	<b>45,2%</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>54,1%</b>	<b>45,9%</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>53,2%</b>	<b>46,8%</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>52,9%</b>	<b>47,1%</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>53,2%</b>	<b>46,8%</b>

Furthermore, it is important to mention that there is considerable difference in the relevant percentages according to the ethnicity, as noted by Papageorgiou and Tsironis (2013). For some countries, immigration to Greece seems to be an exclusively male affair (e.g. the countries of the Indopakistani peninsula, with percentages up to 97%), whereas for other countries it seems to be a mainly female affair. The following table, based on Ministry of Interior data for 2014 (Anagnostou and Gemi, 2015) illustrates this phenomenon.

<b>Third country citizens in Greece, based on ethnicity and gender</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
Albania	183,385	142,143	325,528
Ukraine	2,936	14,451	17,387
Georgia	4,684	10,801	15,485
Pakistan	13,386	1,237	14,623
Russia	2,091	10,417	12,508
India	9,251	3,079	12,330
Egypt	8,116	2,753	10,869

Moldavia	2,262	6,807	9,069
Philippines	2,278	6,420	8,698
Armenia	2,101	3,443	5,544
<b>Total</b>	<b>230,490</b>	<b>201,551</b>	<b>432,041</b>

As regards to the educational level, immigrants tend to have a low level, as the majority (about 86%) has only completed primary or secondary education (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2014b).

<b>Immigrant education level – 2014</b>	
<b>Did not attend school / only a few years of primary schooling</b>	1,6%
<b>Primary education</b>	44,9%
<b>Secondary education</b>	41,7%
<b>Tertiary education</b>	11,8%

According to a study by Lianos (2007), as cited by Anagnostou and Gemi, although most immigrant women (85%) have completed secondary education and on average women immigrants have a higher (62%) educational background than men (38%), there is a considerable mismatch between women's educational level and the types of employment they end up in.

Employment among immigrants, as recorded by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2014b) for the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester of 2014 is as follows:

<b>Immigrant employment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014</b>	
<b>Employed</b>	49,7%
<b>Unemployed</b>	27,6%
<b>Economically inactive</b>	22,7%

The following table contains a breakdown of employed immigrants according to occupation type:

<b>Employed immigrant occupation – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014</b>	
<b>Legislators, senior officials and managers</b>	0%
<b>Professionals</b>	13%
<b>Technicians</b>	6,5%
<b>Clerks</b>	17,8%
<b>Service workers and shop and market sale workers</b>	18,5%
<b>Skilled agricultural and fishery workers</b>	10,5%
<b>Craft and related trade workers</b>	10,6%
<b>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</b>	10,6%
<b>Elementary occupations</b>	17,5%
<b>Unclassified</b>	0%

According to Kasimati and Masourou (2007, as cited in Anagnostou and Gemi, 2015), men are mostly employed in the first sector and construction, whereas women are mostly employed in home and care services. However, it is difficult to record the percentage of women immigrants working in the home sector, since employment in this sector is to a large degree unofficial and insufficiently regulated. Data collected from the Greek Social Security foundation (IKA) indicates that only a small number of employed immigrant women (8.6%) are insured, compared to local women (91.4%).

As noted by Anagnostou and Gemi (2015), the economic crisis has mostly affected those sectors of Greek economy where the largest portion of immigrant workers are employed, especially the construction sector, where unemployment has skyrocketed since 2008 (OECD, 2013). Furthermore, the unemployment rates of immigrants are much higher than those of the local population, since they were at 34.2% compared to 25.5% in 2014 (Eurostat). In total, the increase in unemployment and the deep crisis in specific labour sectors have placed disproportionate burden to immigrant families. Immigrant men are in their majority unemployed and women tend to work in the informal sector of house and care services, often without employment contracts and insurance benefits (Triandafyllidou and Marouf, 2011, as cited in Anagnostou and Gemi, 2015).

### **Problems / Obstacles faced by immigrants during labour market integration**

According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority, for immigrants, discrimination due to ethnic origin, religion or social factors is the most common (39%) obstacle in finding employment suitable to an applicant's skills, followed by inadequate command of the Greek language (31%), lack of work or residence permit (19.5%), while a large percentage mentioned the problem of unrecognised education certificates, a problem mostly affecting tertiary education certificate holders. The latter seems to be evident of the more general difficulty that immigrants face in having their professional qualifications recognised, where, depending on the profession, the country of origin and the qualification, a number of bureaucratic procedures need to be completed under conditions of limited available documentation on the necessary paperwork. This eventually results in greatly limited career progression opportunities for immigrants, as they are forced to take on unskilled work with low remuneration.

The lack of employability promoting services and other active labour market measures constitutes an important obstacle that needs to be overcome, as according to a report by the European Project Lighthouse (2015), the lack of childcare facilities is a major barrier to finding and staying in employment, particularly for women immigrants.

### **Immigrant needs regarding their employment and integration into the labour market.**

Taking into account the problems and obstacles faced by immigrants in gaining access to the labour market, it becomes clear that they have increased needs for training and counselling support with the aim of improving their employability. It is worth noting that according to a recent study conducted in the framework of project Lighthouse (2015), the vast majority of immigrants (95) reported that they have never participated in a vocational training programme in Greece due



to a lack of awareness and access to the system, a lack of time because of professional and familial obligations or due a lack of motivation and trust in the system.

Therefore, the main needs of immigrants can be summarised as follows:

- Learning the Greek language
- Learning an additional language, such as English
- IT skills
- Vocational training for specific professions
- Recognition of prior learning and qualifications and certification of their professional skills.
- Developing soft, social and communication skills, as well as social integration and cultural diversity skills.
- Guidance and counselling support on a personal level, taking into account the different profiles and specific needs of immigrants, as well as a group level, in matters of professional orientation and career counselling.
- Training in employability issues, such as compiling a CV, filling out job applications, interview techniques etc.
- Information on counselling support services, as well as employment and training programmes
- Information on the labour conditions and the Greek labour legislation, as well as familiarisation with the country's labour culture.

### **Gender inequalities in the labour market**

Despite the fact that in Greece gender equality has been promoted by a series of laws and policies that support the harmonisation of family and professional life, protect motherhood and emphasise parental leave, prevent and suppress gender discrimination (by requiring, for example, equal pay for equal work value, preventing sexual harassment etc), promote women's entrepreneurship and vulnerable women's integration in the labour market, gender inequalities and discrimination still takes place against women.

Firstly, women in Greece are more affected by unemployment, the rate of which is currently at 28.7%, whereas for men in February 2016 the corresponding figure was 20.6% (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016). Despite the fact that high unemployment rates are a result of the economic crisis, high figures of women's unemployment is a long-standing characteristic and typical of prevalent discrimination in the labour market (Kambouri, 2013).

Gender inequalities also continue to be present regarding career progression towards the higher tiers of employment in terms of hierarchy and remuneration (the "glass ceiling" phenomenon), with women being typically underrepresented (Kambouri, 2013). Furthermore, the compensation difference in Greece (i.e. the difference between gross hourly rates) was at 15% for 2010, compared to 16.3% for the EU (EU Report, 2015). The total income difference between the two genders in Greece was at 45.2% for 2010, whereas the corresponding EU average is 41.1%.

## **Counselling and support services promoting immigrant employment**

The Greek Organisation of Labour Force Employment ([www.oaed.gr](http://www.oaed.gr)) is the foremost public authority promoting employment and vocational training in Greece. Among other activities, it provides, applies and funds programmes that facilitate access to employment, while also offering professional orientation and counselling support, placing emphasis on groups that are most affected by unemployment, as well as vulnerable population groups such as immigrants. OAED, in collaboration with VET Centres, develops and offers targeted vocational training programmes addressed to unemployed immigrants in sectors such as catering, tourist agencies, maintenance technicians, personal carers, electricians, construction workers etc.

Furthermore, the Centre for Information for Employed and Unemployed Persons ([www.kepea.gr](http://www.kepea.gr)) of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) offers tailored information services to Greek workers and economic immigrants regarding the application of insurance and immigration legislation, while unemployed people can register their CVs, seek work and obtain information on employment and training programmes. It is worth noting that KEPEA maintains an Economic Immigrants' Office, which offers information to economic immigrants regarding their labour and insurance rights, as well as full information on matters regarding their legalisation and integration.

Another provider is the social service offices of Municipalities offer free career counselling and professional orientation services to unemployed people belonging to vulnerable groups, as well as language learning and basic IT skill learning programmes.

NGOs also play an important role in career guidance and support for immigrants. Many of them implement relevant actions funded by the European Union, such as the EaSI (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=el>) or the ERASMUS+ ([http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node\\_el](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_el)) programmes. Similar actions are implemented through the Operational Programme "Human Resource Development" and in particular the Local Actions for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups, aiming at the (re)integration of unemployed persons belonging to vulnerable population groups, including immigrants.

The professionals who are involved in the provision of career counselling and professional orientation services include psychologists, sociologists, social workers, lawyers, adult trainers, career counsellors, VET providers, mentors, life coaches, cultural mediators, administrative staff working in relevant services.

## **Field Research Findings**

In order to ensure participation in the two focus groups, KMOP contacted relevant organisations, with which they have cooperated in the past. The two focus groups took place on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in KMOP's offices in Thessaloniki. The participants were informed about the "Move On" project and the objectives of the research at hand, as well as the fact that the conversation would be recorded but their participation would remain anonymous. They were asked to confirm their consent by signing relevant participation agreement forms.

The discussions proceeded smoothly and without any problems, and participants were eager to express their opinions. The only minor difficulty encountered was the inability of some participants to fully comprehend the questions, as most of them did not have full command of the Greek language. In these cases, the vocabulary was simplified and further elaboration was provided. The findings of the two groups are presented in the following paragraphs.

### **Immigrant Focus Groups**

As mentioned above, four out of the five participants came from Albania, while one of them came from Romania. There were four women and one man participating in the group, and participants had lived in Greece from 8 to 25 years each. All of them currently live permanently in Greece with their families or started families in Greece. As to the education level, three of the women participants were secondary education graduates, one of them had completed a post-secondary technical school on Tourism studies, while the male participant had studied Economic Sciences in his country of origin.

Most the participants were unemployed and only one woman was employed as a cleaner at the time. The male participant, despite his economic background, had not worked in his chosen field but had started a small cleaning business, which he had to terminate due to the economic crisis. The immigrant with the Tourism studies had not managed to maintain employment in her chosen field of study, but had also taken other jobs, such as home childcare / babysitting and cosmetics sales.

Regarding their integration in the labour market, there was a multitude of opinions. Two of the participants believed that they were integrated in the labour market directly and did not face any problems, whereas the other three expressed a different opinion. This may be attributed to the time period in which their immigration to Greece took place, as those who were directly integrated immigrated at times when there was increased immigratory flow towards Greece and an increased availability of jobs that are mostly covered by immigrants, especially in the construction, agriculture and service provision sectors. Their fellow nationals were very assistive in the adjustment and integration process. On the contrary, immigrant women who faced difficulties were those that arrived at a time when the signs of the economic crisis were already apparent. All participants noted that their poor knowledge of the Greek language inhibited their integration into the labour market, but in itself was not the determining factor in finding work.

None of the participants mentioned facing integration problems attributable to their origin or cultural differences. On the contrary, most of the problems they faced pertained to their social integration, as some of them were discriminated against during their efforts to find housing. However, all of the women participants opined that they found work relatively easily and were preferred compared to men in jobs that are considered to be appropriate for women, such as waiting, cleaning, child and elderly care; the relevant stereotypes involving “waitresses” and “home assistants” in Greece were also mentioned.

Regarding to their training needs, all participants stressed their need for learning the Greek language, in the belief that it would improve their employment prospects and open up new career opportunities. Only two participants mentioned a desire to be trained in skills such as pastry

making or hairdressing. No other training needs were mentioned, as most of them did not have any further career ambitions. On a similar note, participants mentioned that they do not have any specific career counselling needs, despite the fact that they are unemployed, since they did not consider it likely that such support would change their employment status or improve their career prospects. Only two out of five answered that they would potentially use such services; in fact, they responded that they did not feel any need to use such services even at earlier times, when they were still employed, as their main interest lied in finding any work, something they achieved easily, regardless of their skills and any ambitions. Most of them mentioned that they were not aware of services that could improve their career prospects and some mentioned knowledge of OAED's activities, which they considered to be without substantial merit, given the economic crises and increased unemployment levels.

### **Experts' / Professionals' Focus Group**

The services provided by the expert and professionals participating in the focus group included counselling and networking through OAED to all citizen groups and particularly to vulnerable groups, including immigrants, women, and also victims of labour exploitation. Furthermore, in one of the organisations represented, immigrants are the main target group supported, and particularly those from Albania, Romania and Bulgaria, to whom career counselling services as well as family support services are provided. Another participant mentioned their organisations' provision of support services to, among others, disabled immigrants and their networking with welfare services, healthcare, etc.

With the exception of the Immigrations Service, which deals exclusively with immigrants, the other organisations do not have targeted programmes for immigrants, even though the latter form a large portion of their target groups. Some organisations, such as ARSIS take care to always have a staff member which speaks the beneficiary immigrants' language and also acts as cultural mediator, so as to ensure the provision of high-quality services.

The participants of this focus group mentioned that immigrants face a number of issues regarding their access to organisations and agencies offering career counselling and employability services, with the most important being the language. Those not familiar with the language seldom approach such services and have naturally little access to the corresponding information. Also, there are many who are not aware of the procedures necessary for approaching these services and obtaining information, but also of the existence of the services altogether. Among others, it was mentioned that the issue of bureaucracy inhibits their access to public services, a problem which is also faced by other citizens. Furthermore, it was pointed out that most of them are not aware of the existence of these services, and street work is often necessary in order to inform immigrants of these and other services provided. It is noteworthy, however, that once awareness is raised regarding the existence and provision of these services, it tends to disseminate quickly among immigrant communities.

As to immigrants' needs regarding their integration into the labour market, learning the Greek language was given top priority. Vocational training was also prominent, especially when

it comes to technical tasks, through which they mainly find employment anyway. Despite the fact that some of them are educated and may have been professionals in their own countries, in Greece they tend to engage in low-skill technical or agricultural tasks and do not seek ways to match their skills and qualifications with their employment position. An important point mentioned by all professionals was that some of the immigrants coming to Greece have a tendency to engage in non-mainstream work, such as house cleaning, prostitution, etc., or informal work. Therefore, it is important to achieve their engagement in formal labour, with insurance benefits and remuneration rates consistent with current legislation. The need for training on “horizontal” skills and skills that pertain to the jobs typically undertaken by immigrants was also mentioned.

Professionals stated that their organisations place emphasis on gender and cultural diversity issues when it comes to service provision. Considerable effort is being put into ensuring that approaches are gender and culturally sensitive, taking into account and respecting diversity. However, there are no specific quality requirements or guidelines for the provision of services when it comes to gender and cultural sensitivity. Also, the participants consider that their employing organisations’ staff is inadequately trained to offer gender- and culturally sensitive counselling services, and thus further training is required for NGOs to offer quality services, especially when it comes to cultural diversity issues.

Finally, regarding the question of whether they were aware of specific career counselling and vocational training services that are addressed exclusively to immigrants, participants stated that they were unaware of such services. Only some unofficial initiatives were mentioned, pertaining mostly to job-seeking assistance and implemented mostly through local immigrant associations and communities.

## Good or Promising Practices

	Practice 1	Practice 2	Practice 3
<b>Title of the practice</b>	Immigrant women in isolation	“Work is open for everybody”  In 2012, the project was awarded the National Award for career counselling	Bridges Programme – City of Glasgow United Kingdom Recognised as an example of Best Practice in Scotland, the UK and Europe
<b>URL of the practice</b>	<a href="http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.6be1c39612ee961cb0e80003437/utrikesf_odda_kvinnor.pdf">http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.6be1c39612ee961cb0e80003437/utrikesf_odda_kvinnor.pdf</a>  <a href="http://socialempowerment.eu/Project_Card.aspx?ProjectID=332">http://socialempowerment.eu/Project_Card.aspx?ProjectID=332</a>	<a href="http://www.ekscr.cz/en/projekt/work-open-everybody">http://www.ekscr.cz/en/projekt/work-open-everybody</a>  <a href="http://socialempowerment.eu/Project_Card.aspx?ProjectID=332">http://socialempowerment.eu/Project_Card.aspx?ProjectID=332</a>	<a href="http://www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk/">http://www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk/</a>
<b>Location /geographical coverage</b>	6 regions in Sweden, namely Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmo, Halmstad, Landskrona and Sundsvall	Prague – Czech Republic	Glasgow , Scotland – United Kingdom
<b>Brief description of the practice</b>	This project is a governmental assignment from the Swedish government to Public Employment Services (PES). The main goal of the project is to find new methodologies for integration of the immigrant women with low education. The project idea was based on the continuous evaluation which showed that the individual approach and non-traditional working methods (not typical for everyday work at PES) were very effective for this specific target group. The project was carried out from 2009 to 2010 in 6 Swedish regions.	Carried out from September 2010 till August 2012, the project “Work is open for everybody” was financed by the Operational Program Prague “Adaptability” and by the city of Prague.  The objective of the project is to give foreigners a chance, through an educational course, to learn everything they need to know about the job market in Prague, so that they can put their skills to use and so that through their qualification they can contribute to the growth of the Czech economy.	The Bridges Programmes supports the social, educational and economic integration of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and anyone for whom English is a second language, living in Glasgow. Recognised as an example of Best Practice in Scotland, the UK and Europe, Bridges works with employers and partners to ensure that our clients have the possible support to help them into work (if eligible), education or further training.
<b>Institution/ Organisation/ Service provider/ Implementing agency</b>	The Swedish Public Employment Service	EKS, a training and consulting organization, based in Prague	The Bridges Programmes Ltd is registered in Scotland as a Charity, Charity No: SCO36344, Company No: 352017
<b>Target Group(s)/ Beneficiaries</b>	Immigrant women meeting the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Born outside EU, who have official permission to stay in Sweden,</li> <li>• Age of women: 16 – 64,</li> <li>• Low or no education,</li> <li>• Insufficient Swedish language skills,</li> </ul>	The target group included participants who were foreigners, who have been living in the Czech Republic for a long time as well as newcomers.  Target group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreigners with an over 90 days residency visa</li> </ul>	Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and anyone for whom English is a second language, living in Glasgow.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployed and living on allowance from the municipality or regional social insurance office,</li> <li>• Without any contacts with municipality or state,</li> <li>• Not registered at PES as job-seekers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreigners with a long term residency permit</li> <li>• Foreigners with a permanent residence permit</li> <li>• Refugees</li> <li>• Citizens of Romania and Bulgaria</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Main Services provided</b></p>	<p>The overall structure of the project “Immigrant women in isolation” consists of the following 4 aspects:</p> <p><b>Outreach activities</b> Coaches used their networks to reach out to women not registered at PES. Informational meetings were arranged at places visited by to immigrant women, for example folk high schools, NGOs, SFI (Swedish courses for immigrants) and other organisations. Posters with information were not effective as there is low trust from women’s side to authorities. In informational meeting women had possibility to ask questions interesting for them and the result of the meeting was commitment to participate in the project.</p> <p><b>Partnerships with relevant stakeholders</b> In some regions PES already had established networks with relevant stakeholders working with immigrants (smaller regions). In bigger regions PES workers established necessary contacts with relevant stakeholders at the beginning of the project. The partnerships embraced municipalities, NGOs for immigrants and immigrant women, adult education providers, VET providers, employers, SFI, etc.</p> <p><b>Participants in pilot focus groups</b> Focus groups were created in order to identify women`s needs, potential hinders and solutions. In the project there were 2 kinds of focus groups, so-called “target group” and “stakeholders”. Stakeholders included representatives from PES, municipality, employers, NGOs educational providers and SFI. Totally 48 focus groups were</p>	<p>The main services/ activities provided included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Educational course</b> This consists direct education of migrants, the aim being to increase their chances at fulfilling themselves on the job market in Prague. This phase includes 3 cycles, each of which consists of 4 educational workshops and several language classes to prepare for the workshops. The workshops and classes were highly interactive, the participants were trained on real life situations, which they will have to face on the job market, they learned how to better communicate (among others thanks to the language classes), one of the course’s highlights was also the exchange of information between each participant. Main topics of the course included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreigners’ rights and privileges</li> <li>• Job seeking and interview preparation</li> <li>• Job interview training</li> <li>• Personal development and evaluation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The course also offered a trip to the employment agency and to some companies. EKG was arranging babysitting for the children (free), which was conducted by immigrant women mainly (voluntarily or symbolic paid) – one very important way how to involve them in community work and give more chance to mothers to participate in the offered courses. The babysitting on the same basis is offered for all the socioeconomical or language courses offered by EKG. This opportunity represents a double benefit – for the immigrant women to participate in community work and to be educated and more qualified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Work Placements:</b> Bridges can offer you short work experience/work shadowing placements with Scottish companies in the sector that you originally worked in.</li> <li>▪ <b>Employability Support</b> If you are allowed to work in the UK you might benefit from our Equipped for the Future Course, a 3 week course (15 hours per week), which will help you understand your skills and your past experience. You will complete applications, write a CV, meet employers, have a chance to practice interview and presentations skills and search for jobs.</li> <li>▪ <b>Advanced Life Skills</b> This is for REFUGEES only who have received leave to remain since MAY 2013. To access this course you must first register with the Scottish Refugee Council and they will refer you to us. The course last 4 weeks (15 hours per week) and will help you settle in Glasgow as a refugee and introduce you to the world of employment.</li> </ul>

	<p>carried out in the 6 project regions: in each region 4 focus groups for the target group and 4 focus groups for the stakeholders. Special themes were chosen for each focus group, for example employment opportunities, health and well-being.</p> <p><b>Labour-market employment political activities</b> The next step after identification of women's needs in focus groups and face-to-face dialogues was matching of these needs to possibilities existing on the labour market through local projects with labour market employment political directions. The participants had the possibility to get financial support from PES in a form of unemployment fee. The cooperation with local stakeholders was carried out through project agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Trainers' training</b> This included the training of some members of the migrants' community, in which they are active. The trainers then passed down the learnt information to the members of their community, his/her community; the project thus indirectly educated many more foreigners. The following activities took place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two trainers' trainings, with the participation of experts from various segments of the job market;</li> <li>• A roundtable with the participants to the course, with experts from the business field, from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and with politicians.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Are the provided services gender and cultural diversity sensitive?</b>	The provided services are both gender and cultural diversity sensitive.	The provided services are obviously both gender and cultural diversity sensitive.	It can be assumed that the services provided are gender and cultural sensitive.
<b>Effectiveness/ Contribution the practice has made to the integration of migrants into the labour market</b>	The outcomes of the project led to the opportunities for women to engage in purposeful learning activities, to support themselves to study or to work and be more active members of society. The creation of local partnerships allowed to give more professional support to women and usage of available resources at local/regional level.	<p>The project made a contribution to the integration of migrants into the labour market. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 individuals graduated from the training program, more than 40% of them later found a suitable job</li> <li>• a comprehensive methodology for group counselling was created (National Award for Career Guidance in 2012)</li> <li>• 46 immigrants trained</li> <li>• a roundtable was attended by 50 representatives of NGOs and the public sector</li> </ul>	<p>Based on the info from the last available Annual Review (2013-2014) Bridges Programme supported over 300 clients in 525 separate interventions. More specifically Bridges has achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 117 placements</li> <li>▪ 123 completing employability courses;</li> <li>▪ 45 undertaking vocational ESOL support</li> <li>▪ 86 going through Life Skills classes and empowerment support</li> <li>▪ 15 mentoring matches</li> </ul>
<b>Are the services provided by highly skilled and well trained professionals and providers of career guidance and counselling?</b>	The services are provided by the Swedish Public Employment Service, which is the main agency for the provision of career guidance and counselling services, which are provided by highly skilled professionals.	EKS involves a team of trainers and advisors who focus on experiential learning. The team is systematically trained in modern teaching techniques. It is an organization recognized by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. It has also received a series of awards in the category of	'Bridges' employs a variety of highly skilled staff such as Trainers, Senior Case Workers, Case Workers etc.



		career guidance. Thus, EKS's professionals are considered highly skilled and well trained.	
<b>Is the practice directly linked with the policy level, both affecting relevant policies and supporting in practice its implementation?</b>	The practice is directly linked with the policy level, as it is implemented by the government body responsible for the implementation of labour market policies.	The practice was financed by the Operational Program Prague "Adaptability" and is in line with its policies which promotes immigrants' integration into the labour market.	'Bridges' is an independent charity organization and cooperates with specific city structures such as the City of Glasgow college and the Scotland Police. It can be assumed that its activities are aligned with the general integration policies.
<b>Is the practice tailor-made based on the cultural and socio-economic environment of your country, and the needs and requests of the migrants regarding their career and their integration into the labour market?</b>	Yes, it is, despite the differences on the cultural and socio-economic environment between the two countries, given that the majority of immigrant women in Greece are of very low education level and have similar training needs to the immigrants who participated at this project.	Yes, it is, despite the differences on the cultural and socio-economic environment between the two countries. Immigrants in Greece face similar obstacles with those in the Czech Republic.	Given the fact the 'Bridges' is a recognized best practice in Scotland, the United Kingdom and Europe we can assume that it caters for the specific needs of migrants. It does not correspond to the current socioeconomic environment in Greece due to the continuous recession, the almost non-existent job market and the absolute absence of any state integration/inclusion policy.
<b>What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the teaching programme and material on gender and diversity sensitive career guidance and counselling for migrants?</b>	<p>Elements of the practice that could be used are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach activity for immigrants</li> <li>• Focus groups in order to identify immigrants' needs</li> <li>• Matching women's needs to possibilities existing on the labour market</li> <li>• On-job training</li> </ul>	<p>Elements of the practice that could be used are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training on real life situations, which they will have to face on the job market</li> <li>• the training of selected members of the migrants' community, who then will pass the learnt information to the members of their community.</li> </ul>	<p>Elements of the practice that could be used are the below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion of applications,</li> <li>▪ CV preparation,</li> <li>▪ Networking with employers,</li> <li>▪ Mock interviews</li> <li>▪ Presentations skills</li> </ul>

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

From the present study, we can conclude that immigrants face a number of problems and obstacles that affect their integration in the labour market and their employability. These problems are related not only to their origin, but also to the conditions prevalent in the Greek labour market and Greek society and bureaucratic difficulties that inhibit their opportunities, such as, for instance, the official recognition of educational titles obtained in their countries of origin. Furthermore, as regards to improving their employability, immigrants have increased and specific needs, which mainly pertain to learning the Greek language, their participation in vocational training programmes, guidance and counselling support, as well as the development of various professional and interpersonal skills. Besides, both men and women immigrants face many inequalities and discrimination in employment, as many Greeks do and in particular women. In parallel, they also experience many labour inequalities that stem from their national and cultural origin, while their labour and social insurance rights are frequently violated, a phenomenon which is more prominent in the case of immigrant women. Also, a series of counselling services and programmes can contribute to the employment of immigrants in Greece. However, as the field research indicated, on one hand there is inadequate utilisation of these opportunities from the side of the immigrants, whereas on the other it is evident that these initiatives are inadequate in satisfying their specific needs, while the staff that provides services to immigrants is insufficiently trained in gender and diversity issues.

Based on the above and taking into consideration the good or promising practices presented, a series of recommendations are proposed, which could improve the access of immigrants to counselling services and vocational training programmes, as well as the quality and effectiveness of these services and programmes vis-à-vis labour market integration and career progression of immigrants:

- Personalised counselling support based on the personal profiles, the skills and needs of both men and women, taking into account their specific cultural and gender characteristics.
- Introduction and application of methodologies and guidelines, as well as quality standards in providing counselling services so that they are sensitive to gender and cultural diversity issues.
- Development of training programmes based on the knowledge, skills and the specific needs of immigrant men and women, taking into account current labour market conditions.
- Training of counsellors and trainers providing services to immigrants in matters of cultural diversity and gender issues, as well as in modern training and counselling methods and tools for immigrants.

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## Appendix

### Participants in the field research

#### Immigrants:

- G. S., from Albania
- M. M., from Albania
- M., from Albania
- M. T., from Albania
- N. S., from Romania

#### Experts / Professionals:

- Maria Margarita-Theoharopoulou, Psychologist, KMOP
- Alexandra Matou, Social researcher, ARSIS NGO
- Konstantina Keramitsi, Immigrations Service, Thessaloniki,
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