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The case of Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain

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Technology & Social Change Group

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Abstract

There is much research on the role of e-skills in advancing employability among disadvantaged groups, but little is known about the way in which these skills can promote the economic integration of immigrant women in the European Union, or how improving digital competencies and access to computers and the internet can foster social inclusion. This study contributes to filling this gap, investigating the role of e-skills in advancing the employability of immigrant women in four countries: Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. Romania is included for comparison, as a source of migrants. The conceptual framework builds on Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, as well as on the EU's *Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. Based on a survey of 375 immigrant and 155 native-born women, and supplemented by interviews with staff at non-government organizations, this research examines three interrelated paths that, we argue, lead to improved employability: education and lifelong earning, social inclusion, and cultural inclusion. Findings suggest that strengthening e-skills among immigrant women is an important factor in advancing along these three paths, potentially improving women's position in the labor market. In addition, NGOs play an pivotal role in fostering social, economic, and cultural integration and in promoting many of the competencies identified by the European Union as critical to succeed in today's labor market.

Keywords

e-skills, immigrant women, employability, ICT skills, digital competencies , ICTD, technology, social change

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Contents

Figures

Preface

Microsoft launched the *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program* in 2003 with the aim of bringing the benefits of information technology to underserved populations around the world. By supporting NGOs with cash grants, software, and specialized curriculum resources, the program has reached over 170 million individuals through over 50,000 community technology centers worldwide. Evaluating impact has been key to the *Community Technology Skills Program*'s success. In partnership with the University of Washington's Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA), Microsoft has captured lessons learned and made continuous improvements. In recent years, a deep focus on information technology skills for employability has led to partnerships with NGOs that provide comprehensive job and life skills training and connect individuals to employment opportunities. The TASCHA team has been tasked with assessing the impact of this strategic programmatic shift by conducting research at the national and regional level.

In Europe, Microsoft engaged a TASCHA-led team of European researchers to examine how our assumptions about the value of e-skills held up next to our target population's experience, in this case, immigrant women. Migration and the integration of immigrants is a significant trend and issue for European countries. There are tangible benefits to mobility, for example as a counterbalance to the challenges posed by shrinking working population or declining birth rates — but only if there is also access for all to available jobs. Lacking the right skills can be a serious barrier for immigrants looking to find a job. According to the February 2010 European Commission report, *New Skills for New Jobs*, there is clear evidence that the potential of migration is not realized. Immigrant employment rates are not satisfactory for workers with lower skills levels, especially for women. The unemployment rate among immigrant women is more than double that of native-born women, and immigrant women are generally clustered in less-skilled occupations. This is significant because women now account for more than half of the immigrant population in most European Union counties. One of the top priorities of decision-makers in Europe will be to effectively manage the human capital represented by migrants and specifically by improving their skills.

We at Microsoft see an opportunity to help by ensuring that the information technology skills that contribute to employability — and provide benefits beyond work — are readily available to all. We understand that migration and socio-economic integration involve a complex set of issues, but also that Microsoft has a particular role to play, specifically around helping unemployed people obtain the skills that can help them improve their livelihoods. Today, job seekers without appropriate technology skills will not find employment, so giving people new skills can have a transforming effect throughout Europe. That's why we've made the commitment, year after year, to partner with NGOs and other community groups and to invest in e-skills training programs targeting vulnerable communities — helping people acquire the essential skills to thrive and work in

Europe. During the 2010 fiscal year, Microsoft donated a total of over $80m in cash and in-kind contributions in 32 countries to support NGO capacity building, including 28 NGO community skills-training projects that will reach 5.4 million people over the next three years and that will be vital to creating jobs and growth.

We are pleased to share the findings of this research and, perhaps more importantly, to continue to engage in dialogue and explore how cooperation, partnerships, and the leveraging of Microsoft's core competencies can help ensure that immigration is best managed to create constructive and rewarding outcomes for all.

Sylvie Laffarge
Director, Microsoft Community Affairs
for Europe, Middle East, and Africa

Executive summary

Women are immigrating in large numbers and the consequences are profound for them, their families, the communities they depart, and the communities in which they arrive. Women make up more than 50% of immigrants to European Union (EU) countries, with the exception of Slovakia, Lithuania, and Romania. These women often migrate for employment. As they attempt to enter the labor market they face a double disadvantage: they are women and migrants. This study examines the effects of non-governmental organization (NGO) e-skills training programs on the employability and social inclusion of immigrant women in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Romania.

Research framework and methodology

The study uses Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to examine the ways that immigrant women adapt to life in a new place. Most analyses of how people move into employment presume and only examine more direct and intentional processes such as formalized training and employment-searching assistance. We challenge this notion and, drawing on Sen's approach, have developed an alternative framework consisting of three "paths" that are critical to advance the social and economic participation of immigrant women: *education and lifelong learning, social inclusion,* and *cultural inclusion*. We use the *European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* to ground assessment of education, social, and cultural participation skills.

This study addresses three questions relevant to programs designed to support the integration of immigrant women in the EU:

1. What role do digital competencies play in promoting the integration of immigrant women into the EU labor market?

2. How do digital competencies function as catalysts to promote other key employability skills, such as social and cultural skills?

3. How does the range of NGO services support the employability of immigrant women?

The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, individual interviews, and group interviews of women and NGO administrators. The convenience sampling technique resulted in participation by 530 women (375 immigrant women and 155 native-born women) who received e-skills training and/or employability support services through 32 NGOs. Sampling of the organizations began with 2009 grantees of Microsoft's *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*. The sample also included Microsoft grantees' formal and informal partner organizations of in each of the five countries. More than 40 NGO administrators were also interviewed. Countries were selected to represent a range of social, economic, and political dimensions of migration in "old" and "new" Europe.

Profile of the women sampled

While articulating the characteristics of the immigrant women in our sample is necessary to contextualize our findings — it is also a finding in and of itself. Understanding the circumstances faced by these women provides insight into the lives of a population that is not well understood in Europe. The sample included 375 immigrants from 64 countries. Half of them came from five countries: Morocco, Ecuador, Nigeria, Peru, and Ukraine.

Most of the immigrants sampled migrated fairly recently: 80% immigrated within the past ten years. Their average age is 36, and most are between 25 and 49. There is some variation across countries: the immigrant women in the Netherlands are slightly older (average age 43) while women in Hungary are the youngest (average age 30). Most are married or have partners, 70% have children, and 66% have children living with them.

While there are differences across countries, roughly half migrated to find employment and roughly one-third migrated to join family members or spouses. Most have at least a high school education. Almost 90% are at least bilingual; most speak two or three additional languages.

Employment

Most of the immigrant women sampled had been employed in their country of origin, and of these more than one-third held professional or technical positions. Less than half, however, are currently employed — often working in service occupations (cleaning, restaurant work, caregiving, etc.).

Most report that their earnings are not adequate to support their families, so they rely on additional sources of income. Only 13% reported government unemployment subsidies as an "additional source of income."

Those with professional positions in their countries of origin sometimes hold professional positions in their new countries. This is not the case, however, for those holding technical and associate professional positions or for skilled craft workers. These women tend to be employed in positions that do not make use of their prior training and professional experience. This finding is consistent with other research that has shown that in many EU countries, female migrants are more frequently overqualified than native-born women.

In general, we found that prior education and employment experience are not reflected in current employment situations. Credentials are part of the problem: home-country achievements are often not recognized, which limits access to further education and better employment opportunities.

Digital skills

Of the immigrant women sampled, 72% reported that they possess *at least* basic computer skills, 28% reported no computer skills at all, and 22% reported intermediate-level skills. There are significant differences among the countries: Italy had the highest percentage of immigrant women with *no* computer or internet skills, followed by Hungary and Spain. Women in the Netherlands reported the highest e-skills levels on average.

Fully 70% of the immigrant women sampled use computers and internet at least once a week, predominantly for communicating with distant family members, to conduct job searches, and for studying.

Three paths

Sen's capabilities approach — the conceptual starting point for this study — posits that the individual is the most important agent in the process of development, rather than "so-called" experts. What resources do women themselves bring to bear? What personal and community assets do they use and mobilize? We focus on the *capabilities* of the immigrant women, as they move from their previous environment into a new life in their new home country.

The process of adaptation and inclusion is conceptualized in terms of three "paths," that lead towards fulfilling social and economic participation in new countries.

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING The education path embraces two kinds of learning. First are the specific capabilities that could enhance the role of agency of immigrant women, capabilities developed through participation in training and educational activities. Second is a broader category of "key competencies," including the ability to communicate in the host-country language, learning to learn, a sense of initiative, and digital skills, as well as the

lifelong learning opportunities that can help individuals achieve those competencies.

Immigrant women identify access to education and training opportunities as critical to improve their social and economic status, even though most (especially those with higher education levels) have jobs that do not utilize their existing skills.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) knowledge is relevant for their employability. The length of residence in the destination country positively correlates with ICT skill levels — the most recent immigrants tend to have the lowest digital skills. Also, those with higher ICT skill levels tend to be more educated. ICT skill levels positively correlate with current employment status — those with lower skill levels are more likely to be unemployed.

Technology programs in NGOs also provide indirect learning benefits. Computer training programs draw immigrants into social settings where they can learn from and interact with people that are more experienced in the new culture. These interactions help to enhance language skills, self-esteem, autonomy, and socio-cultural skills, all of which affect the employability of immigrant women.

SOCIAL INCLUSION How do e-skills and ICTs promote social inclusion by immigrant women? The social inclusion path describes the development of *capabilities* to promote social participation, *diversification* of social and civic roles, and the *opportunities* for expanding the links into social networks. We found that the women in our study are not victims; they actively shape their social spaces to adapt to life in their new countries.

Both the immigrant women and the native-born group actively participated in a variety of social spaces and civic networks, in most cases extending beyond their own ethnic communities. These networks were more extensive and diverse for immigrant women that lived in the destination country for a longer period of time. Often immigrants are assumed to be isolated and to live in enclaves, but we found that women develop diverse bridging networks over time.

NGOs also play an important role as immigrant women adapt and integrate socially. Overall, 88% of respondents participate in NGO activities. Immigrant women use NGO services more than native-born women. Participation in NGO services is often the "diving board" for learning social and civic skills. NGOs provide a safe space to learn new social skills and become part of a new community. The spaces also provide access to other organizations and service providers — beyond organizations that target immigrant communities exclusively.

Social inclusion and diverse networks are also important for employment outcomes. NGO contacts activate social linkages that can help women find jobs. Personal social networks and networks that radiate from their interactions with NGOs are seen as more effective than government employment agencies for job-seeking. The nonprofit sector also supports employability through services and advocacy. Active membership in these organizations promotes employability.

CULTURAL INCLUSION Cultural inclusion describes capabilities of immigrant women to adapt culturally — to situate themselves in a new culture without becoming disconnected from their roots. This path is concerned with the ability of women to bridge cultures through language, customs, awareness of diversity, dialogue, art, and other means.

Cultural skills were not generally rated as highly important by the immigrant women. For those who rated cultural skills highly, however, the appreciation of cultural skills appears to "close the gap" in attitudes between the foreign-born and the European-born respondents.

The survey also asked respondents whether they participate in cultural and artistic activities. The group who ranked highest on this measure tended to have higher rates of employment (especially as high-skill labor and as entrepreneurs) and higher levels of job satisfaction. They were more likely to attend social events and vocational training, and were more competent speakers of the host-country language (self-reported). They also use internet significantly more than the rest of the sample, and are more likely to attend e-skills classes.

Finally, members of the more "culturally active" group are more likely to be members of nonprofit organizations, to work in the nonprofit sector, and to participate in social networks. This finding appears to support one of our working assumptions: that cultural participation and expression may be related to active participation in intercultural groups and social networks, fostering leadership and a sense of social responsibility.

The role of NGOs

NGOs are important intermediaries for helping immigrant women find employment. After family and friends, NGOs are cited as the most important channel for helping immigrant women to find employment, to improve their e-skills, and to effectively use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Specifically, NGOs serve as a channel for finding jobs, either by employing women directly or by facilitating job search and placement. They also provide computer training and low-cost technology access. NGO training programs use teaching methods that present materials in ways that are carefully adapted to the populations they serve.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study examines the role of e-skills in advancing the employability of immigrant women in four countries: Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. The conceptual framework emphasizes (1) the *agency* of the immigrant women themselves, adopting a "capabilities approach" rather than a victimization perspective; and (2) the importance of inclusion *processes* rather than a binary model of inclusion/exclusion. These processes are conceptualized as three interrelated paths toward greater economic and social participation: education and lifelong learning, social inclusion, and cultural inclusion.

The survey asked the women to identify problems they face, and to suggest policy improvements. Problems cited by respondents include language-learning, employment issues, social marginalization, and bureaucratic procedures. The suggestions they offered tend to focus on social inclusion, and on the quality of public and nonprofit services and employment centers.

- More efficient public services, tailored to meet the specific needs of immigrant women, can maximize their potential contribution and their opportunities to express their roles as social and economic agents. In addition, targeted awareness-raising campaigns could promote self-employment, entrepreneurship, and commercial initiatives. Related initiatives could emphasize the importance of lifelong learning, and open channels for dialogue with public agencies.

- Immigrant women are sometimes unable to take advantage of formal education and employment opportunities because their experience and/or credentials are not recognized in their new countries. Many of the women that take advantage of NGO training courses would undoubtedly benefit from access to more formal training. Government policies that could promote recognition of trans-national educational credentials represent an important step forward.

- Women want more access to computer and language training. An important element of NGO services is providing training in e-skills, as well as free or low-cost access to computers and the internet. NGO training programs use interactive, informal teaching methods, presenting ICT in concrete ways by applying the new skills to practical tasks. NGO ICT training could become still more valuable if their programs could provide some form of official certification.

NGOs serve a crucial function for immigrant women for both social integration and labor market integration. In view of the critical role they play in advancing social and economic inclusion, NGOs represent a high-return area for public and private funding and support.

Both the foreign-born and the native-born groups actively participate in social spaces and civic networks, in most cases extending beyond their own ethnic communities. We found that the women themselves and NGOs that serve them have a variety of assets and employ a variety of strategies to promote economic, social and cultural participation. In general, the overall picture of the background, activities, and aspirations of the immigrant women surveyed gives strong support to an approach that views them as partners in the process of advancing their social, cultural, and economic inclusion in the host country.

About this report

This report is the latest installment in research on ICT training and employability in disadvantaged communities around the world. Since 2005 this research has been supported by a grant from Microsoft Community Affairs, through the *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*. This program awards cash, software and training materials to nonprofit organizations to provide computer training for the purpose of promoting employability and social inclusion. For more information visit http://tascha.uw.edu/employability.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The role of digital competencies

Fostered by globalization, human migration is increasing. In Europe, people are migrating from both less-developed countries outside and from within. Despite the strong economic need to meet the demands of the labor market, the policy response has been inadequate.

Meanwhile, migration continues. In some countries the inflows are primarily women. While countries with a longer tradition of welcoming immigrants — such as the Netherlands — are beginning to accept their multiculturalism, countries with less experience receiving immigrants — such as Italy and Spain — tend to show more prejudice and social rejection toward foreigners.

In this context, immigrant women face a double challenge — as migrants and as women. Even the best-educated immigrant women suffer discrimination, relegated to less-desired jobs at the base of the pyramid — and even when they have the resources to progress to better jobs, there is normally a significant gap between their prior training and current employment. In other words, their capacities are not always recognized, validated, or well utilized.

1.1 Migrant women's "double disadvantage"

The so-called "double disadvantage" experienced by migrant women in the labor market is in part the result of an environment of unequal opportunity that negatively affects both women and migrants (Rubin, Rendall, Rabinovich, Tsang, Janta, & van Oranje-Nassau, 2008). Migrant women have more difficulties integrating into the labor market than either native-born women or migrant men. Indeed, they face a double battle: first, to integrate socially and culturally as foreign-born people in their host country; second, and equally important, to overcome the gender bias in the labor market as well as in other areas of social, political, and economic life (including difficulties in balancing work and family life, especially for those bringing up children). Migrant women may also face additional hurdles, including some arising from cultural orientations in their country of origin, relating to their role in the family and their ability to contribute financially to the household.

Any discussion of ways to improve the employability of immigrant women in the European Union labor market must consider an array of factors that may not necessarily apply to other groups that also face barriers to employment. A recent study by RAND Europe succinctly outlined some of the most important factors affecting the employment opportunities of migrant women and their position in the labor market, relative to both native women and migrant men (Rubin et al., 2008):

- Migration patterns differ significantly between the "old" migrant-receiving countries of Western Europe (UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, etc.) and the "new" migrant-receiving countries, most notably Italy, Spain, and some countries of Eastern Europe.

- Third-country (non-EU) migrant women in Europe have on average higher unemployment rates than native-born women, EU-born migrant women, or third-country migrant men.

- Migrant women experience a much greater disparity in unemployment rates in the "old" migrant-receiving countries of Western Europe than in other European countries. Furthermore, migrant women experience a disparity in earnings,

compared to native-born women in the host country, of around 40% at the time of their arrival (Adsera & Chiswick, 2007).

- Underemployment is greater among migrant women than among either migrant men or native-born women. As many as a third of the migrant women in the labor forces of Belgium, France, and Sweden are either unemployed or involuntarily part-time employed, as are a quarter of the female migrant labor forces of Spain and Greece.

- Rates of temporary-contract employment are generally higher for migrant women than for native-born women. More than half of all employed migrant women in Spain and Cyprus have temporary contracts, compared to a third of native-born women in those countries.

Apart from labor market inequalities, other factors shape employment opportunities for immigrant women. Critical factors include not only the particular "incorporation model" of cultural diversity in each country, but also the initial conditions that motivated their migration, and the character of the social networks through which they integrate into the labor market.[1] The hurdles migrant women face as they integrate into the receiving country labor market are complex, reflecting their personal motivations for migration, family structures and women's role within the household, cultural traits and social networks, and the political environment in the host country.

In this context, what role can digital competencies play to promote the integration of immigrant women into the EU labor market? Can these skills support the employability of individuals who are doubly disadvantaged, as immigrants and as women? Are digital competencies linked to other key competencies, such as social and cultural participation and skills? Are digital competencies related to other aspects of educational achievement, or to other socio-demographic characteristics? What circumstances favor increased and better use of ICTs? Under what conditions does ICT enhance employability? These are some of the most pressing questions we examine in this research.

These questions also have broad — and increasing — relevance for labor market policies, as the EU economies evolve in the digital era towards a productive system based primarily on information and knowledge.

1.2 Preparing workers to succeed in the knowledge society: Key competencies for lifelong learning

In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council set a new strategic goal for the European Union: to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." To achieve this, Europe's education and training systems were required to adapt to the demands of the knowledge society, as well as to the need for an improved level and quality of employment.

One of the main components of this approach is the promotion of basic skills that everyone should have the opportunity to acquire through lifelong learning — skills that become the essential basis for further learning. These "key competencies" are: literacy and numeracy (foundation skills); basic competencies in mathematics, science and technology; ICT and use of technology; learning to learn; and social skills, entrepreneurship, and general culture. The Barcelona Council's conclusions (European Council, 2002) stressed the need for action to improve the mastery of those basic skills, notably digital literacy (together with foreign languages). Subsequently, a special working group introduced a framework of eight key competencies for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2004b) outlining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that relate to these domains (European Parliament & Council, 2006). This document became an essential reference for the EU's *Education and Training 2010* work program and *Lifelong Learning Program 2007–2013*, as well as for national policies in many European countries.

1.2.1 Europe 2020: Labor market trends and related skills needs

A predictive analysis by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training of Europe's skills needs for 2020 (CEDEFOP, 2008) provided the basis for the European Commission communication, *New skills for new jobs: Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs* (European Commission, 2008b), underlining the skills challenge Europe will face during this decade. The analysis predicts an accelerating pace of change in labor market and skills requirements due to many factors, including globalization and increased international trade, aging populations, urbanization, and the evolution of social structures. Despite the current unpredictable

1 Kluzer & Hache (2009) identify the dominant incorporation models for migration as *assimilation* (until the end of the 1970s) and later *integration* (starting from the 1980s), which often aimed, implicitly or explicitly, at having the immigrants adopt the host-country culture.

scenario due to the financial crisis, there are two factors that offer great potential for the creation of sustainable jobs: the shift to a low-carbon economy, and the growing importance of the knowledge economy across Europe (exemplified by the diffusion of ICTs and nanotechnologies). These new jobs will undoubtedly require more sophisticated abilities on the part of workers.

CEDEFOP's long-term forecast anticipates the emergence by 2020 of 80 million replacement jobs and 20 million new jobs, almost 75% of them in services. The new jobs will be generated predominantly by business services, while the primary sector could lose 3 million jobs. As construction stabilizes, manufacturing would experience a net loss of 800,000 jobs, despite an increase in engineering jobs — and in spite of strong replacement demand in manufacturing.

The middle-term forecast, up to 2015, predicts net job creation in several fields: business services (such as IT, insurance, or consultancy), health care and social work, distribution, personal services, hotels and catering, and to a lesser extent in education. It predicts that the transition toward a low-carbon economy will increase employment in several fields — energy, water and waste treatment, construction, transport, industry, agriculture and forestry. Europe's demographic deficit will be ameliorated by the increasing participation of older workers, women, and migrants; even so, there is a risk of future labor shortages.

Skill level and qualification requirements will increase significantly, across all types and levels of occupation, creating a need to ensure a better long-term match between skill supply and labor demand. Jobs requiring high levels of educational qualification (beyond high school diploma) are predicted to rise from 25% to 31% by 2015; jobs requiring medium-level educational qualification would also increase slightly, from 48% to 50%, while jobs requiring low levels of educational qualification would decline dramatically, from 26% to 19%.

Non-manual skilled occupations will generally require highly qualified workers; in fact, higher skill levels will be necessary across all occupations. Workers with medium educational qualifications will increasingly fill skilled manual occupations and even elementary jobs. Only half of elementary jobs will be held by workers with low educational attainment, with overall education rates increasing at a faster rate than labor market expansion.

1.2.2 Impact on Europe's workforce profile

This trend to expansion of high-skilled jobs also entails an emerging risk of labor market polarization. Net job creation projections indicate:

- 18 million additional jobs created in high-skilled, non-manual occupations: administrators; marketing, logistics and sales managers; IT systems administrators; teaching professionals; technicians
- Low or even negative job creation in some skilled occupations
- 5 million additional elementary jobs, mainly in the service sector: security, domestic work, cashiers, cleaning services
- Job growth at the higher and lower ends of the spectrum will leave a shrinking middle range of employment.

These labor market changes are related to trends in technology: new technologies and modern work organization drive job expansion at the higher level of the job spectrum. New technologies can displace medium-skilled, routine tasks and repetitive work through automation and computerization (tasks that can also in many cases be outsourced) — but technology cannot substitute for the "non-routine" tasks that are typical of both high- or low-skilled occupations.

Service sector employment will also experience significant changes. There is a clear trend in the service sector towards a broader skills portfolio for all occupational levels, driven by the application of technologies (especially ICT) as well as by changes in work organization, including, of course, changes responding to technology. ICT professionals will have to develop skills in marketing or management; service workers will have to develop customer orientation skills and digital literacy; knowledge-intensive sectors will require both managerial skills and scientific knowledge; and social care and education positions will require further skills upgrading, including digital competence. This pattern is seen in the growing demand by employers for "transversal" or generalized key competencies, such as problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, linguistic skills, and more generally, "non-routine skills."

"Low-skilled" service sector jobs thus increasingly require more demanding, non-routine tasks, but there is little financial recognition of the new competencies and skills they require. Thus, while gender may be no longer a discriminatory factor in other areas, migrant women may continue to experience a gender disadvantage because they disproportionately hold service sector jobs.

1.3 EU labor markets: Prospects and policies

CEDEFOP's projection of labor market needs through 2020 envisions significant potential for employment creation in Europe in the medium and long term, but this trend (as we have seen) demands upgrading skills — both for high-tech jobs and for low-skilled workers who are at risk of exclusion from the labor market.

To respond to the nature of the new jobs, and to improve the adaptability and employability of workers, European education and training systems must generate those new skills, including the basic skills and learning that are prrequisite for updating skills. The European economic recovery plan includes a major initiative to promote employment and reintegration into the labor market through activation, retraining, and skills upgrading.

A central challenge, however, will be to address the particular circumstances of member states and regions, with their widely differing workforce skill profiles and sector distribution of employment. So far, too little is being done to increase and adapt the skills of an aging workforce, despite the fact that, for most member states, skills mismatches in the labor market have been a growing concern. As the European Commission communication emphasizes, upgrading skills to promote employability is a necessity not only for those in high-tech jobs, but for all segments of the workforce.

Some groups need special attention:

- The low skilled, who are more vulnerable in any crisis and who are much less likely to participate in lifelong learning
- The aging workforce, for whom too little has been done to increase or adapt their skills in accord with the new scenarios
- Migrant populations, who face many problems in adapting their skills to the requirements of host labor markets — usually learning through alternative non-formal and informal channels, or even autonomously

The Communication in fact accords special attention to the migrant population. It sets as a matter of economic policy the goal of ensuring that *non-EU migrants' skills can be used at an optimal level*. The geographic mobility of immigrants can help reduce regional skills mismatches — but this would require coordinated action on issues of concern to the entire workforce: removing obstacles to the free movement of workers in the EU; more transparent information on labor market trends and skill requirements; enhanced coordination between various public employment services and social security systems; and reducing gender imbalances (e.g., in technical and managerial occupations).

1.3.1 The role of e-skills as an employability catalyst in Europe's knowledge-based economy

The European Commission (2008a) found that, in 2007, a full 40% of the EU's population have no internet skills. Even higher percentages are seen for older age groups, those outside the labor force, and those with a low level of education. The percentage of women with no internet skills is similar to that of men.

Over the past decade, EU policies have fostered three generations of digital literacy programs: the first stage focused on extending *access*; the second stage promoted basic *internet use*; and the third stage aims to promote more sophisticated and sustainable *digital skills*. The European Commission Directorate General for Information Society's Digital Literacy High-Level Expert Group, in a joint evaluation (European Commission, 2008c), judged that the first- and second-generation programs have resulted in regular use of the internet, supported by increased computer and internet skill levels. Nevertheless, a lot still needs to be done to improve the position of disadvantaged groups.

We also see a need to address an emerging secondary digital divide, relating to quality of use. There is evidence that disadvantaged groups use the internet less intensively than other groups. A first step would be to increase confidence and trust in the use of technologies for these groups. People with a low level of

education, those outside the labor force, and older users lack confidence to transact business online or to use public electronic services. Another important step is to improve the skills for critical thinking, in all age groups. This is part of the third-stage focus on promoting critical thinking, trust, and confidence, as well as multiplatform use. Most EU countries are currently starting to develop these third-generation initiatives.

Both initiatives on the ground and research studies have shown the importance of addressing digital literacy needs in the context of local socio-economic trends and policies. Equally important is to promote online public services (such as e-government and e-health) and formal and informal networks, adapting them to the specific requirements of targeted populations. Such initiatives can help upgrade skills and avoid creating new marginalized groups of the digitally disadvantaged. It is widely recognized that, for disadvantaged groups, a key role is played by local social structures such as public intenet access points, NGOs, etc. (Rissola, 2007a & 2007b).

Gender equality also emerges as a key factor in responding to new skill needs, as it could ameliorate future skill shortages, for example in technical and managerial occupations. Along the same lines, the *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* highlights that employment and geographical mobility of third-country (non-EU) immigrant workers can help reduce skills mismatches, and ensure that their skills can be used at the optimal level; indeed, the successful integration of migrants and their descendants is considered a key factor for EU economies and societies. In this context, e-skills training might act as a catalyst for improving the employability of immigrant women in the framework of a European knowledge-based economy.

While recent policies and programs launched by the Commission stress the importance of the upcoming knowledge Society and the Lisbon goals, there are still important differences to be resolved between European policy and individual member countries' policies, relating to migration, gender, training and employment, and e-inclusion. Debate continues around the increasingly multicultural character of European society, accelerated by internal mobility and massive migrations from third countries. Much still needs to be done, in terms of engendering public support, to appropriately address the situation of migrant women in labor and education policies and programs.

1.3.2 The role of social organizations in promoting key competencies for disadvantaged groups

Social organizations and NGOs play a key role as intermediaries between disadvantaged groups and the labor market, in the European Union and around the world. Dozens of NGOs in the European Union provide basic digital competence training, as well as a wide range of employment and social services to prepare a workforce to meet the demands of today's labor market.[2] Even though NGOs are only one provider of basic ICT skills among many, we argue that these organizations are particularly suited to function as intermediaries between the most disadvantaged groups and the labor market, as compared to private training providers and even, in some cases, government programs (Chapple, 2005; West & Garrido, 2007).

There are several reasons why social organizations are often more successful in reaching disadvantaged groups:

- In many places, NGOs uniquely provide basic ICT training that is affordable or free for low-income groups.
- Many NGOs have a well-established relationship of trust with the communities they serve.
- In many cases, NGOs represent an important social hub, where people can learn and develop a variety of social skills through interaction with other trainees while expanding their social network.
- Several NGOs incorporate employability outcomes as part of their social mission, and make basic ICT training and other services more accessible for more at-risk groups (immigrant groups, people with physical disabilities, etc.).
- NGOs often design their ICT training programs as a catalyst to develop other skills that are pivotal to succeed in the labor market, such as teamwork, collaboration, and communication.

In short, these "third-sector" organizations often function as bridges to expanded social networks, allowing members of disadvantaged communities to develop new ties, new relationships, and new social skills that are just as important as ICT skills for success in the labor market.[3]

2 Consult Telecentre Europe (telecentre-europe.org) for information on many social organizations that provide digital competence training and other social services for disadvantaged groups in the EU.

3 Third sector, voluntary sector, civil sector, and nonprofit sector are different ways to refer to the sphere of social activity undertaken by organizations that are for nonprofit and non-governmental. It is called third sector as it is neither the public nor the private sector.

1.4 Objective and structure of this report

Although there is a plethora of research around the role of digital competencies in enhancing the employability of disadvantaged groups, there is little specific information about the situation of immigrant women. How can digital competencies advance the economic integration of immigrant women into the EU labor market? Can these skills promote social and cultural integration as well?

The objective of this study is to understand the contribution of digital competencies to advance the employability of immigrant women in five European Union countries: Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Romania (as a source country). Based on a survey administered to 375 immigrant women and 155 local women (as a comparison group), and interviews with the staff of social organizations, the research explores the role of digital competencies in relation to three interrelated paths to improving employability:

1. Education and lifelong-learning path
2. Social inclusion path
3. Cultural inclusion path

In addition, the research highlights the role of social organizations in promoting social, economic, and cultural integration of immigrant women, and in advancing many of the "key competencies" identified by the European Union as critical to succeed in today's labor market. Conceptually, the research draws on Amartya Sen's *capabilities* approach as well as on discussions of *employability in the knowledge economy*, as advanced by researchers and policy-makers in the recent decade.

In this chapter, we have reviewed the European Union policy context regarding "key competencies" for advancing employability in a knowledge economy, highlighting the role of digital competencies in the employment equation and the role of NGOs in helping disadvantaged groups acquire these competencies. The structure of the rest of the study is as follows:

CHAPTER 2 describes the theoretical framework that guides this research, as well as the methodology.

CHAPTER 3 presents a brief socio-demographic profile of the immigrant women who participated in the study.

CHAPTERS 4 TO 6 analyze the survey data and interviews in relation to the three paths to employability, assessing the contribution of e-skills to autonomy, access to training opportunities, social networking, and cultural participation.

CHAPTER 7 elaborates the overall findings in relation to the research hypothesis: that e-skills can serve as a catalyst, helping to advance important elements of the three paths leading to employability.

Improving the opportunities and employability of immigrant women in Europe is more than an issue of individual and social well-being. The current economic crises highlight the urgency of crafting new policies that will optimize the participation of workforces in European economies. In that context, enhancing the participation of immigrant women will be an essential component of success.

1.5 TASCHA's employability research and Microsoft's *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*

This report is the latest installment in ongoing research investigating the links between employability and information and communication technologies. This body of work, funded by Microsoft Community Affairs under its *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*, began in 2005 and has explored diverse communities of users — including displaced workers, immigrant women, youth, and people with disabilities — in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and North America.

Microsoft has provided research support to the University of Washington's Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) to understand the role of nonprofit organizations in providing basic ICT-skills training to underserved populations around the world, as well as to inform programmatic decisions.

Over time the emphases of this research have evolved. As the body of knowledge developed, questions of program impact and evaluation gave way to a broader investigation of ICT skills and employability. The inquiry now extends beyond Microsoft grantees and has expanded to include a variety of local research partners and, in many cases, a commitment to participatory design that has widened the research scope even further.

However the *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*'s large portfolio of grantees — and the University of Washington's ongoing relationship with these organizations — provides a rich starting point for sampling and research design.

To learn more about TASCHA's employability research, please visit tascha.uw.edu/employability.

Chapter 2

Research framework and methodology

In the last decade, women are migrating in greater numbers — and with greater impact on their families, countries of origin, and host societies — for the purpose of finding work.

Once, women migrated primarily to form a family or reunite with loved ones (Dumont & Liebig, 2005). Today, a growing number of women migrate in pursuit of better employment opportunities and for the chance to lead a life they value in a different society and culture (Sassen, 2001). Women now account for more than 50% of the immigrant population in most countries of the European Union, with the exception of Slovakia, Lithuania, and Romania (Herm, 2008; Dumont & Liebig, 2005). Most of the current migration of women to the European Union is now employment-oriented.

This increased feminization of migration flows is the result of many concatenated factors and development processes (Sassen, 2001 & 2002). Among the most cited are (1) decreasing opportunities for male employment, especially in more traditional economic areas, as foreign investment pressures economies toward export industries, and (2) increased participation of women in the workforce in more-developed countries increases the demand for women immigrants to fulfill traditional family caring needs, such as taking care of children or the elderly.

Despite the increased presence of women in migration flows, research on the factors that affect their labor and social participation in host countries remains unsatisfactory and incomplete at best. In many policy and academic circles, participation in the host countries' labor market is perceived as the main avenue for social inclusion. "Exclusion and marginalization are mainly constructed as exclusion from and marginality to paid employment. Integration into society is elided with integration into work" (Levitas, 1996, p.11). This study, therefore, aims to understand the employment dynamic of immigrant women as part of a broader process of social inclusion.

We also see an overemphasis on national statistics to probe the pervasive inequality that exists in labor participation — both between immigrant women and native-born women, and between immigrant women and men. The result is an incomplete picture of the capabilities of immigrant women to participate economically, socially, and culturally, despite these systemic inequalities.

More recent studies are beginning to address this gap, teasing out different aspects of the experiences of immigrants and discussing such topics as the importance of social networks for labor integration (Drever & Hoffmeister, 2009), the aspirations and resources of immigrant groups (van Meeteren, Engbersen, & van San, 2009), and the effects of the migration and integration process on their children (OECD, 2009). The study presented here falls into this category of research.

The underlying premise of the research is that immigrant women are active participants in different economic, social, and cultural spaces in their host societies. Rather than framing immigrant women as "victims" of an unfair and discriminatory system, we recognize that they possess capabilities to shape their places of residence, their families, and the life they've chosen for themselves.

By approaching the study of immigrant women from this perspective, the research does not seek to minimize the very real sources of deprivation and

inequality. As described in the introduction, there are many factors that hinder the successful integration of immigrant women into the labor market, and many of them are systemic or even endemic in the host societies. Nevertheless, women dealing with these larger constraints cannot simply wait for broad policy improvements; rather, they pursue a range of strategies on the ground, trying to improve their lives in the host country. The focus on immigrant women's *capabilities* can provide important guidance for the efforts of policy-makers and social organizations to smooth the process of integration and expand the opportunities for marginalized groups. Such a perspective may ultimately encourage more systematic efforts to address the underlying sources of discrimination.

2.1 Theoretical framework: Amartya Sen's capabilities approach

The theoretical framework that informs this research is broadly based on the "capabilities approach" developed by Amartya Sen in the late 1990s. Sen (1999) defines development as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Development requires the removal of major sources of economic unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance of over activity of repressive states" (p.1)

The capabilities approach challenges the dominant conceptions of development that have permeated the field and shaped policy initiatives over the last sixty years. Most importantly, Sen's work starts from the premise that, with "adequate social opportunities, individuals can shape their own destiny and help each other" (p.10). For Sen, the emphasis should be placed on "the agency role of the individual as member of the public and as a participant in economic, social, and political actions (varying from taking part in the market to being involved, directly or indirectly, in individual or joint activities in political and other spheres)" (p.19).

This conceptualization of development, and of the active role of individuals and communities, is a dramatic departure from the commonly assumed view of development as a process in which "the poor or marginalized" must rely on the help of "the expert" in order to overcome poverty and exclusion. This approach rather views the individual as the principal agent and the most important actor in this process. The focus is on understanding the sources of "unfreedom and deprivation" that constrain the capabilities of this actor to have a fulfilling life.

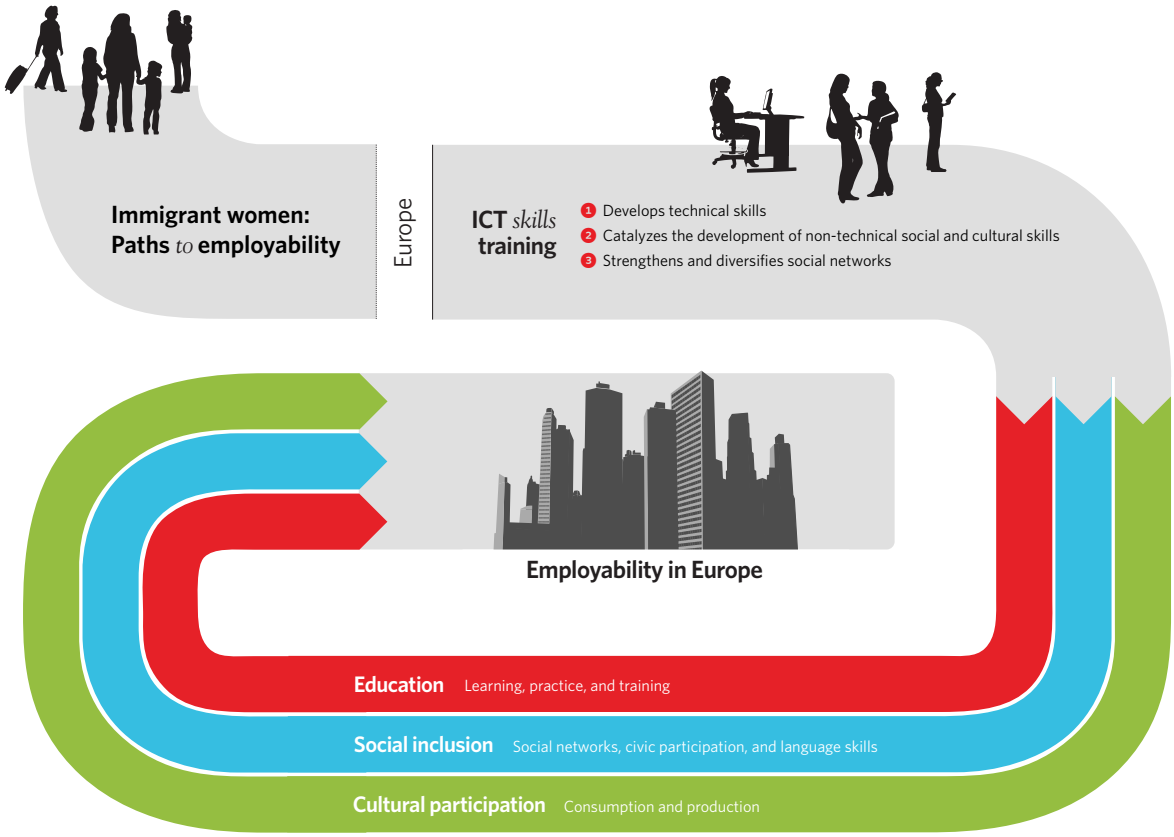
Applying Sen's understanding of development and agency to immigrant women, we can see that — despite the fact that many of them are de facto excluded, for example, from the labor market — there are many ways in which immigrant women "participate daily in shaping their spaces of residence in ways which enrich their lives." Looking at the "capabilities" of immigrant women from the perspective of their employment status or income level eclipses and limits our view of the role they have in their communities, their homes, their diasporas, etc. The sources of unfreedom or deprivation, as conceptualized by Sen, would be in this case the discrimination in the labor market, the lack of educational opportunities for immigrant women, cultural traditions that may limit their "agency" and participation in different levels of society, etc. Although it is very difficult to map all these sources of unfreedom and deprivation, it is possible to identify the main sources and how they affect immigrant women's capabilities for having a fulfilling life, however they may define fulfillment and happiness.

The conceptual framework therefore begins with a focus on the *capabilities* of the immigrant women, as they move from their previous environment into a new life in their new home country. The process of adaptation and inclusion is conceptualized in terms of three "paths," all leading towards a more fulfilling level of social and economic participation. As discussed below, these are the *education and lifelong-learning path*, *the social inclusion path*, and the *cultural inclusion path*.

This path model of social integration in turn draws on the discussion of digital competencies on the *European Reference Framework on Key for Lifelong Learning*. The eight basic competencies are identified as: communication in the mother tongue; communication in a foreign language; mathematical literacy and basic competencies in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; interpersonal and civic competencies; entrepreneurship; and cultural expression. For our purposes, four of these competencies are central to the analysis: language competence, digital competence, social and civic competence, and learning to learn.

The study particularly addresses three practical issues in the design of programs to support the economic and social integration of immigrant women in the

Figure 1 The paths to employability



EU. What role can digital competencies play to promote the integration of immigrant women into the EU labor market? How are these competencies linked to other key competencies, such as social and cultural participation and skills? And what is the role that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play in different aspects of immigrant women's lives?

2.2 Paths to employability

Based on the capabilities approach, the research proposes an analytic framework to understand the contribution of digital competencies to improving the employability of immigrant women in the European Union. Three deeply interrelated building blocks, or paths, constitute the main framework of the analysis: the *education and lifelong-learning path*, *the social inclusion path*, and the *cultural inclusion path* (Figure 1).

2.2.1 The education and lifelong-learning path

This path is broadly defined as: "The capabilities and competencies necessary for immigrant women to secure a job, maintain or upgrade a position, develop entrepreneurial skills, and prepare the foundations for lifelong learning (as defined by the European Union)."

The education path embraces two kinds of learning. First are the specific capabilities that could enhance the role of agency of immigrant women, capabilities developed through participation in training and educational activities. Second is a broader category of "key competencies," including the ability to communicate in the host-country language, learning to learn, a sense of initiative, and digital skills, as well as the lifelong learning opportunities that can help individuals achieve those competencies.

In mapping some of the elements of the education and lifelong-learning path for migrant women, we analyze four encompassing factors. (Table 1 gives the variables included in each factor.)

1. Immigrant women's educational background, supplemented by their learning in Europe, affects their opportunities in the labor market.

2. Host-country language and ICT competencies play a key role in advancing their employment opportunities.

3. e-Skills training courses give them the opportunity to enhance other basic competencies: local language, social and civic skills, learning-to-learn, and sense of initiative.

4. NGOs aid their economic and social integration by providing non-formal ICT training opportunities (among other services).

2.2.2 The social inclusion path

This study defines the social inclusion path for immigrant women as a product of the capabilities required to further promote social participation and mobilization, the diversification of social and civic roles, and the *opportunities* for expanding the links into social networks.[4] In this context, we examine in particular the role that e-skills and communication technologies play in helping migrant women along a social mobility path. Social inclusion is a complex phenomenon; our definition is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to help shift the frame of reference for migrant women from "victims" to "active participants," capable of shaping their social spaces and the societies where they now live.

In mapping some of the elements of the social inclusion path for migrant women, we analyze five encompassing factors. (Table 2 gives the variables included in each factor.)

4 This definition is in part based on the definition of interpersonal, intercultural and social and civic competencies outlined in the *European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Parliament & Council, 2006).

Table 1 Exploring the education and lifelong-learning path for immigrant women

Factors	Levels of primary analysis	Levels of secondary analysis
Educational Level	Prior to migration	Multi-country analysis (Italy, Hungary, Spain, and the Netherlands) Comparative analysis with the group of native-born women Importance of education and lifelong learning to employability
Training in host country	Participation in training Types of training courses Reasons for not attending courses	
Language skills	Host-country language level Other languages	
Digital competencies	Computer skill level Internet skill level Activities using computers and internet ICT Access places Training programs	
Education and training in the context of the EU's key competencies	Importance of education and training in comparison to the other seven competencies	

1. Awareness of the problems they face in the host society (i.e., sources of unfreedom) and of potential solutions to overcome these obstacles

2. Participation in different social spaces, indicated by their participation in social events and in non-governmental organizations

3. The diversity of their social networks, specifically as they relate to social participation and the labor market

4. The role of NGO-offered training and services in promoting social participation and social and civic skills

5. The role of digital competencies and ICT access and use, as a catalyst to promote further social participation

2.2.3 The cultural inclusion path

The cultural inclusion path includes a number of different capabilities and attitudes of immigrant women: to acquire local language(s) and culture(s) while maintaining their own; to increase local awareness of their own culture and to learn from local culture(s); to create positive links between different cultures and promote intercultural dialogue; to participate in intercultural groups and activities; and to create artistic/cultural experiences/objects. An example of mobilizing the cultural inclusion path might be to participate in designing ICT initiatives, that involve socially excluded groups in the development of technological platforms tailored to their needs.

In mapping some of the elements of the cultural inclusion path for migrant women, we analyze encompassing factors (Table 3 gives the variables included in each factor.

The conceptual framework is not intendedas a comprehensive tool that includes all the variables and factors that affect each of the three paths toward employability. We have narrowed the scope to focus on some of the most relevant variables to help us understand how digital competencies might contribute to improve the lives of immigrant women in the European Union.

2.3 Methodology: Operationalizing the three paths to employability

The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods. In collaboration NGOs that provide training and services to immigrant women in Spain, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Romania, we surveyed 375 immigrant women and 155 native-born women between May and August, 2009.[5] (See Table 4 for the distribution of the sample per country.) The immigrant women were selected using a convenience sampling technique; for this reason, it is difficult to assess how representative these women are of the population that receives NGO training and other social services. With the agreement of the organizations, we offered symbolic compensation as a token of appreciation for participating in the survey: one hour of their time, compensated at the official minimum wage. The surveys for both groups (immigrant and native-born women) were implemented at the organizations, using individual and group interviews.

Sampling of the organizations began with 2009 grantees of Microsoft's *Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program*. These organizations receive cash, software and training materials to promote social and economic inclusion among their trainees. The research sample also included formal and informal partner organizations of Microsoft grantees. Most of these organizations have social missions that predate their involvement with ICT. Thus, while the NGOs in our sample may not be representative of the universe of organizations that offer ICT training programs in the five European countries covered in the study they are generally at the forefront of efforts to bring the benefits of ICTs and employability services to disadvantaged populations.

The survey was specifically designed to explore the three paths to employability.[6] It included a set of questions to help us better understand the women's employment experiences, family dynamics, and aspirations for improving their opportunities in the European Union. In addition, the survey included two open-ended questions to allow the immigrant women to discuss the main problems they faced when first migrating to the host country, and the issues they consider critical to advance the position of women in the European Union. Their employment history (occupations before migrating and at the

5 See Appendix 1 for the list of organizations and Appendix 2 for the staff and trainers of the NGOs that contributed to this research project.

6 Survey instruments in each language can be accessed at tascha.washington.edu.

Table 2 Exploring the social inclusion path toward employability

Factors	Levels of primary analysis	Levels of secondary analysis
Immigration decision	Motivation to come to Europe	Multi-country analysis (Italy, Hungary, Spain, the Netherlands) Comparative analysis with the group of native-born women Importance of social and civic skills in relationship to employability
Immigration problems	Problems encountered in European receiving countries Recommendations to EU/national/ regional/city authorities	
Social participation	Participation in social spaces Participation in NGOs NGO membership Diversity of social networks	
Role of NGOs	The role of NGOs The value of NGO services	
Social and civic skills in the context of the EU's eight key competencies	Importance of social and civic skills in comparison to the other seven competencies	

Table 3 Exploring the cultural inclusion path toward employability

Factors	Levels of primary analysis	Levels of secondary analysis
Cultural consumption	Kind of cultural products In language of country of origin In language of host country	Multi-country analysis (Italy, Hungary, Spain, the Netherlands) Comparative analysis with the group of native-born women Importance of social and civic skills in relationship to employability
Cultural participation, self-expression, and creativity	Type of participation Roles played Use of multimedia technology in cultural production	
Cultural participation in the context of the EU's eight key competencies	Importance of cultural participation in comparison to the other seven competencies	

country of residence) was recoded following the International Labor Organization's *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO-88).[7]

7 See http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/index.htm

The survey for the group of native-born women captured the same information, without the questions regarding migration. For both groups, immigrant and native-born women, the surveys were translated into six languages: Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Romanian, and Hungarian.)

In addition, we interviewed more than 40 NGO representatives to better understand the nature of the training programs and social services they offer, as well as to identify the obstacles and opportunities they perceive as most critical. Social organizations play a key role as bridges to different social spheres within host countries. We map the various programs and services the organizations provide for immigrant women and examine the way the training, services, and other activities contribute to pave these three paths and to improve the quality of life for these women.

2.3.1 Criteria for selecting countries

The five EU countries represented in the research were selected in part to reflect the difference in migration dynamics between "old" and "new" Europe, as well as to explore some regional differences within the countries. For example, Italy and Spain have shifted from being emigrant countries (up to end of the Second World War and the Spanish Civil War) to become receivers of massive immigration, over a time period of merely 10–15 years.

Despite the similarities between the cultures of Spain and Italy, there are significant differences in political environment that suggest a critical comparison of the factors affecting immigrant women's integration into the host society. (A recent illustration of this difference in environment is the declaration of an Italian minister suggesting that the Romani living Italy should move to the more permissive environment of Spain.) For Italy and Spain, we also sampled different regions to understand the impact of local labor dynamics.

The Netherlands has a long history of receiving immigrants. For more than five centuries, people have come to the Netherlands to seek refuge and work, and after the Second World War, the numbers of immigrants dramatically increased (Zorlu & Hartog, 2002). For many of the migrants, the motivation was to reach towards modernization. The Netherlands has long been known for accepting immigrants to ameliorate an overall shortage of labor, especially workers willing to take unskilled jobs. At the end of the 1950s, big companies started to actively seek labor immigrants. At first most of these "guest workers" came from the south of Europe (Spain, Greece, Italy, etc.); later they came from Turkey and Morocco. Many came from former Dutch colonies: first the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and later Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. For the Netherlands, our research was limited to the city of Amsterdam.

Hungary was selected because, as one of the more prosperous countries of the enlarged European Union (EU27), it has received an increased migration flow of various origins in the recent years. For example, Békéscsaba city (capital of Békés County, an agro-industrial region), situated 20 kms from the Hungarian-Romanian border, is a multinational town with the highest percentage of Slovak population in Hungary, as well as an increasing number of Romanians (many of them ethnic Hungarians).

Romania was selected as a source country — one of the main source countries of migration to the European Union.

2.3.2 Definitions and terminology

IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Women who do not hold citizenship of the country of residence. We use the terms immigrant, migrant women, and foreign-born women interchangeably.

NATIVE-BORN WOMEN

Women born in the five EU host countries included in the study (Spain, Italy, Hungary, Romania, and the Netherlands). Note that this sample is not uniformly distributed among countries; women from Romania and Hungary represent 70% of the population of this group.

COMPUTER SKILLS LEVEL

Eurostats measures computer skills using six computer-related tasks: copy or move a file or folder; use copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document; use basic arithmetic formulas (add, subtract, multiply, divide) in a spreadsheet; compress files; connect and install new devices, e.g., a printer or modem; and write a computer program using a

Table 4 Distribution of the sample per country

Country	Number of foreign-born women	Number of native-born women	Number of NGOs per country	Geographical scope of sample
Italy	136	26	4	Regional (7)
Spain	126	11	14	Regional (5)
Hungary	40	42	9	Border regions (3)
The Netherlands	69	10	3	Urban (Amsterdam)
Romania	(source)	67	2	Regional (2)
Total	**375**	**155**	**32**	—

specialized programming language. *Low level* of basic computer skills is defined as ability to carry out one or two of the six tasks. *Medium level* of basic computer skills: ability to carry out three or four of the six tasks. *High level* of basic computer skills: ability to carry out five or six of the six tasks.[8]

INTERNET SKILLS LEVEL

Eurostats measures internet skills level using six computer-related tasks: use a search engine to find information; send an e-mail with attached files; post messages to chatrooms, newsgroups or any online discussion forum; use the internet to make telephone calls; use peer-to-peer file sharing for exchanging movies, music, etc.; and create a web page. *Low level* of basic internet skills: ability to carry out one or two of the six internet-related tasks. *Medium level* of basic internet skills: ability to carry out three or four of the six tasks. *High level* of basic internet skills: ability to carry out five or six of the six tasks.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Also referred to as NGOs, the third sector, voluntary sector, civil sector or nonprofit sector, these organizations are nonprofit and non-governmental, i.e., neither public nor private sector. The European Commission considers that the third sector is represented in Europe by four large "families" of nonprofit entities: associations, foundations, co-operatives, and mutuals. The NGOs considered in this report, despite their differing legal status, share a basic mission to focus on social/educational/cultural programs.

NGO MEMBERSHIP

Voluntary participation in the work of an NGO takes three main forms:

1. The decision to become "member"
2. Serving as volunteer
3. Becoming a supporter via donations

Membership is identified here as a direct indicator of active participation. Members participate in governance by voting and being elected to office, and have a voice in shaping strategies and programs.

8 Learn more about the Eurostat methodology at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/information_society/methodology.

Chapter 3

Getting to know the women in our study

This study captured the experiences of 375 immigrant women from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The diversity of the sample reflects the composition of immigrant groups within each country.

This chapter describes the regions where these women come from, their educational level and languages spoken, their employment situation at the time of responding to the survey, and their overall level of digital competence.

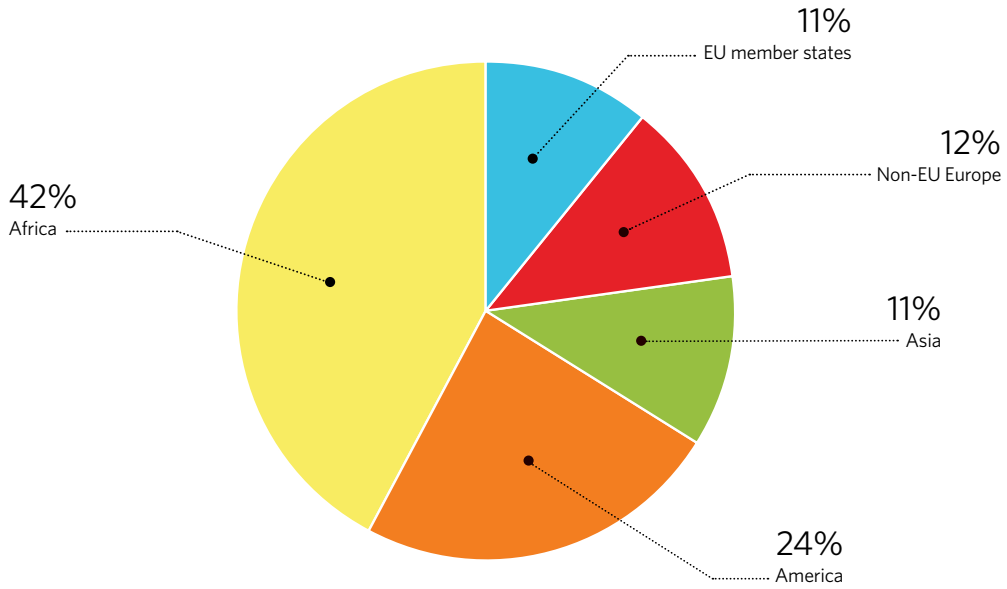
3.1 Who are these immigrant women and where do they come from?

The immigrant women sampled in the study — the "respondents" — come from very diverse backgrounds in terms of nationality, family structure, languages spoken, and education level. These women represent a total of 64 countries from different regions of the world, with half of them coming from six countries: Morocco, Romania, Ecuador, Nigeria, Peru, and Ukraine. Respondents come primarily from Africa (42%) and the Americas (24%); smaller numbers come from Non-EU Europe (12%), Asia (11%), and EU member states (11%).[9] See Figure 2 for the breakdown by region.

The average age of the surveyed women is 36, with some variation across countries. Most women (75%) are between the ages of 25 and 49 — of working

9 The "EU member states" group is primarily Romanian and Bulgarian citizens who were beneficiaries of a moratorium of up to two years (following the entry of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU on January 1, 2007) that allowed them to freely circulate across Europe. Unless they obtained permission from the host country, however, they were allowed to reside *but not to work* until the end of the moratorium. In Spain, since January 1, 2009, they do not need to obtain a job permit.

Figure 2 Immigrant women in the study (by region of origin)



age — which is consistent with the motivation for many of them to migrate: to find a better job to provide for themselves and their families. Immigrant women in the Netherlands are slightly older (average age 43), while women in Hungary are the youngest (average age 30). (See Table 5.)

In terms of family structure, 62% of the women have partners (married or cohabitating). 72% have partners of the same nationality, 22% have partners from the host country, and 7% have partners from other countries. The vast majority of their partners live in the country of residence (81%). Most of the women have children over the age of five (70%); 33% have children under age five. 66% have children living in the host country, while the rest have children living in their home country or somewhere else.

Table 5 Average age of the immigrant women (by country)

Country	Average age	n
Italy	36.83	135
Spain	34.58	125
Netherlands	43.39	69
Hungary	30.41	44
Total	**36.53**	**373**

3.2 How long ago and for what reasons did they migrate?

Most of the women are fairly recent migrants: 42% migrated in the last 6–10 years and 38% within the last five years (Table 6). The top two reasons for migrating were for work (52%) and for family reunification (32%). Relatively few women migrated for humanitarian reasons or to study (11% and 15% respectively). There were important regional differences in reasons for migrating: 78% of women from the Americas and 67% of women from EU member states migrated to find jobs, compared to 35% of women from Africa and 36% of women from Asia. Among women from Africa, the most common reason for migration was to join a family member (45%). (See Table 7 for reasons for migration by geographic region.)

Table 6 Length of residence in host country

Length of time in host country	Percent of total sample	n
0–5 years (2009–2004)	40	142
6–10 years (2003–1999)	42	149
More than 10 years	18	68
Total	**100**	**359**

There also emerged significant differences in immigrants' motivation across the four countries in the study: 66% of the immigrant women in the Netherlands migrated to join their families, compared to 21% in Italy, 29% in Spain, and 28% in Hungary (see Table 8). (Note that many of the immigrant women sampled in the Netherlands come from Africa — the geographic region in our sample with the highest percentage of women migrating to join family members.)

More than half of the immigrant women in our sample were economically active (employed) before migrating (almost 60%): over a third had worked as professionals, technicians, or associate professionals; 20% had worked as clerks; and only 10% had worked in elementary occupations in their country of origin.

3.3 How many languages do they speak, and what is their educational level?

In addition to their mother tongue, 89% of the women reported speaking more than one language, and a majority speak two or more foreign languages. All told, the women we surveyed speak 67 languages. The five most common *mother-languages* are Arabic, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian. The most common *second and third languages* are Italian (41%), English (36%), French (21%), Dutch (20%), and Spanish (18%).

Table 7 Reasons for migrating (by region of origin)

Reasons for migrating	Geographic region				
	Africa	**Asia**	**America**	**Non-EU Europe**	**EU member states**
To study	15%	10%	19%	9%	13%
To join my family	45%	21%	21%	17%	39%
To work	35%	36%	78%	59%	67%
For medical care or health reasons	3%	0%	3%	7%	8%
Political and humanitarian reasons	9%	39%	3%	17%	3%
Other	21%	10%	12%	13%	10%
Total number	**156**	**39**	**91**	**46**	**38**

Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Table 8 Reasons for migrating (by country of residence)

Reasons for migrating	EU country of residence			
	Italy	**Spain**	**Netherlands**	**Hungary**
To study	19%	14%	5%	21%
To join my family	21%	29%	66%	28%
To work	63%	73%	5%	28%
For medical care or health reasons	2%	6%	0%	7%
Political humanitarian reasons	7%	4%	10%	44%
Other	8%	10%	43%	9%
Total number	**135**	**125**	**67**	**43**

In terms of their educational qualifications, 62% have at most a high school diploma. However, one-third of the women have a vocational qualification or university degree. There is some variation across the four host countries: a higher percentage of respondents in Spain and the Netherlands have at most a high school diploma — 78% and 75% respectively; while Italy and Hungary show the highest percentage with a vocational degree. Netherlands also has the highest percentage with a vocational degree, while Italy and Hungary have the highest percentage with a university degree (Level 1 and higher). (See Figure 3 for educational level by country of residence.)

Regardless of their academic and vocational credentials, it was rare for immigrant women to have their home-country qualifications recognized by the educational system of the host country (less than 11%). The absence of such recognition presents one of the biggest obstacles for immigrant women wanting to improve their opportunities in the labor market. Moreover, although more than half of the employed group are working as professionals, technicians, or associate professionals, only 18% of this relatively well-employed group reported that their job was "completely" related to their area of study.[10]

3.4 What is their e-skills level and where do they access ICTs?

About a third of the immigrant women have basic computer and internet skills, 32% have intermediate computer skills, and 22% have intermediate internet skills.[11] Slightly over 20% of the women reported no e-skills at all. Immigrant women in Spain and the Netherlands show the highest percentage with basic computer and internet skills, while the highest

10 For information on the ILO job categories (ISCO-88) see: http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/isco88e.html.

11 Computer and internet skill levels were calculated using Eurostat's indicators.

Figure 3 Education level of immigrant women in the sample (by country of residence)

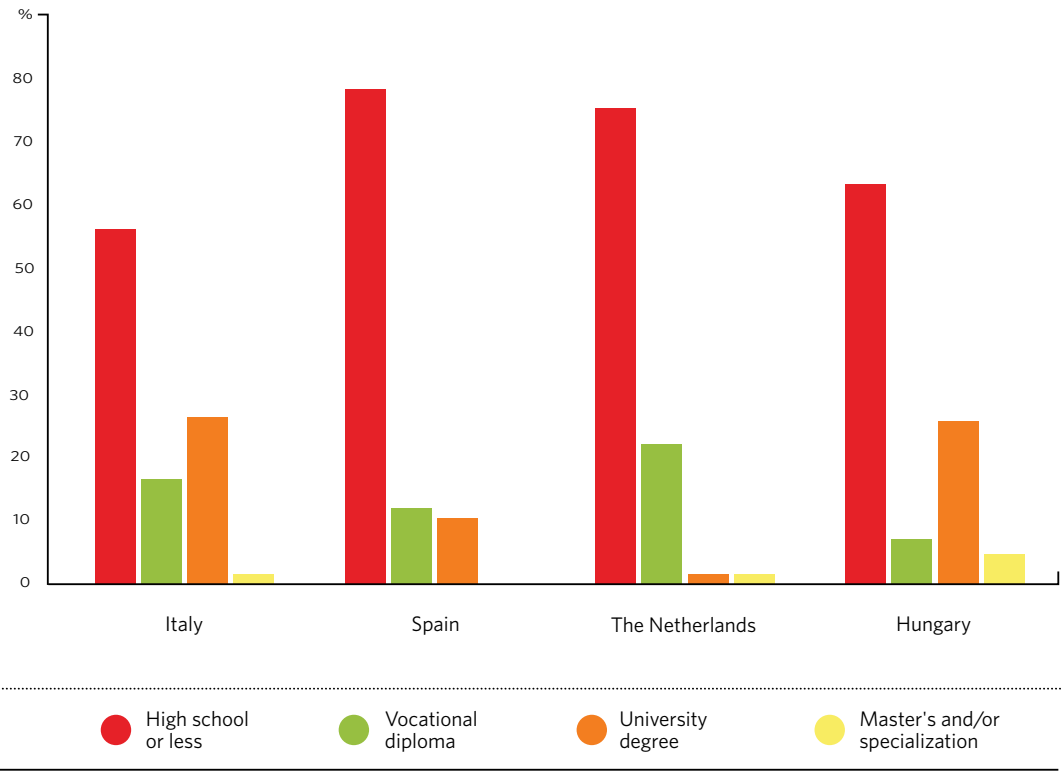


Figure 4 Computer skill level of immigrant women (by country of residence)

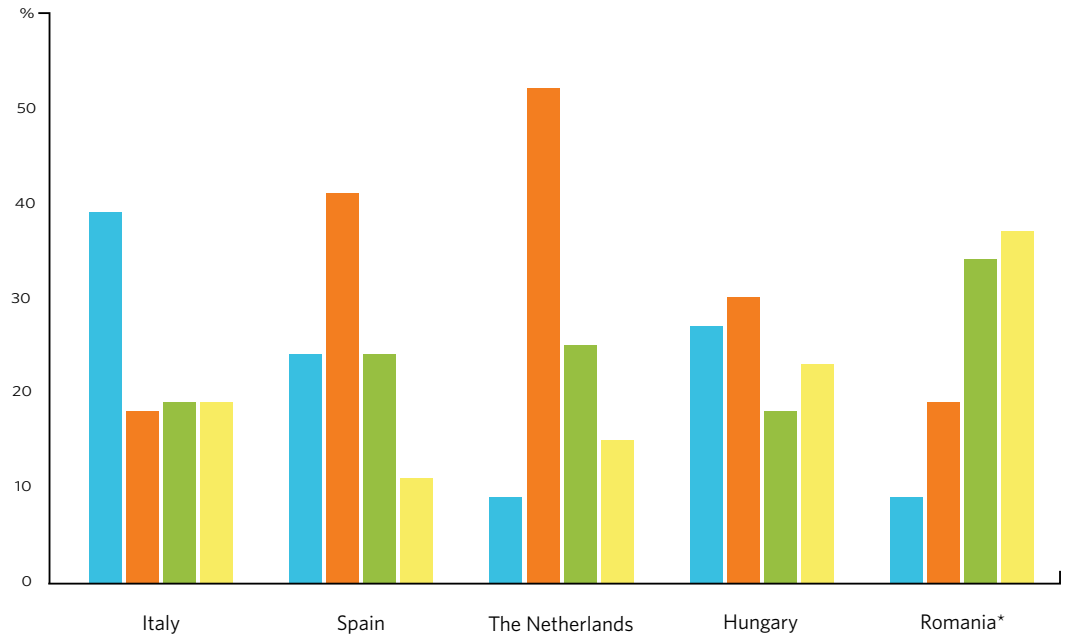
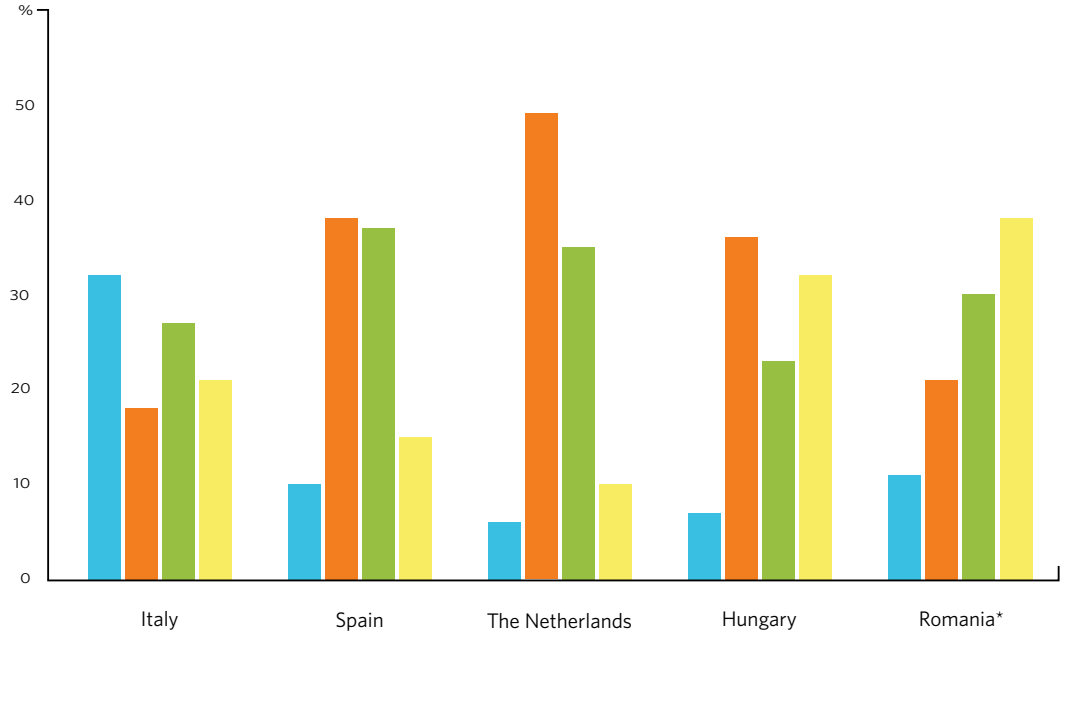


Figure 5 Internet skill level of immigrant women (by country of residence)



* Romania is included as a source country of migration rather than a host country; the percentages for Romania apply to the sample of native-born women.

proportion of women with advanced skills are in Italy and Hungary. Interestingly, Italy also shows the highest percentage with *no* computer and internet skills. (See Figures 4 and 5 below, for computer and internet skills level by country of residence.)

For accessing computers and the internet, the three most commonly used places are home, centers run by NGOs, and homes of friends and family. This suggests that more informal, friendly, and comfortable environments are preferred over formal educational institutions such as universities and public locations.

3.5 What is their employment situation?

Currently, 44% of the immigrant women are employed, and another 43% are looking for a job. The majority of the unemployed women live in Spain and Hungary (66% and 58% respectively). An additional 14% reported that they were unemployed but were not currently looking for a job; the majority of this group lives in the Netherlands. (See Table 9 for employment status of immigrant women by host country.)

Of the respondents with jobs, most work in services or elementary occupations — that is, in restaurants, cleaning houses, or taking care of children or the elderly. (See Figure 6 for distribution of occupations in host country compared with the country of origin.) Those with professional positions in their country of origin also held professional positions in the host country; this was not the case, however, for those holding technical and associate professional positions in the country of origin, or for skilled craft workers. In many EU-countries, the overqualification rates for female migrants are significantly higher than for native-born women.[12] Furthermore, these overqualification rates appeared to be more pronounced in Southern European

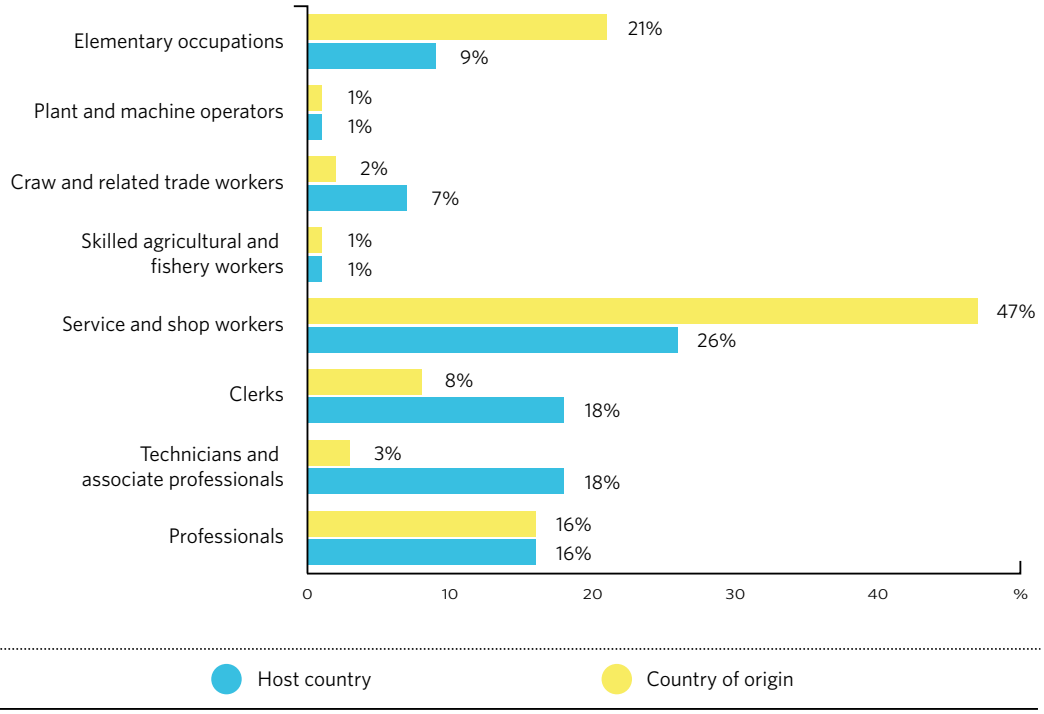
12 Dumont & Liebig (2005) define overqualification for immigrant women as "the proportion of women whose educational attainment is higher than the general requirements for the occupation which they hold" (p.7).

Table 9 Employment status (by host country)

Host country		Employment status			
		Yes	**Unemployed looking for job**	**Unemployed NOT looking for a job**	**Total**
Italy	n	95	35	4	134
	% country	71%	26%	3%	100%
Spain	n	32	83	10	125
	% country	26%	66%	8%	100%
Netherlands	n	21	12	28	61
	% country	34%	20%	46%	100%
Hungary	n	10	25	8	43
	% country	23%	58%	19%	100%
Total	n	158	155	50	363*
	% country	44%	43%	14%	100%

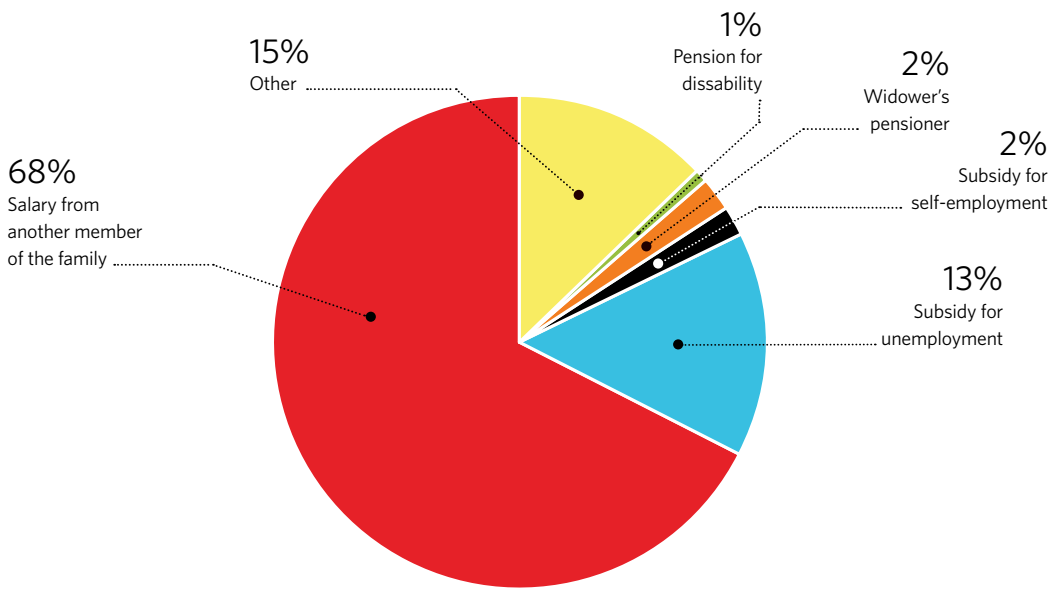
* 12 missing cases are excluded from this analysis.

Figure 6 Occupational status of immigrant women (by country of origin and country of residence)



Notes: Percentages for distribution of occupations in country of origin are based on 218 responses (66% of sample). Percentages in host country are based on 170 women employed at the time of the survey.

Figure 7 Additional sources of income for the immigrant women employed



countries, and more acute among immigrant women from non-EU countries (Dumont & Liebig, 2005).

Only 39% of women with jobs reported that their incomes are sufficient to cover their basic needs; most (61%) reported that their income was not sufficient. In fact, the vast majority (68%) of these employed women rely on other sources of income — primarily, a salary from another member of their family — to provide for their families and themselves. (See Figure 7 for sources of additional income of employed immigrant women.) Only 13% rely on government unemployment subsidies as an additional source of income.

3.6 What issues do they consider most important to improve their situation?

Respondents were asked what the EU can do to improve lives of immigrant women. Most wanted either increased assistance to find employment or improve employment conditions (34%), or assistance to facilitate the process of obtaining residency papers or work permits (24%). Two other areas they considered important were the promotion of women's rights — balance between work and family, equal pay for equal work, investing in female-friendly social policies, and addressing discrimination and violence — and access to higher education and training. We also surveyed a small sample of native-born women as a comparison group. The key issues they cited to improve the opportunities of women in the European Union were assistance in finding employment (60%) and access to higher education and training (15%).

Chapter 4

Education and lifelong-learning path

Immigrant women face a double challenge, as migrants and as women. Even the best-educated immigrant women suffer discrimination, as they are often channeled into elementary and service employment.

4.1 Introduction

Immigrant women face a double challenge, as migrants and as women. Even the best-educated immigrant women suffer discrimination, as they are often channeled into elementary and service employment. Even if they have the resources to progress to better jobs, there is in most cases little congruence between their employability profile — their prior training, education, and experience — and their current employment. In other words, their capacities are seldom fully recognized, validated, or well utilized.

4.1.1 The capabilities approach

Rather than focusing on "victims" of the system, we focus on their unexploited human potential, basing our analysis on the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen. As explained in the conceptual framework, this approach views individuals as principal agents in the development process. It focuses on understanding the sources of "unfreedom and deprivation" that limit the individual's capability to shape a fulfilling life.

When we apply this approach to the labor market of the knowledge society, we can identify important challenges for potential workers (males and females, natives and immigrants):

1. Technological and organizational changes require new sets of skills, if workers are to become and remain competitive in the labor market.
2. These important skills include computer skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, language skills, teamwork and collaboration skills.
3. Individuals with high barriers to employment are more likely to suffer from the obsolescence of their skill set, potentially widening the existing economic and social gaps.

In particular, most immigrant women experience such difficulties as limited training opportunities, bureaucratic restrictions on the formal recognition of competencies acquired abroad, problems of family-work reconciliation, limited knowledge of local language, and lack of familiarity with information and communication technologies (where much of the knowledge economy is conducted). These issues need to be addressed with targeted strategies.

The education and lifelong-learning path embraces two kinds of learning. First are the specific capabilities that could enhance the role of agency of immigrant women, through participation in training and educational activities. Second is a broader category of "key competencies," including the ability to communicate in the host-country language, learning to learn, a sense of initiative, and digital skills, as well as the lifelong learning opportunities that can help them achieve those competencies.

4.1.2 Working hypotheses

Several working hypotheses guide our analysis for this chapter:

1. Immigrant women's educational background, supplemented by their learning in Europe, affects their opportunities in the labor market.

2. Host-country language and ICT competencies play a key role in advancing their employment opportunities.

3. e-Skills training courses give them the opportunity to enhance other basic competencies: local language, social and civic skills, learning-to-learn, and sense of initiative.

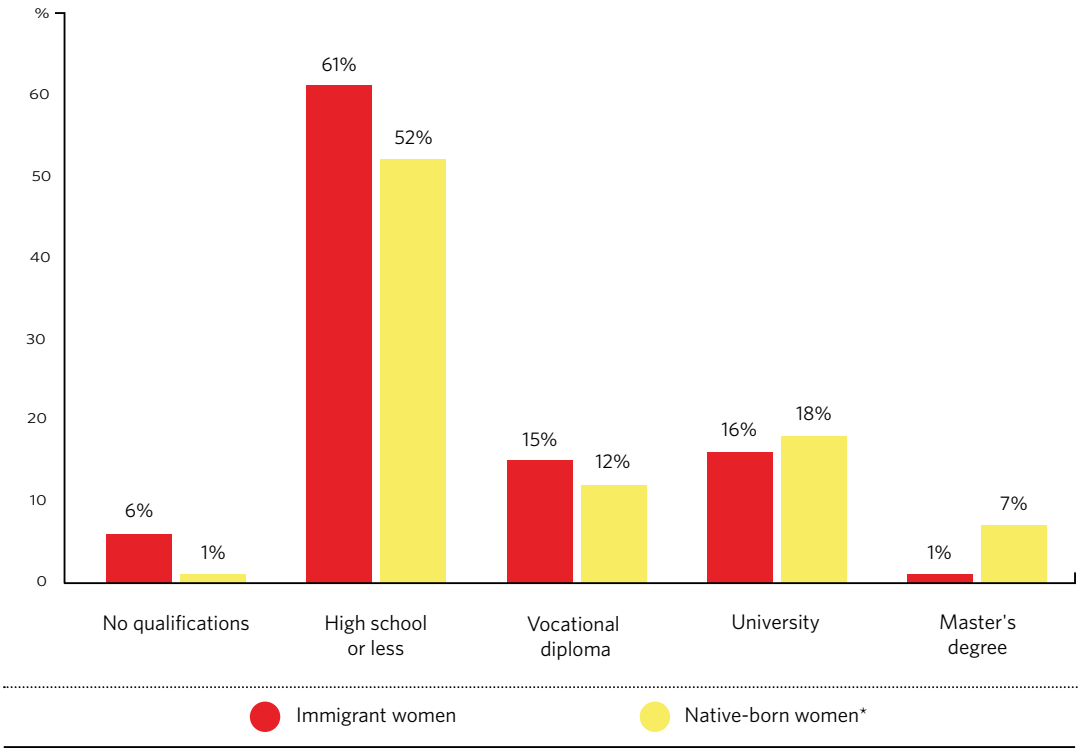
4. NGOs aid their economic and social integration by providing non-formal ICT training opportunities (among other services).

Guided by these hypotheses, we explore in this chapter the educational background of immigrant women prior to migration to Europe, as well as their training efforts, digital skills, and language skills in their countries of residence. We examine how these skills can help them meet labor market requirements both directly and by developing other key competencies; and how the NGOs that offer digital literacy training and other services are providing some of the tools they need for becoming more autonomous in a knowledge society.

4.2 Educational background of immigrant women prior to migration

Our sample shows that almost one-third of the migrant women have gone beyond secondary education: 15% have a vocational training diploma and 17% have a university degree. Almost another third (28%) have a high school diploma (see Figure 8). Their education level is only slightly lower than that of the comparison group of women born in the host countries; however, their labor opportunities are notably more limited.

Figure 8 Highest educational qualifications obtained by immigrant women in home country compared to native-born womencompared to native-born women



* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

The educational profile differs among the four countries of residence. In all countries, *a sizeable majority have secondary or higher qualifications*.

- Migrant women in Italy show an educational profile comparable to the native-born group: almost a third (32% for both groups) have a high school diploma; and almost half (48% and 47% respectively) have a higher (tertiary level) certificate or degree.
- The lowest educational levels are found in Spain: over one-third have a high school diploma (37%), but less than one-quarter have a tertiary level qualification (22%).
- In the Netherlands, close to half have a high school diploma (44%) and one-third third have a tertiary level certificate (33%).
- In Hungary, 23% have a high school diploma, and over one-third (38%) have a tertiary level certificate.

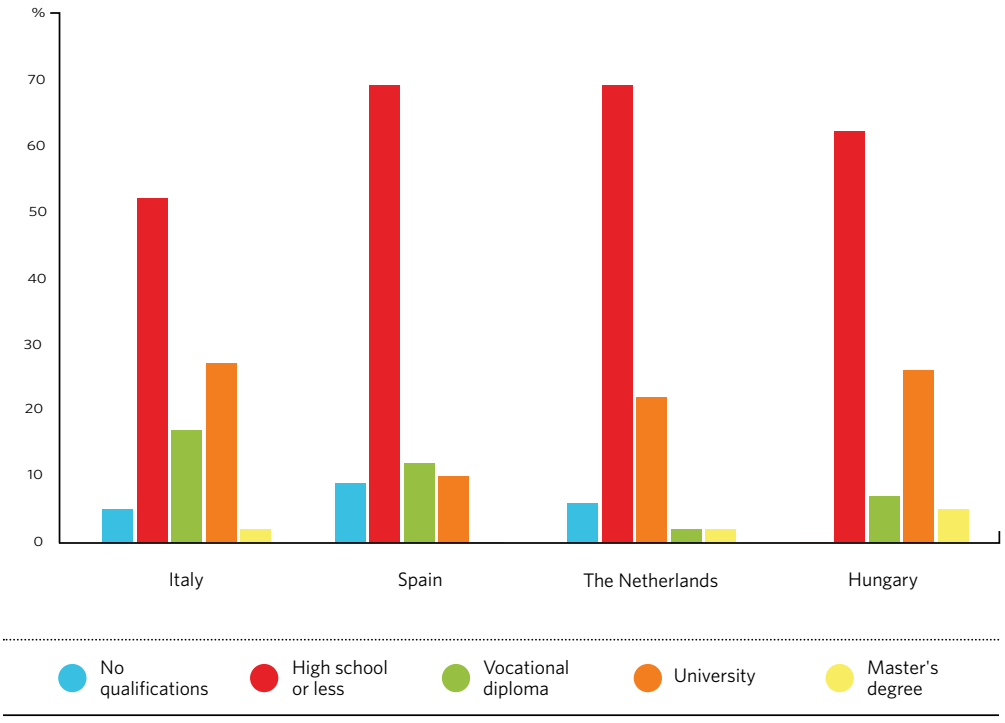
The differences in educational profile may help explain why the unemployment level for our sample is only 27% in Italy and a daunting 66% in Spain.[13] We note, however, that national statistics for Spain (2008) show only 21% of immigrant women unemployed, with an overall national unemployment rate at 14%.[14] Clearly, our sample is skewed to over-represent the unemployed group. Still, it is likely that women with more education find employment more easily (even if it is a "non-qualified" or extralegal job, or one below the level of their training). This "vertical segmentation" inside the group of immigrant women was widely noted during the massive regularization in Spain in 2005, where well-educated immigrant women were legalized as domestic servants, eventually to move to better-suited jobs (Montes de Oca, Andersson, & Rissola, 2003).

Table 10 suggests a correlation between employability and education level. Roughly 20% of those with lower qualifications (primary level) are currently employed, compared to about 40% for secondary level and 60% for tertiary level. The overall difficulty of finding

13 Of course there are other concurrent reasons: Spain has the highest percentage of recent immigrants (within past five years); those with regular jobs may receive unemployment subsidies, unlike in Italy; the economy and labor market are less varied in Spain than Italy, especially in the trading and services sectors (where many migrants are employed); etc.

14 According to Eurostat, at the end of December 2009 this rate had climbed to 19.5 % (19.6 for men, 19.4 for women). No data is provided by Eurostat regarding the percentage of unemployed immigrant women.

Figure 9 Highest educational qualifications (by country of residence)



employment is also evident however, since around 40% of the highest educated group remains unemployed, although almost all of them are seeking a job.

Important differences in education level emerge according to region of origin.

- Asians, non-EU Europeans and immigrant women from EU member states show relatively high percentages with tertiary qualifications (47%, 55%, and 46% respectively); those from the Americas and Africa have lower percentages (27% and 22% respectively).
- Africa has by far the highest percentage with at most a primary school certificate (27%).
- The regions with the highest percentage of high school diplomas are the Americas and EU Member States (45% and 33%).
- The regions with the highest percentage of specialized university degrees are EU and non-EU Europe (21% and 26% respectively).
- For the Asian region, the education levels are remarkably evenly distributed: 26% have a primary or middle school certificate, 26% a high school diploma, 22% a vocational training diploma, and 26% a university degree.

Overall, the sample shows a significant level of educational background, which represents a valuable, underutilized resource for the local labor market. A big problem faced by immigrant women across Europe is the long and costly process of getting validation and recognition for their training or education. Only 3% report that their academic certifications were recognized, even after several years. In addition, inflexible work permits often prevent them from working and studying at the same time. Not surprisingly, their employment is weakly related to their field of study — more than half report little or no relationship.

In the group of native-born women, contrastingly, that relationship is stronger, with almost half reporting that their work is completely related to their education or training. (See Figure 10.)

Table 10 Employment status (by educational level)

	Employed	Unemployed looking for a job	Unemployed NOT looking for a job
No qualification	19%	57%	24%
Primary school	23%	52%	25%
Middle school	35%	41%	24%
High school	46%	44%	10%
Vocational diploma	62%	32%	6%
University degree (Level 1)	59%	41%	0%
University degree (Level 2)	61%	36%	3%
Master's degree	0%	80%	20%

Accordingly, the immigrant women with jobs are overwhelmingly employed at the base of the employment pyramid (cleaning services, caregivers, waiters), even if they are qualified for better jobs. The EU-born women tend to be better positioned in the labor market, even if they still suffer inequalities as compared with native males (for example, in the wage differential seen in Spain).

This situation might improve if the competencies acquired in their countries of origin were formally recognized in their hosting country. The European Commission is making positive efforts to provide formal recognition for competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, through initiatives like the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). This system will facilitate the accumulation and official recognition of knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired in different learning environments (Montes de Oca et al., 2003). Such a system could benefit immigrants in particular.

4.3 Training efforts of immigrant women in host countries

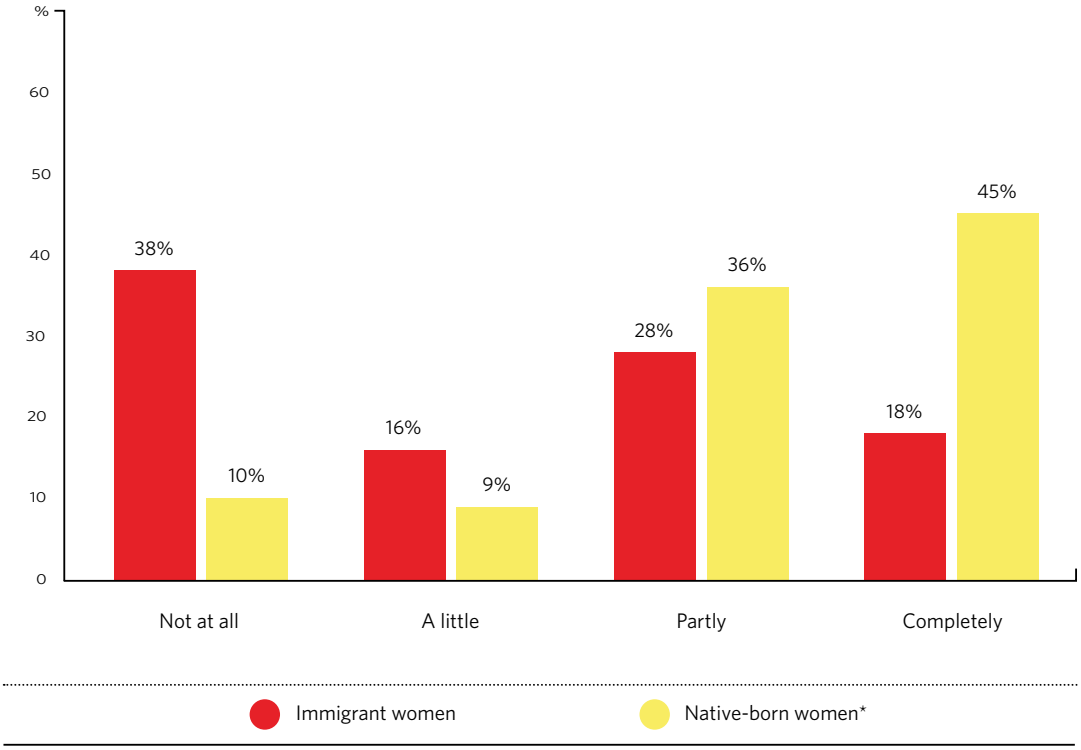
Immigrant women are building lifelong-learning paths in their new countries, enhancing their prior educational background. In our sample, 306 women reported attending 612 training courses. Only one-sixth of the sample (58 women) participated in no training courses, while one quarter had taken three or more train ing courses since arriving in Europe. (See Figure 11.)

They evidently view *training* as an important way to improve their employability and their lives. This pattern has been observed for Latin Americans: training, as a resource to cope with instability or crisis, is highly valued in most of the region.

4.3.1 Distribution of training courses

A breakdown by region of origin shows a relatively homogenous distribution of training activities.

Figure 10 Is your occupation related to your field of study?



* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Figure 11 Number of training courses attended by immigrant women in host country

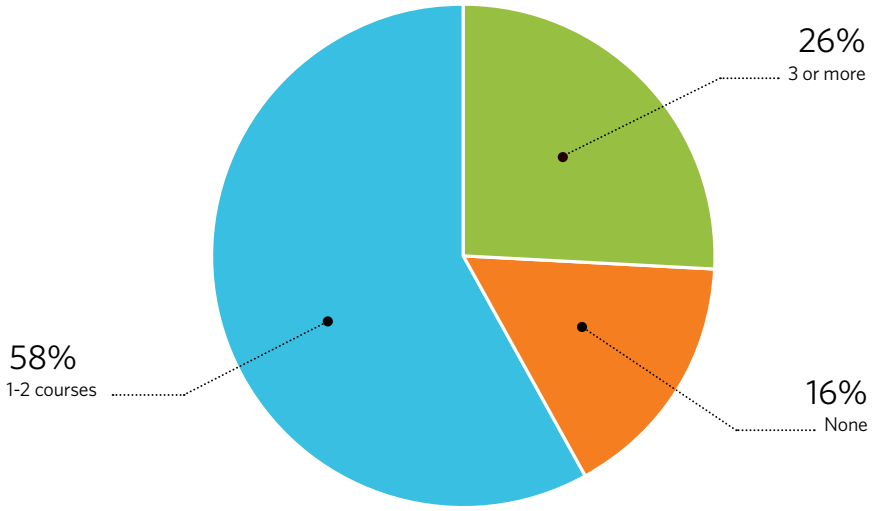
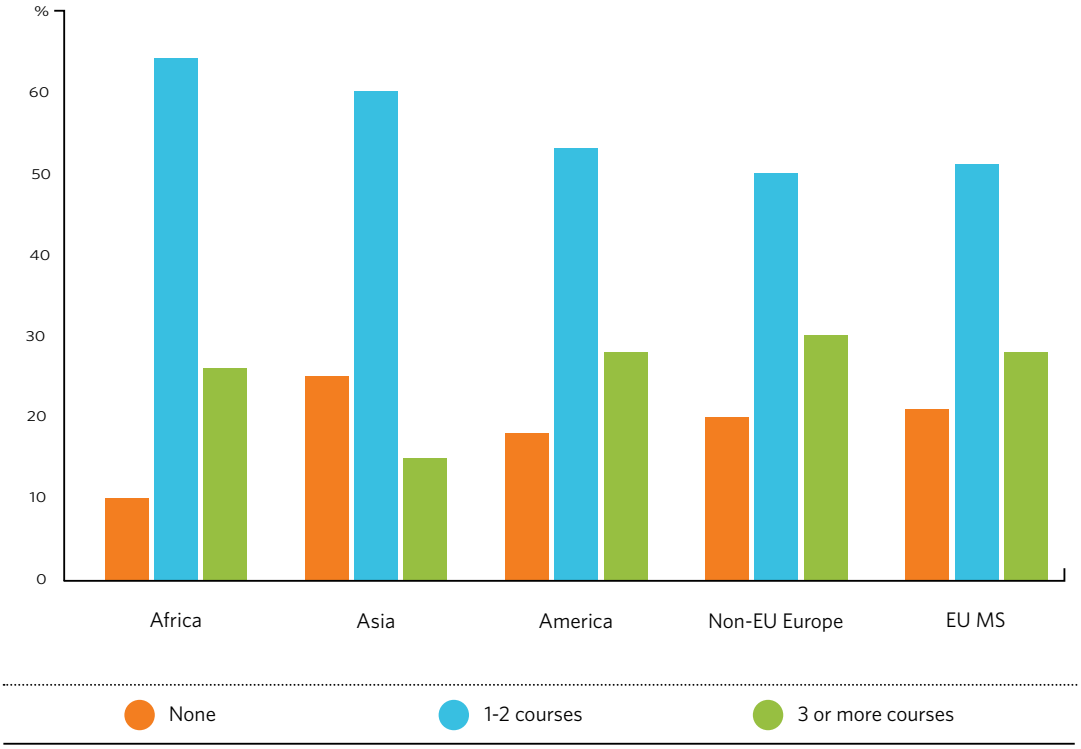


Figure 12 Number of training courses attended in host country (by region of origin)



A slightly higher percentage of Africans participate in training, possibly to remedy a relatively lower overall level of education. In contrast, Asians have the lowest percentage attending training courses, probably because they tend to have more formal education. (See Figure 12.)

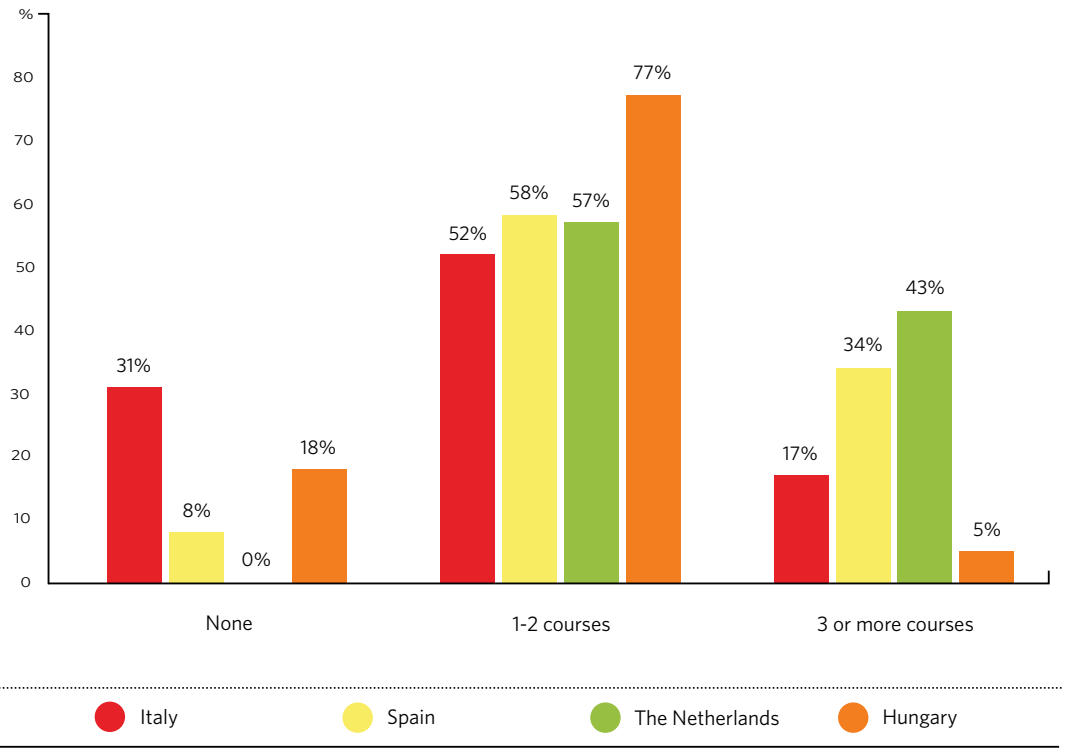
By *country of residence*, the distribution is less homogeneous, possibly reflecting different national public policies. In Spain and the Netherlands, the average number of courses is 2 and 2.5, respectively; all the respondents in those two countries have taken at least one course, and more than 40% have taken three or more. In Italy, by contrast, fully 31% have taken *no* training courses, and the average is 1.5 courses. In Hungary, only 5% have taken three courses or more (the average is 1.3 courses). (See Figure 13.)

There are differences in national contexts that may contribute to these patterns:

- In the Netherlands, people must attend training courses regularly in order to receive national unemployment subsidies.
- In Spain, NGO courses are free of charge, and people can participate regardless of legal status.
- In Italy, people are required to show an identity card even to use public internet resources; courses are not completely free of charge.[15]
- In Hungary, the surveyed group is mainly composed of refugees and asylum seekers; training is part of a broader social inclusion strategy of the NGOs serving them.

15 Italian anti-terrorism laws require those using a public internet center to show an identity card and sign in person every time they access the internet.

Figure 13 Number of training courses attended in host country (by country of residence)



4.3.2 Types of training courses

Of those who attended courses in the host country (306 women), the group who took three or more courses preferred vocational training courses, followed by e-skills courses. Those who took one or two courses concentrated more on local language training and secondarily on e-skills.

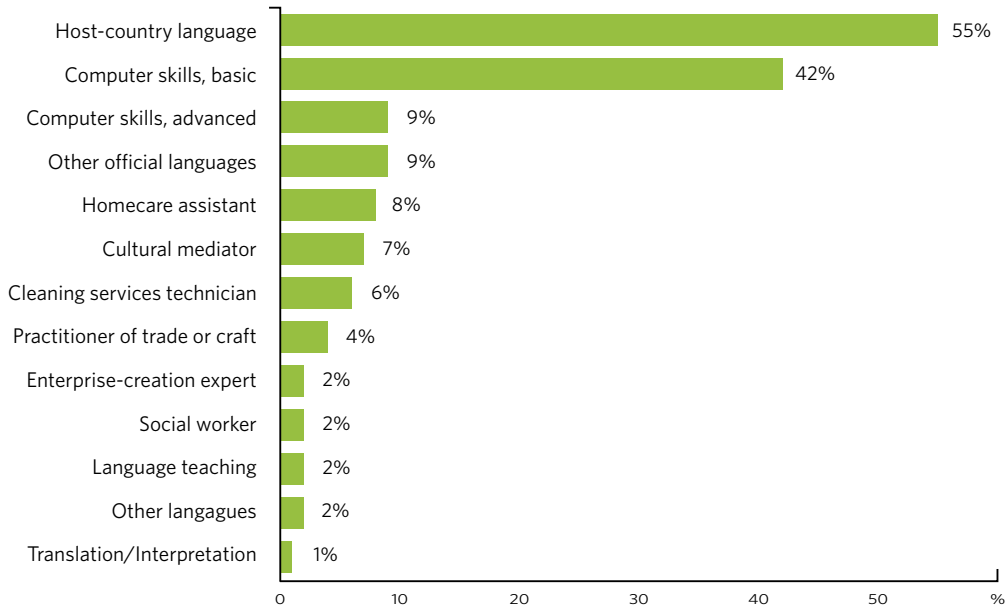
Overall, the most popular area of training was *e-skills* (43%, including basic and advanced levels).[15] The other two areas were roughly equally popular: host-country *language* (30%) and *vocational training* (27%). Vocational training included training in social assistance (cultural mediation, social work, and job guidance); care-giving (homecare assistance, nursery, and baby sitter); business (tradecraft, enterprise creation and management, craftwork); language-related employment (e.g., interpreter); and ICT-related employment. For the sample as a whole, the variety of training courses is far richer than their actual areas of employment. (See Figure 14.)

Different patterns can be seen at the country level. In Hungary and Italy, the most popular training subject is the host-country language (54% and 52% respectively), whereas e-skills courses are the most popular in the Netherlands and Spain (97% and 55%). Other popular courses in Hungary relate to other official languages, trade and craft practice, and e-skills. In Netherlands, language courses are a close second to e-skills (91%), and 21% attend advanced computer skills courses. (Note that all the participating NGOs in the Netherlands offer e-skills courses, unlike Italy, for example.)

In Spain, the second most popular subject is the language (38%), followed by other official languages (19%), homecare training (16%) and cleaning services training (14%); 9% attend advanced computer skills courses. Italy has a lower percentage attending

15 These high figures could be influenced by the fact that the NGOs that collaborated in the survey are in most cases providers of digital literacy courses — with the exception of some of the organizations in Italy and Hungary.

Figure 14 Specific training courses taken by immigrant women



Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

training courses (31%); the second most popular subject was cultural mediator (14%) followed by basic computer skills (13%). (See Table 11.)

We found no clear relationship between the number of courses taken and the individual's current employment situation. Of the group that took no training courses, over half are currently employed. Of those who took three or more courses, the employed group is only a few percentage points above the unemployed group — and for those who took one or two courses; the unemployed group outnumbers the employed group by a few percentage points. (See Figure 15.)

This could be seen as refuting our working assumption that progress in the education and lifelong-learning path improves employability. There may be other factors involved, however. With some knowledge of the

Table 11 Specific training courses taken by immigrant women (by host country)

Training courses	Host country				
	Italy	**Spain**	**Netherlands**	**Hungary**	**Total number**
None	31%	8%	0%	16%	57
Host-country language	52%	38%	91%	54%	199
Other official languages	1%	19%	4%	9%	31
Other languages	1%	3%	4%	2%	9
Language teaching	4%	1%	2%	5%	9
Translation/Interpretation	2%	0%	2%	2%	4
Cultural mediator	14%	2%	5%	5%	27
Social worker	4%	2%	.0%	5%	9
Homecare assistant	6%	16%	4 %	0%	30
Cleaning-services technician	2%	14%	3%	0%	21
Trade or craft	4%	3%	2%	7%	13
Enterprise-creation expert	2%	2%	2%	5%	9
Computer skills, basic	13%	55%	97%	7%	153
Computer skills, advanced	5%	9%	22%	2%	32
Other	15%	26%	12%	9%	63
Total number per host country	128	123	68	43	362

Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

NGO training programs, we suggest that the programs offered may be failing to reflect the changing needs of the labor market, since the NGOs tend to focus more on the social dimension than the economic dimension. Another factor, no doubt, is the stigmatization of immigrant women in the labor market.

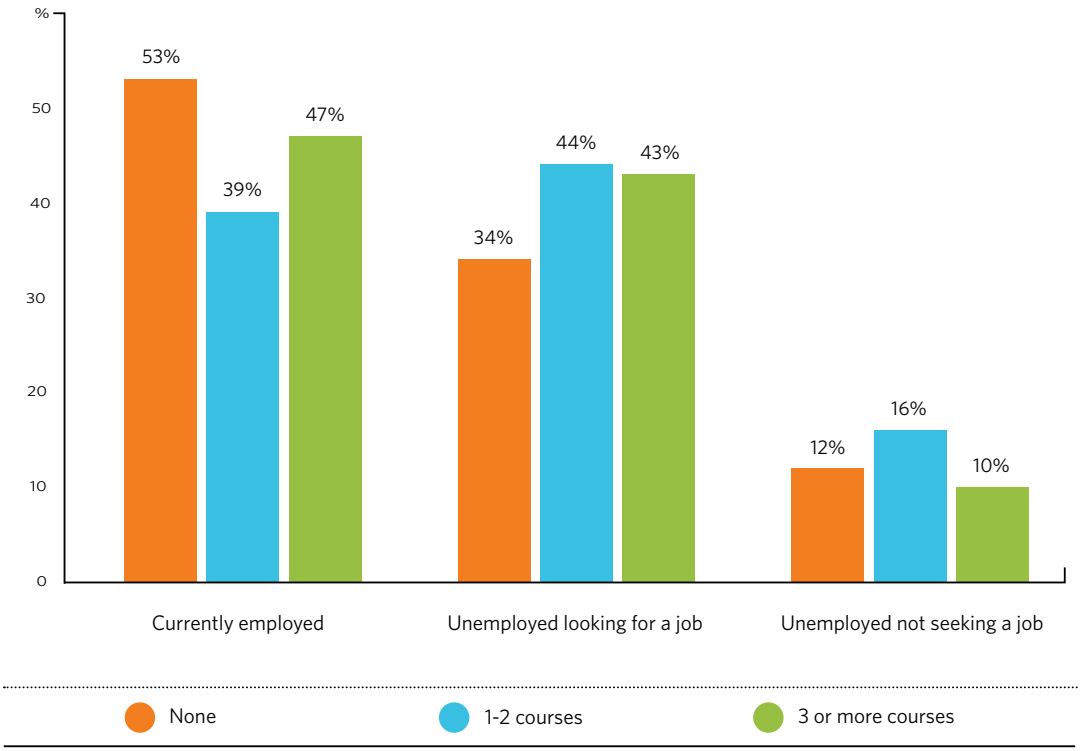
Those respondents who have not attended any training courses give various reasons. In Italy the main reason given is lack of time. This may reflect their greater participation in the job market: employment rates for the sample were 71% in Italy, compared to 34% in the Netherlands, 26% in Spain and 23% in Hungary.[17] In Spain, respondents cite the high cost of enrollment (for private training, not NGO courses). Cost is also the reason most cited in Hungary and the second most cited in the Netherlands (where the main reason cited is difficulty with the local language).

There is more broad agreement on this question when comparing region of origin. Respondents from *all* regions cited lack of time as the main reason for not taking courses. Respondents invest a lot of time in their jobs (more than eight hours a day) besides taking care of family matters, often without the support of close relatives. Africans and non-EU Europeans also cite problems with the local language, and Americans and Asians cite the high cost of enrollment, in addition to language and time concerns.

Online courses represent a resource that could help overcome the main constraint cited, a lack of time; these, however, are not widely used. Those who report attending at least one online course represent just 21% of the whole sample: none in Hungary, and only 10% of respondents in Spain, but 25% in Italy and an impressive 90% in the Netherlands.

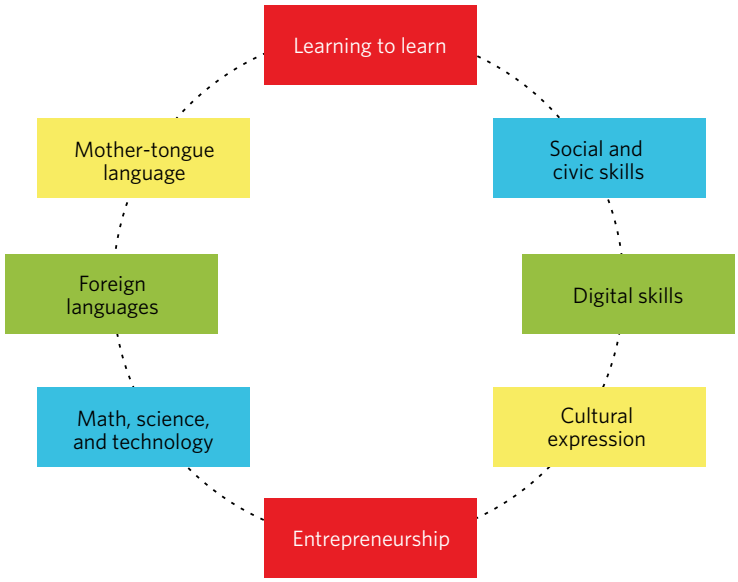
17 In terms of vocational training participation, the Italian sample is second highest (31%), following Spain (41%) and before Hungary (27%) and the Netherlands (25%).

Figure 15 Number of training courses (by employment status)



Note: Percentages based on total number of respondents (n=364)

Figure 16 The eight key competencies for lifelong learning



We hypothesize two different reasons for the lower percentages of online learning, which may also reflect opportunities:

- **Preparedness.** Respondents may lack the basic competencies required to learn online, including basic e-skills, knowledge of local language, and the ability to (self)learn[18] — that is, to actively look for relevant information — as well as the ability to learn in collaboration with peers through electronic means (at-a-distance mutual learning). *We note that the experience of online learning is itself a practical way to acquire those competencies, and immigrant women should therefore be encouraged to experiment with these resources.*

- **Availability.** NGO staff reported that the e-learning opportunities available on the internet are difficult to identify and, when free of charge, of low quality. Only a few organizations offer their own appropriate e-learning resources. A notable exception is the Esplai foundation in Spain, which has developed numerous online resources and shares them with other social organizations that provide digital literacy training with a community orientation. High-quality resources in general tend to be subject to license (at a price unaffordable by the NGOs), or else were developed through (often unsustainable) project funding and are narrowly designed to fit needs which are not broadly relevant.

In our vision, widely available e-learning resources represent a potential area of investment for public and private funds; the resulting learning programs could be shared by third-sector organizations working in the field of e-inclusion.[19] We note that the framework of NGO services leads them to prefer face-to-face courses, as a way of building trust and a sense of belonging as well as promoting ties with other individuals and with the local community. These are important benefits for those with limited circles of family and friendship. Nevertheless, e-learning could be an excellent *second step* for those who have finished a digital literacy course and want to continue the learning process. Such courses also represent an opportunity for NGOs to multiply their impact. Moreover, the internet can also be an important means of creating social links and enlarging networks. The positive example of the Netherlands should be further explored as a model for programs in other countries.

4.4 Key competencies to live and work in Europe

The European Union's *Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Parliament & Council, 2006), as noted in the Introduction, identifies eight competencies — defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes corresponding to a specific domain — which are considered crucial for three basic aspects of life:

18 "Learning-to-learn' comprises the disposition and ability to organise and regulate one's own learning, both individually and in groups. It includes the ability to manage one's time effectively, to solve problems, to acquire, process, evaluate and assimilate new knowledge, and to apply new knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts — at home, at work, in education and in training. In more general terms, learning-to-learn contributes strongly to managing one's own career path." (European Commission, 2004, p.8).

19 Third sector, voluntary sector, civil sector or non-profit sector are different ways to refer to the sphere of social activity undertaken by organizations that are nonprofit and non-governmental. It is called third sector as it is neither public nor private sector.

1. Personal fulfillment and development throughout life (cultural capital)

2. Active citizenship and inclusion (social capital)

3. Employability (human capital)

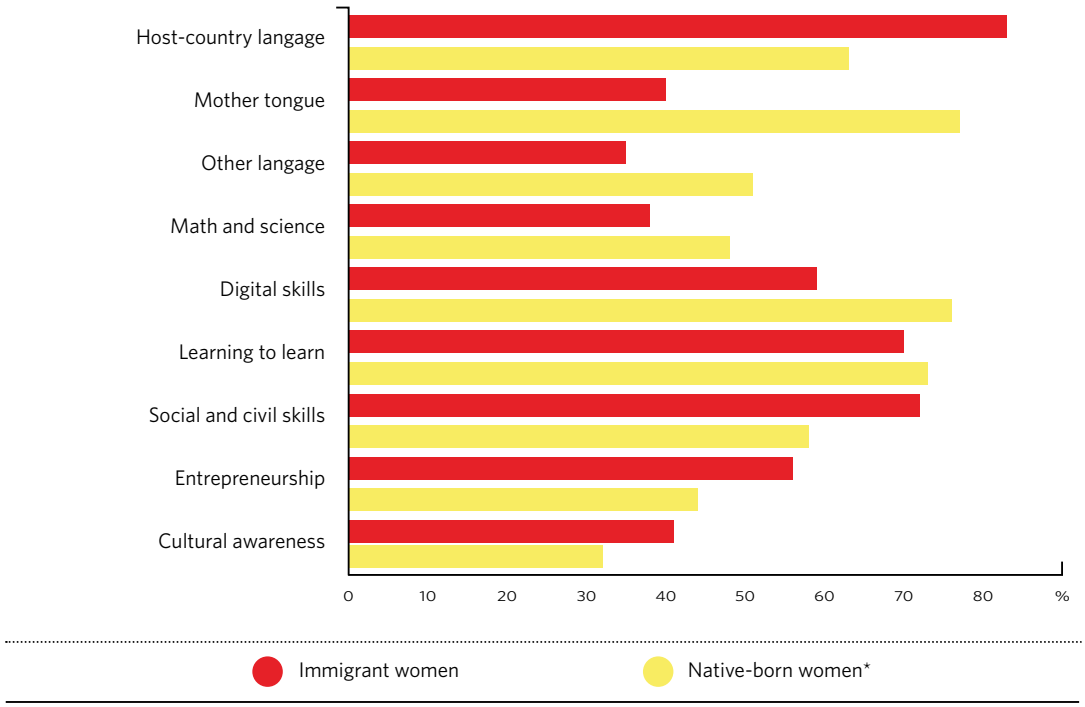
The eight competencies are: communication in the mother tongue; communication in a foreign language; mathematical literacy and basic competencies in science and technology; digital competence; learning-to-learn; interpersonal and civic competencies; entrepreneurship; and cultural expression.

The surveyed women were asked to rate each of these key competencies (slightly adapted to the context of the research) according to its importance for improving their labor situation in the host country. Figure 17 shows the percentages in each sample that rated a particular competence as *very important* (5) or *important* (4).

The immigrant women in the sample clearly recognize the need to acquire competence in the *language of the host country* (83% of immigrant women; 77% of native-born women). The immigrant women who are employed (or seeking employment) are more focused on learning the local language than those who stay at home, or than native speakers. Note, however, that for some of the immigrant sample, the mother tongue is the same as the host-country language (e.g., Latin Americans living in Spain), a factor that may reduce the overall percentage.

The second most valued competence is *social and civic skills* (72%). This area, too, is less highly rated by native-born women (58%), probably because they have less need to focus on new social ties and can take for granted the cultural conventions and civic norms that govern community life. Next most important is *learning to learn* (70% for immigrants and 73% for native-born women), a very promising finding both for their potential empowerment and for the success of policies aimed at promoting lifelong learning.

Figure 17 Most-valued key competencies for lifelong learning to improve the employment situation of women



* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Digital skills are particularly valued by native-born women (76%) and less by immigrant women (59%), reflecting their different backgrounds. It is likely that immigrants, coming from countries where the informal economy provides the main source of jobs, do not immediately recognize the facilitating role of ICT in Europe. Indeed, for those coming from economies where ICT is poorly represented, it is hard to recognize the necessity of dealing with technological media in even such elementary jobs as elder care and restaurant work.

Sense of initiative/entrepreneurship is somewhat highly rated by both groups, at over 50%, suggesting an interest in building self-employment opportunitiets.

It is interesting to compare these responses with the European policymakers' vision, as expressed at the Barcelona Council (2002). The main competencies identified as most critical for life and work in Europe were *foreign language* and *digital competencies* (European Commission, 2004a). These are competencies that are also valued by the immigrant women in our sample.

For most of the immigrant women, of course, the host-country language is in fact a foreign language (with some exceptions, such as the Latin Americans whose native language is Spanish);[20] they naturally emphasize the importance of improving their competence in this area. However, they tend to underestimate the importance of mastering their own language, as well as other key languages like English. For many, no doubt, their immediate daily needs are too pressing to allow them to pursue training to improve their medium- or long-term employability.

Regarding *digital competence*, more than two-thirds of the respondents rated it as important (rating 3, 4, or 5). These findings should be taken into account by public administrations and public or private initiatives involved in improving their training, employment, and social integration.

4.4.1 Language skills of immigrant women

The existing language skills of immigrant women represent valuable cultural and human capital for occupational and social mobility. These skills can be used for the benefit of both the host country — to facilitate intercultural understanding, for example as *cultural mediators* — and their countries of origin — as agents of *co-development*

20 Note that for many migrants from former Spanish colonies — in Latin America (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador) or in Africa — their mother tongue is a tribal language (e.g., Quechua), and Spanish is a second language, often requiring further training.

Table 12 Number of other languages spoken by immigrant women (by host country)

Number of languages*	Host country				
	Italy	**Spain**	**Netherlands**	**Hungary**	**Total**
1	0%	31%	3%	0%	11%
2	35%	37%	46%	44%	39%
3	41%	21%	39%	40%	34%
4	16%	9%	8%	9%	11%
5	8%	.0%	3%	7%	4%
6	0%	2%	0%	0%	.5%
7	0%	0%	2%	0%	3%
Total percent in country	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Refers to languages spoken in addition to mother tongue.

(Naïr & de Lucas, 1998); both countries can benefit from migration flows.

There is remarkable diversity of mother tongue languages in the sample of 375 immigrant women, with a total of 61 languages represented. Arabic (22%) and Spanish (20%) prevail, with the other languages each spoken by less than 10%. There are also small numbers of native speakers of a *lingua franca* such as English or French (4 and 3%), and of other host-country languages (Dutch, 3%; Hungarian, 3%; Italian, 0.5%). A number of other spoken languages reflects the diversity of the immigrants' origins: Romanian (6%) and Bulgarian (1%) — the last two countries to join the EU; Russian, Ukrainian, Moroccan, Turkish, and Nigerian, each between 2% and 5%.

Only 11% of the respondents reported that they speak only one language (see Table 12). We can compare this figure with the results of the 2007 Adult Education Survey (AES) — a self-assessment of language skills shows that 36% of the adult EU population (ages 25 to 64) speak only one language; 36% speak one foreign language, and 28% speak two or more foreign languages.[21] Three of the countries in our survey show lower than average numbers in the AES survey: Hungary (75% speak only one language, the lowest ranking in language ability in the AES); Spain (47%); and Italy (39%).[22] (See Table 14.) The surveyed immigrant women overall have a richer linguistic capital than the average European citizen.

Table 13 Top ten languages spoken by immigrant women, in addition to mother tongue

Language	n	Percent of cases
Italian	130	41%
English	114	36%
French	66	21%
Dutch	64	20%
Spanish	**57**	**18%**
Hungarian	**17**	**5%**
Russian	**13**	**4%**
Romanian	**10**	**3%**
Catalan	**10**	**3%**
Arabic	**8**	**3%**

The most-prevalent second (or even third) languages are Italian (25%), English (23%), French (13%), Dutch (13%), Spanish (11%), and Hungarian (3%). (Recall that for 79 individuals in the sample, Spanish is their first language, so the total percentage of Spanish-speaking respondents would be much higher than 11%.) For Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, 80-90% of the immigrant women speak the host-country language. For Hungary, the percentage is 73%. (See Table 13.)

But although immigrant women may speak more languages, *competence in the local language* is for many a significant barrier to get a (better) job and become more integrated in local society. They are aware of it, as indicated by their reported motivation to learn the language of their country of residence: *Integration with local society* (39%) and *To work* (33%) emerged as the main reasons.[23]The survey also asked them to self-assess their level of understanding of the host-country language. More than two-thirds (68%) did not speak the language before entering the EU. About one quarter (26%) have only a basic language ability, and one-third (36%) have medium ability. The remaining 38% report a high skill level, including those for whom it is their native language. Respondents report higher ability in comprehension than speaking, and lower ability in writing.

In Italy and Spain, around half of respondents report a *high level* understanding of the local language; in the Netherlands, around half have only a basic level, despite the government efforts to promote the learning of Dutch.[24] (See Table 15 for host-country language ability.)

We also saw differences according to region of origin. Migrants from the Americas have the highest percentage of *high skill level* responses (for comprehension, speaking, and writing, 70%, 61%, and 58% respectively). Note that these numbers include immigrants to Spain, where many of them are native speakers of the national language. Non-EU Europeans have the next highest percentages (comprehension, speaking, and writing are 53%, 34%, and 28% for high level; 36%, 51%,

21 The Adult Education Survey (AES) was conducted between 2005 and 2008 by EU member states and candidate countries in collaboration with the European Free Trade Association. The survey covers participation in education and lifelong-learning activities (formal, non-formal, and informal learning), as well as self-reported skills, including foreign languages and IT.

22 Comparison with the Netherlands and Romania is not possible due to lack of AES survey data.

23 Respondents: 325 answers given by 241 immigrant women. Total percentages by region can be over 100% because of multiple answers.

24 Both Dutch and Magyar (Hungarian) are considered especially difficult languages to learn.

Table 14 Self-reported language competence of adult EU population

	No foreign languages	One foreign language	Two or more foreign languages	Best-known foreign language
European Union*	**36**	**36**	**28**	**English**
Hungary	75	18	8	English
Portugal	51	22	26	English
Spain	47	35	18	English
Bulgaria	44	30	26	Russian
Greece	43	45	12	English
France	41	36	23	English
Italy	39	34	28	English
Poland	37	39	24	Russian
United Kingdom**	35	65	NA	French
Belgium	32	16	52	English
Czech Republic	32	35	34	English***
Croatia	31	40	29	English
Germany	29	41	30	English
Austria	20	50	29	English
Finland	16	16	68	English
Cyprus	15	59	26	English
Estonia	14	30	56	Russian
Slovakia	8	24	68	Czech**
Slovenia	8	21	72	English
Latvia	5	40	55	Russian
Sweden	5	45	50	English
Lithuania	3	32	66	Russian
Norway	3	22	75	English

* EU average is based on available member states and excludes the United Kingdom.
** The questionnaire for the United Kingdom only distinguishes "no foreign language" and "one foreign language."
*** Slovakian is not recorded as a foreign language in Czech survey, whereas Czech is recorded as a foreign language in the Slovakian survey.

Source: AES findings (2007) reported in September 24, 2009, Eurostat news release (see http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-24092009-AP/EN/3-24092009-AP-EN.PDF).
Notes: The survey included adults aged 25 to 64 and covered the 27 EU member states except Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, and Romania.

and 40% for medium level). Immigrants from Africa are mostly at the *middle-basic level* (comprehension, speaking, and writing are 41%, 45%, and 32% for medium level; and 34%, 37%, and 48% for basic level). Those from Asia appear only slightly higher: comprehension, speaking, and writing are 48%, 50%, and 35% for medium level and 28%, 30%, and 40% for basic level.

An analysis of age groups shows that the younger groups have increasingly better skills in the host-country language. The youngest group also has evenly balanced skills in all three aspects of language: the 15-to-24-year-old group reports *high skill level* for comprehension, speaking, and writing at 46%, 45%, and 43% respectively. In contrast, immigrants between 50 and 64 years old have high-skill percentages at 37%, 25%, and 20%. Many of those in the youngest group attended school in the host country, providing them an opportunity (however stressful) to learn the local language through an immersion process.

In terms of length of stay in the host country, there are also significant differences between subgroups of immigrants. According to the profile (Chapter 3), roughly 38% arrived within the last five years, and almost 40% arrived six to ten years ago. Only 18% have lived in the host country more than ten years. We find that the middle group (resident in-country between 6 and 10 years) has higher local language skills than the other groups: around half report having high-level skills. This seems to confirm a finding of *Migrant women in the EU labour force* (Rubin et al., 2008), that a long process of adaptation is required, particularly in countries with a longer history of immigration (e.g., the Netherlands). Surprisingly, however, respondents who arrived more than 10 years ago have the *lowest* percentage of high-level skills: comprehension and speaking are reported at 30% and 22% respectively; for writing, high-level skills are negligible, and almost half (47%) report only basic level skills. One contributing factor is undoubtedly the relative lack of affordable opportunities to study the local languages until recent years, when national and EU efforts have increasingly promoted such programs.[25] Moreover, a significant part of this sub-group belongs to the Moroccan community in Amsterdam, who came mostly to reunite with their families rather than to work.

Another factor correlating with local language competence is *educational background*. In general, the higher the educational qualification, the higher the local language skills. More than half of the respondents with a secondary or higher education (high school, vocational training, university) have high-level comprehension and medium-high speaking skills; of those with lower educational qualifications, more than one-third have only basic comprehension and speaking skills, and around half have only basic writing skills.

25 See, for example, the European Commission's language actions under its Lifelong Learning Programme (under the Directorate General for Education & Culture): http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/lingua/index_en.html.

Table 15 Fluency level in host-country language

	Comprehension			Spoken			Written		
Host country	Basic	Medium	High	Basic	Medium	High	Basic	Medium	High
Italy	9%	39%	52%	11%	51%	38%	29%	42%	28%
Spain	13%	32%	55%	17%	33%	51%	17%	28%	55%
Netherlands	46%	38%	16%	51%	39%	10%	64%	28%	8%
Hungary	33%	28%	39%	30%	38%	33%	49%	19%	32%

4.4.2 Digital competencies

e-Skills are one of the most essential basic skills required to live and work in a knowledge economy. One of our working hypotheses is that digital skills contribute across all the paths, improving employability. Here we describe the digital profile of our target group, their e-skill training opportunities, how e-skills can broaden their learning opportunities, and how NGOs are helping them to acquire and improve these skills.

For the entire sample of immigrant women, around 30% use computers and internet one to two times per week. That frequency corresponds to the schedule of lessons for digital literacy training courses; many lack online access at home or at work, and they avoid spending money on cybercafes (in favor of more urgent needs), so they are limited to using internet on the days when they visit the NGOs.

Regular users of computers and the internet — including those attending classes as well as the more frequent users — amount to an impressive 70% of the entire sample (see Figure 18). A small percentage (16% of the total sample) reported never using a compute-r or the internet. Their two main reasons cited for not using ICT are lack of ICT skills (32 cases) and lack of access or opportunity (15 cases); only 7 women responded that they have no need to use ICT.

The three sites where they use computers and internet most often are *home* (51%); *NGOs* (40%); and *home of family or friends* — an extension of home-based use (24%). (See Figure 19.) The relevant context is the high penetration of internet in households across Europe, reported at 65% for the European Union. According to the Eurostats 2009 commuity survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals, the average internet penetration is 63% — 90% in Netherlands, 55% in Hungary, 54% in Spain, and 53% in Italy.

Lack of internet access from home seems to be conditioned by several factors: first, the price of the service — often unaffordable for immigrant women who are unemployed or underemployed; second, the instability of housing (especially for those most newly arrived) — which makes them avoid buying "luxury" equipment; third, their age (older respondents are apparently more reluctant to invest in technology). NGOs not only provide digital literacy training but also PCs and access to internet free of charge. With better facilities, it appears, respondents would make more frequent use of these opportunities. Interviews with NGO staff reveal that the factor limiting frequency of use is the insufficient quantity of IT equipment; some mentioned that, due to limited facilities, they had to restrict use by assigning timeslots.

By countries, there are significant discrepancies. In Italy, the preferred place to connect to internet is *home* (79%, higher than the national rate of household connection to internet); use of NGOs for internet is very low (8%). In Spain, however, 46% of the users access internet from NGOs, 34% from private centers, and 15% from public locations like libraries — heavily favoring social spaces overall. In the Netherlands, NGOs represent the preferred channel (82%) followed by home connections (47% at own home, 45% through friends and family). Hungary shows a pattern more like that of Italy, with 59% accessing from home (see Figure 20).

We might hazard a connection between these patterns and the socio-political conditions of immigration in each country. The tendency to "home reclusion" or agoraphobia in Italy may be related to an element of denigration and even demonization of immigration, by the government and society. Immigrants may be discouraged specifically by the requirement to show an identification card in order to make use of NGO services. In Hungary, the samee tendency could reflect the fact that most of the respondents are refugees or asylum seekers. In the Netherlands and Spain, there is almost no sense of being systematically excluded, and immigrants are much more likely to frequent social spaces to access the internet.

What do respondents use computers and internet for? We asked about games and leisure, work, study, hobbies and creative activities, and household matters: respondents could rate each item "never," "occasionally," "once or twice a week," "three to five times a week," or "daily." If we combine all the positive responses (excluding "never"), we find that roughly half the sample of ICT users engages in each of these activities. An exception is *study*, approaching two-thirds, probably because this figure includes those who were taking an ICT course at the time of the survey. (This is consistent with the frequency given for studying, *one or two times a week*.)

Daily ICT use for working was more prevalent than daily use for studying, and responses were polarized: those whose work requires using a PC must do so *daily*; those

Figure 18 Frequency of computer and internet use

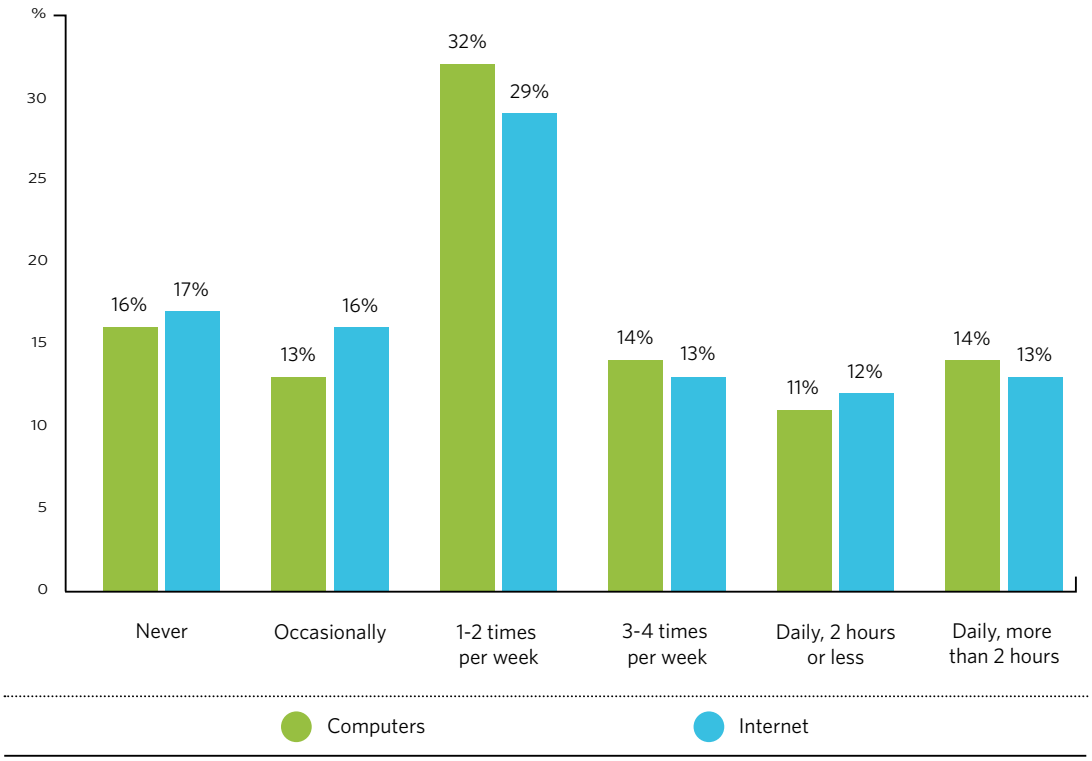
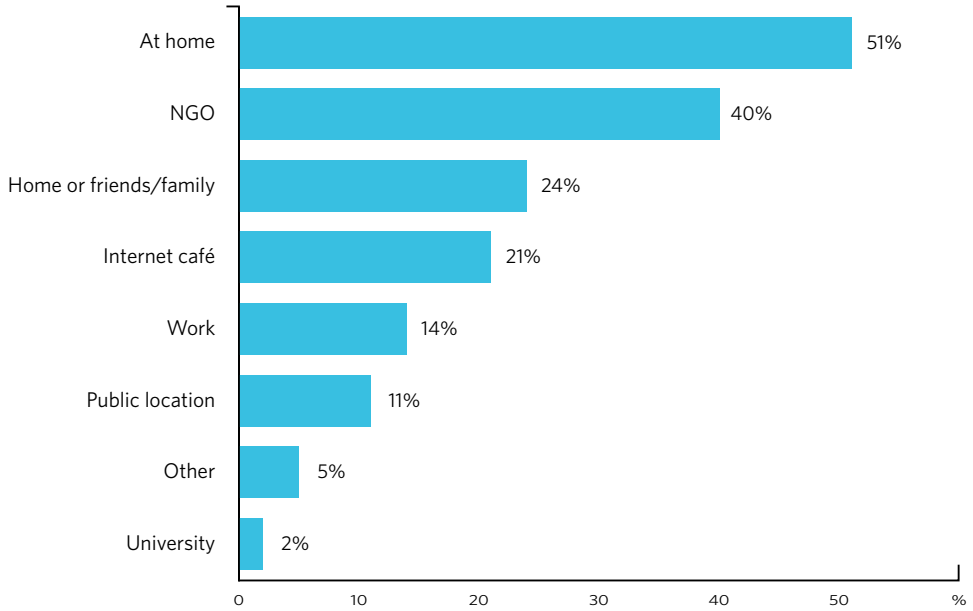
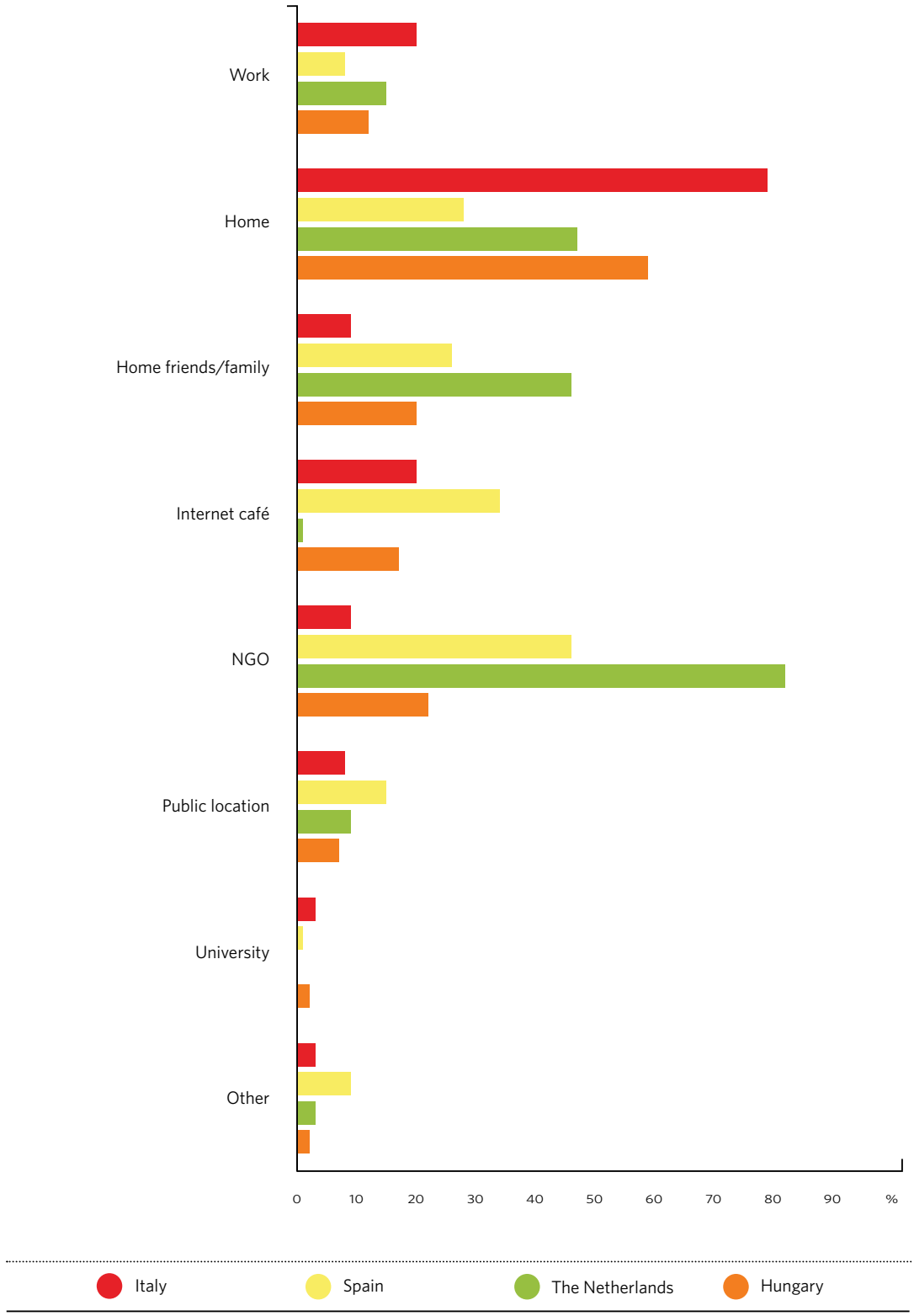


Figure 19 Most common places to access computer and internet



Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 20 Places to access the internet (by country)



Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 21 Frequency of use (by kind of activity)

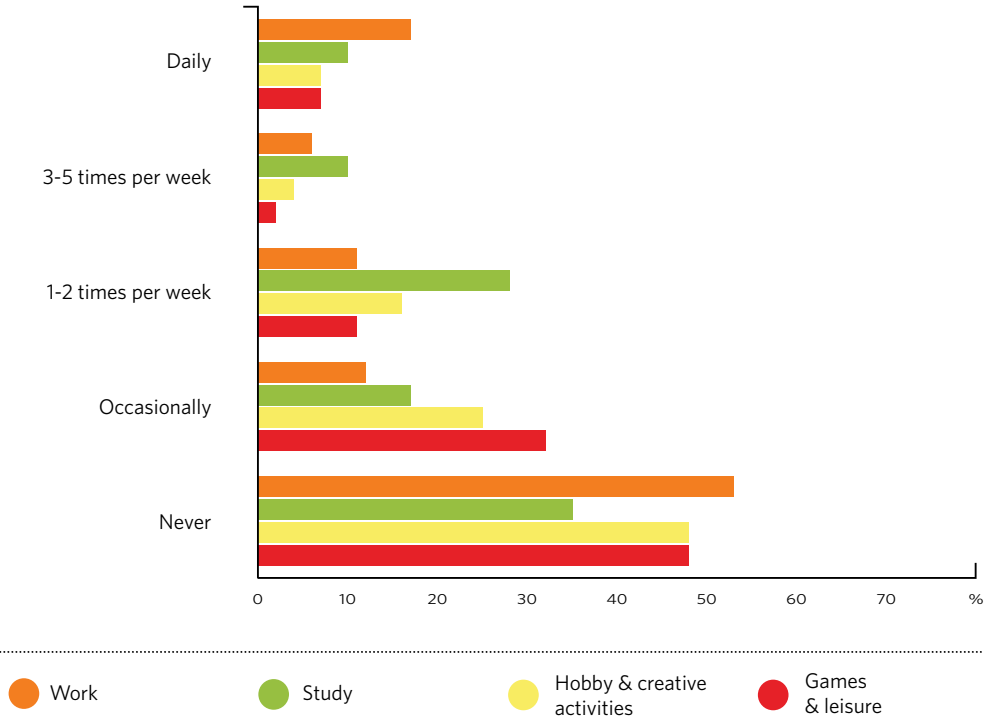


Figure 22 Use of the internet during the last 12 months

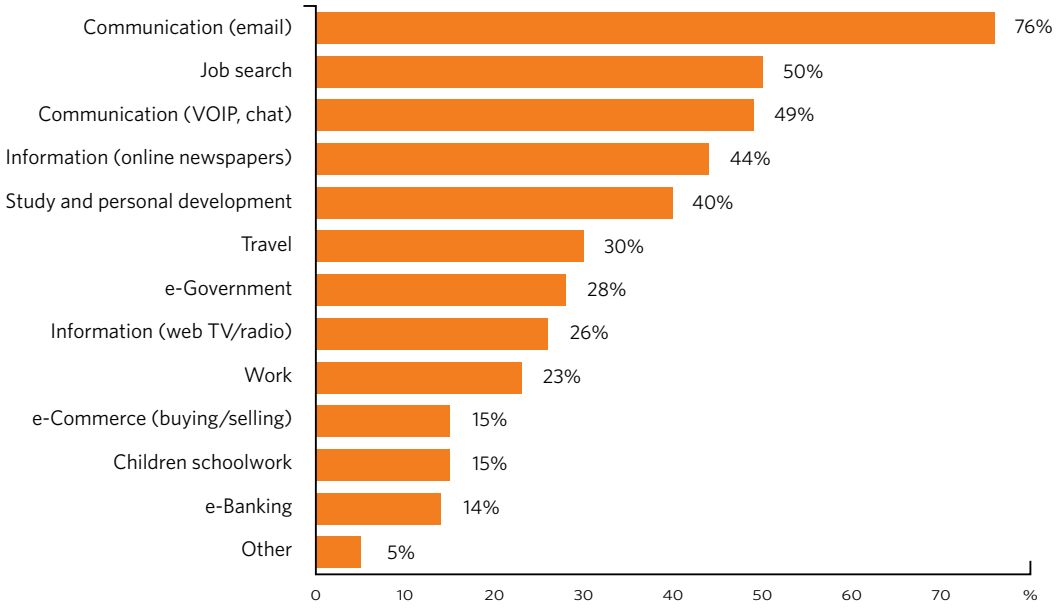
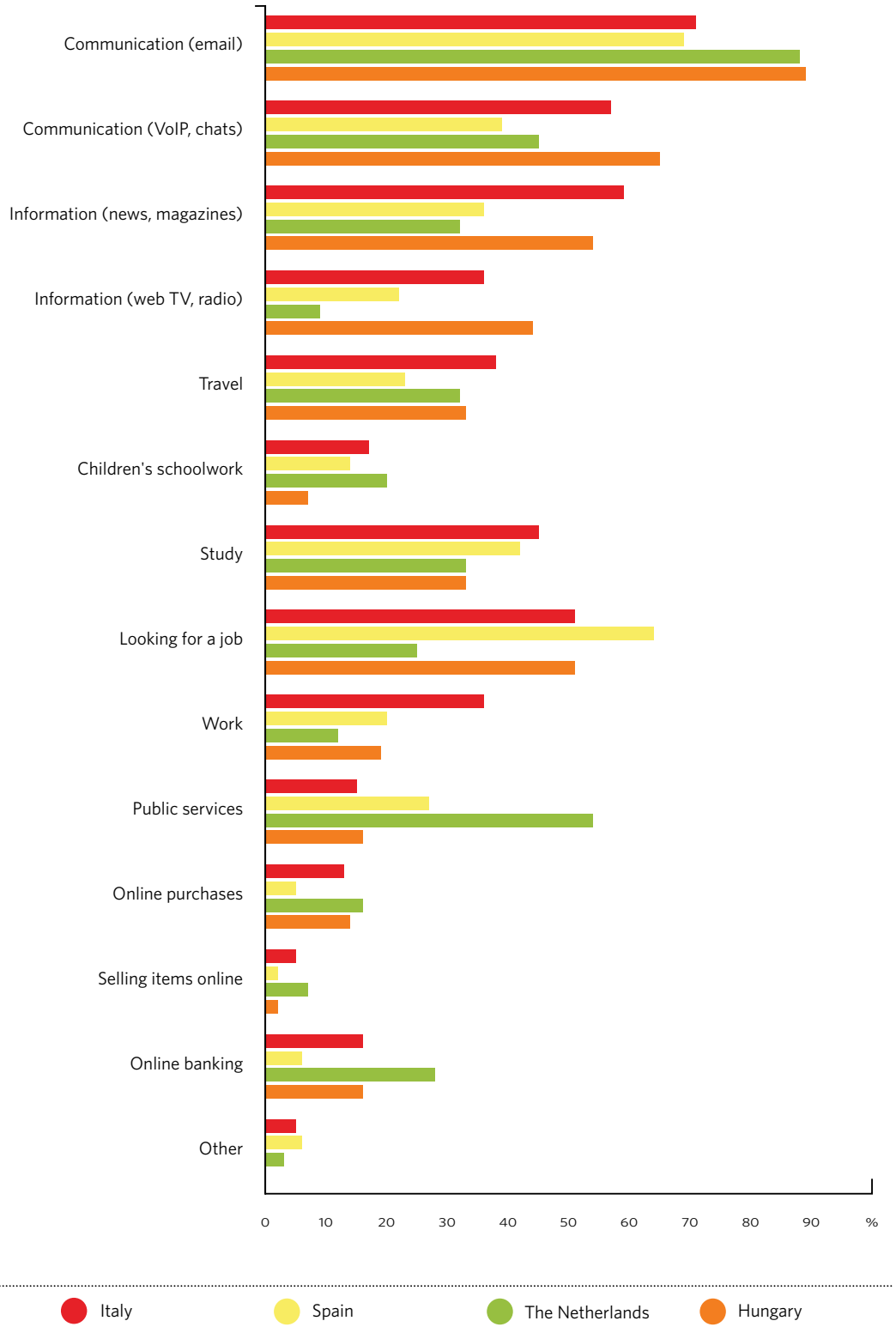


Figure 23 Use of the internet for specific activities (by host country)



whose work does not require it *never* do it. The other activities — household affairs, hobby and creative activities, games and leisure — are predominantly *occasional*. (See Figure 21.)

Whatever the preferred activity, the major factor is access. Respondents access from home if they can afford the cost (often sharing it with flatmates), or from NGOs (free of charge), or from friends' and relatives' homes.

An analysis of internet usage in the 12 months prior to participation in the survey shows that:

- *Communication* is the predominant use, including email (76%) and other means, such as chat and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) (44%). They use technology to communicate with close relatives, to exchange photos, and to interact with their parents or kids by webcam. ICT developmenthas shortened distances around the world, but cost matters — respondents rarely access internet from a cybercafe.

- The second most popular use is for *job searching* (50%), while only 23% use it for working.

- Not all jobs require use of computers for *work*. Respondents tend to overlook the possibility until the need occurs, and then they use NGOs almost exclusively. Nurse assistants, for example, find that their profession is increasingly dependent on technology, requiring professional requalification training; nursing students are assumed to be familiar with computer use. For immigrants, NGOs offer more accessible digital training than any other channel.

- 40% use internet to *study*. An e-learning component — low-cost (or no-cost) and high-quality — would be an excellent way of enhancing lifelong learning for this group.

Figure 24 Usefulness of the internet for training and employment

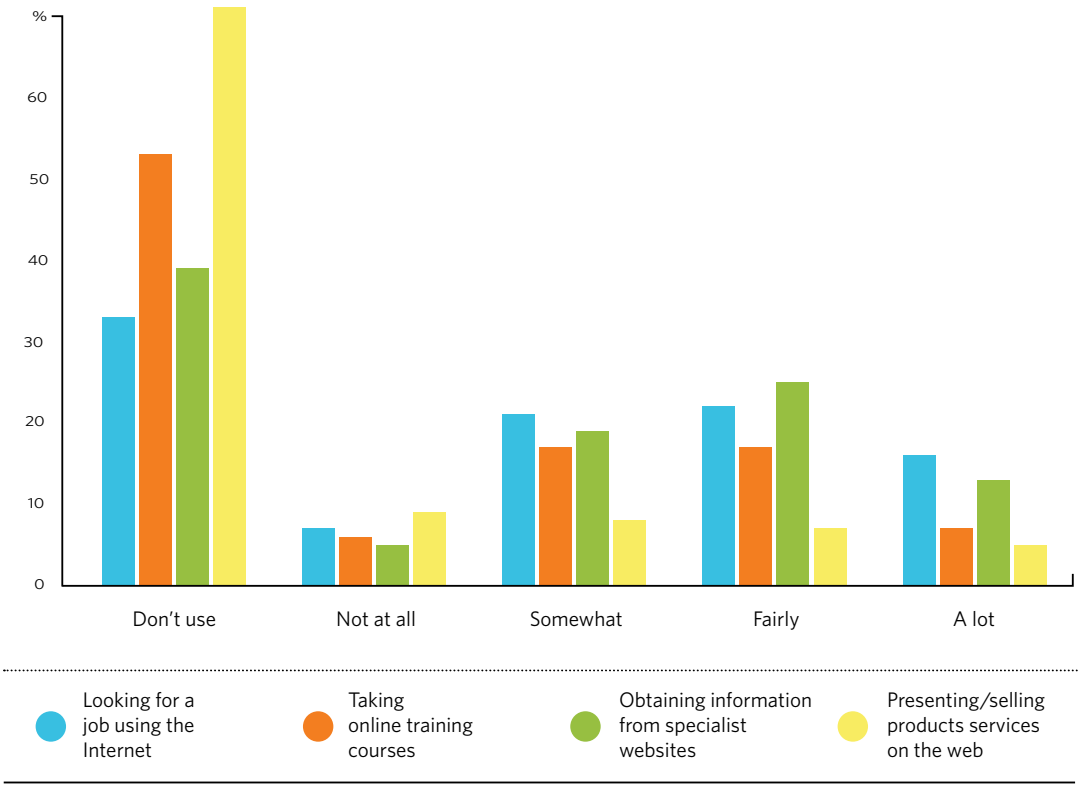


Figure 25 e-Skills level (by Eurostat categories)

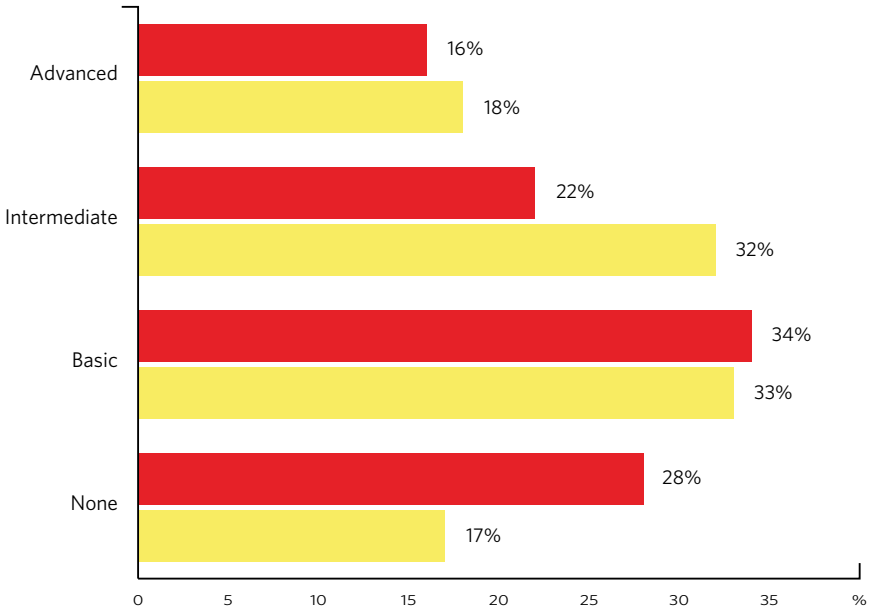
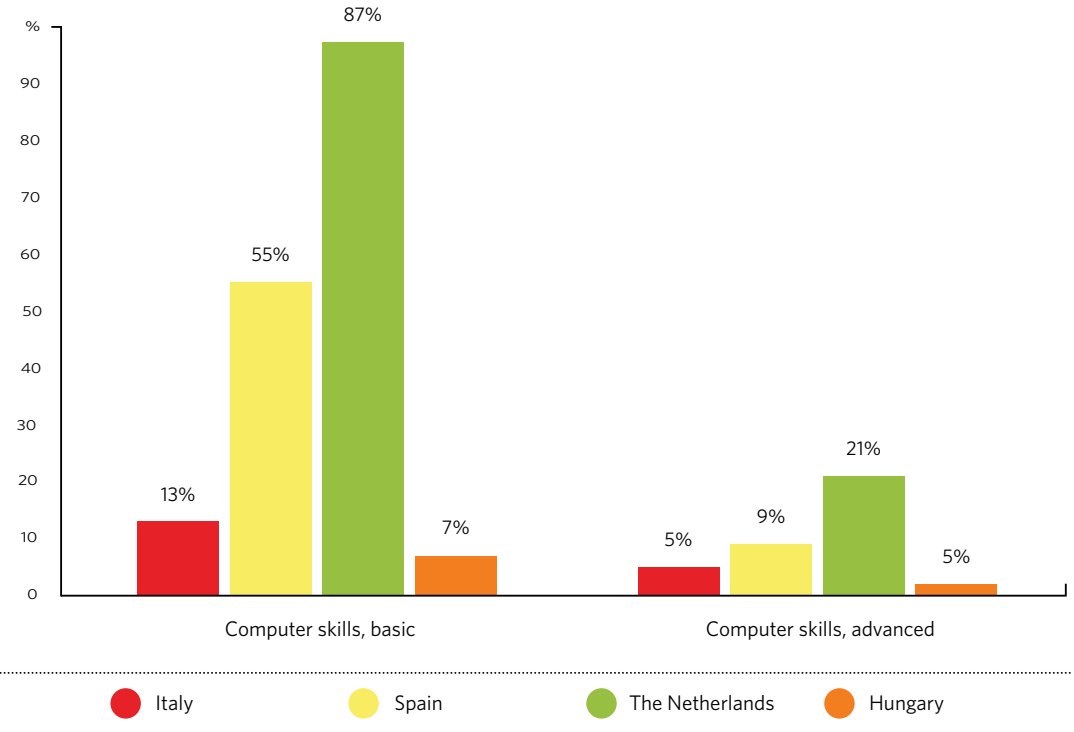


Figure 26 Participation in computer skills training (by host country)



- Other uses include *personal and household affairs*, including: travel (30%), e-government services (28%), e-banking (14%), and children's schoolwork (14%). Apparently, almost all the respondents who have children living with them (15% of the sample) are using internet to help them with schoolwork, suggesting that this is an important way to interest them in technology — and also in the local language.

- *e-Commerce* is rarely used: only 11% buy online, and 4% sell items online. Apparently most respondents are not aware of the commercial possibilities ICT offers for entrepreneurial activity.

Another dimension of the digital world is the knowledge and use of web 2.0 resources — the networking and collaborative dimension of the internet. This dimension has low penetration among this population; not surprisingly, those who like using these features are the youngest age group. Overall, only 18% reported taking part in a *social networking* site: 40% of those under 25 years of age; 20% of those in the range 25-49; and just 5% of those 50 and older. 8% have a *personal blog*: 20% of those under 25; 8% of those in the range 25-49; and no one older than 49. 6% *write online news* or participate in forums: 13% of those under 25; 6% of those in the range 25-49; and no one older than 49.[26]

We found only minor differences in internet use between countries (Figure 23):

- Communication and information functions are used slightly more in Hungary and Italy.

- Job seeking is a widely used function in Spain (64%), and somewhat less in Italy and Hungary (51%); in the Netherlands it is less used (25%).

- Italy has the highest percentage using internet for work (36%).

- Netherlands has the highest percentage using e-government (54%) and online banking (28%).

4.5 e-Skills as a pathway to wider training options

e-Skills are widely seen as a "shortcut" to finding and utilizing training opportunities, and as a means of improving basic competencies and thus employability. When we asked about the usefulness of ICT for training and work, however, we found that the respondents' use of this approach was limited (see Figure 24):

- A significant number don't use internet for training or employment purposes, probably because they are unaware of its usefulness. (NGOs could help through targeted awareness-raising actions).

- The most often-used employment-related activities were looking for a job using the internet and obtaining information from specialist websites.

- Online training courses are not widely used. Acquiring competencies in the programs learned was more popular, which may indicate a practical way to introduce the use of internet for learning.

- Selling products or services on the web is practically ignored.

We also assessed the level of respondents' e-skills, as self-reported, using Eurostat categories.[27] We found (Figure 25):

- A balanced distribution of levels of competence (Gauss bell)

- Better knowledge of internet than of the computer 17% with advanced ICT skills — mostly concentrated in the younger age range and in the Netherlands

- 17% with no knowledge of internet, and a full 28% with *no* knowledge of the PC

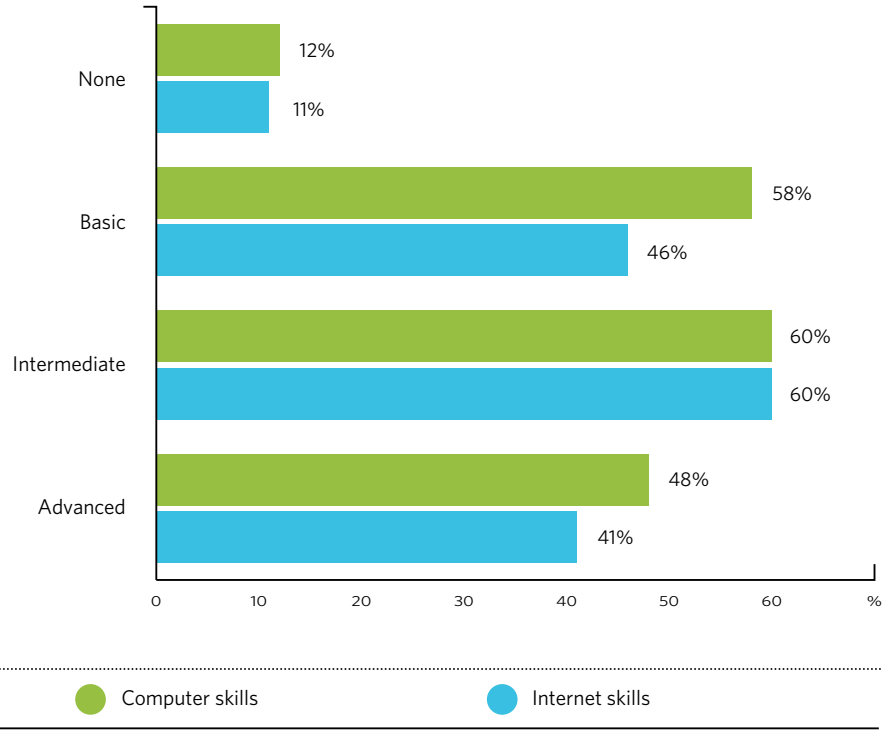
Internet is more familiar than the PC because the women use ICT more to communicate with relatives abroad than to write documents or process data; also, a number of them (mainly from Africa) use cell phones instead of PCs to access the internet.

The last two findings indicate that the digital divide persists. For the group with no knowledge of ICT, this lack of competence is a barrier to full functioning in a digitalized world, as well as to employment opportunities (including ICT-related jobs as well as internet job portals). NGOs engaged in the e-inclusion field play an important role in bridging the gap by providing

26 A recent Eurostats study shows a similar pattern. A large majority of young people in the EU were found to use the internet daily (more than 70% of those aged 16–24), while use among older people was less frequent (around 50%). See Lööf & Seybert (2009).

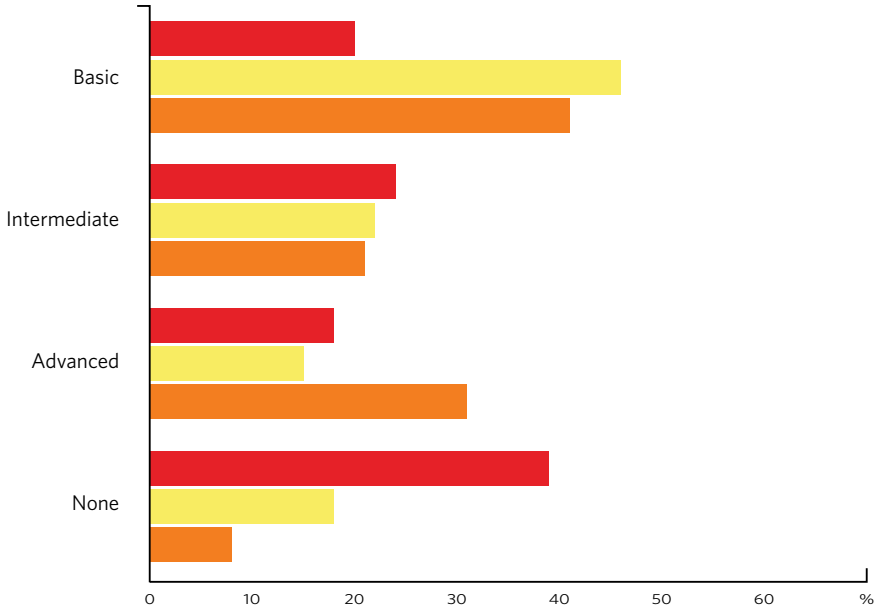
27 As explained in Chapter 2, our survey included two questions based on Eurostat's 2007 *Community Survey on ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals*, each organized around six different basic ICT operations (definitions of low, medium, and high skill levels are outlined in Section 2.3.2).

Figure 27 Percentage of immigrant women who attended a course on e-skills (by e-skills level)



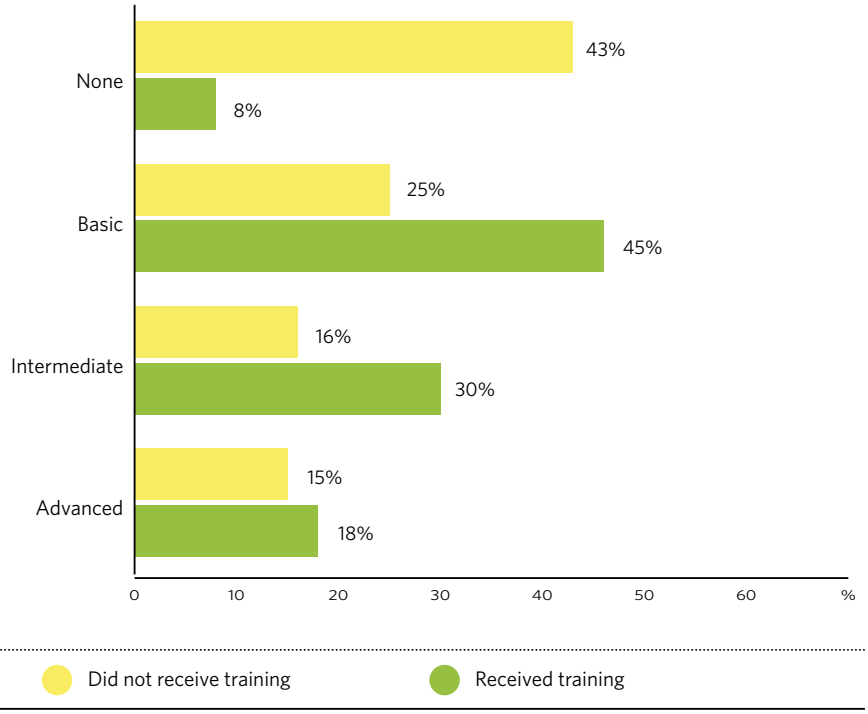
Note: e-Skill level according to Eurostat indicators.

Figure 28a Computer skills level of women who did *not* participate in e-skills courses



Note: Based on 109 cases in Italy, 55 in Spain and 39 in Hungary; Netherlands is not represented because there are only 2 valid cases.

Figure 28b Computer skill level of immigrant women by training participation



digital literacy and other training courses, even in the absence of supportive public policies and funding.

There are opportunities to increase immigrant women's involvement in ICT training. Only half of the sample attended digital training courses: 41% have taken basic e-skills training and 9% have taken advanced courses. There are also important cross-country contrasts:

- In the Netherlands, almost all immigrants had training in basic e-skills (97%) and one-fifth had advanced training (21%)
- Spain is close to the average, with 55% and 9% taking basic and advanced training, respectively
- In Italy and Hungary, only 13% and 5% trained in basic skills; 7% and 2% had trained in advanced skills [28]

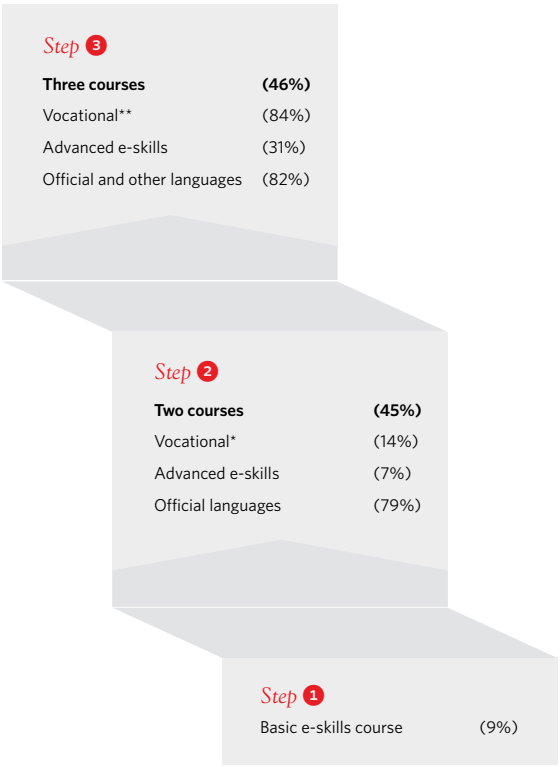
The countries also differ in their national policies. The Netherlands aggresively promotes e-skills training — training is *mandatory* for immigrants to continue to receive government financial support. Spain has allocated funds and developed initiatives to promote a knowledge society through a combination of infrastructure and services. In Italy, however, public initiatives are more scarce and concentrated in the richer regions. In Hungary, public initiatives in this area are practically nonexistent.

Of the respondents who have some level of digital skills, half or more have attended e-skills courses: 58% and 46% of those with *basic* skills (PC and internet respectively); 60% of those with intermediate e-skills; and less than 50% of those with advanced skills. In addition, 12% of those with no ICT skills reported taking a course, no doubt including many who were surveyed at the beginning of their digital literacy training. (See Figure 26.)

Available data indicate that the NGO courses are not tailored to cover more sophisticated needs, but are rather oriented to assist people at the beginning stages of acquiring digital literacy. NGO staff interviews highlighted the lack of equipment, staffing, and funding to provide advanced ICT skills training. (One explained that they couldn't train in multimedia editing due to the lack of appropriate peripherals

28 Nevertheless, in both these countries, self-learners (with no formal training) have attained medium/advanced levels of ICT skills: 40% in Italy and 42% in Hungary, compared to 39% and 35% in the Netherlands and Spain.

Figure 29 Learning path: training courses



* Includes cultural mediation, cleaning services, language teaching.

** Includes homecare assistance, cleaning services, cultural mediation, informatics-related job profiles, administrative profiles, shop assistance, and assertiveness skills training.

and software.) More advanced training, however, could prepare a number of immigrant women for employment as software programmers, graphic designers, or multimedia producers. A significant portion of the users (around 40–50%) continue learning on their own, or with help of friends and relatives.

Of the women who have not taken e-skills courses, a sizeable percentage have no computer skills (30% in Hungary, 44% in Spain, and 48% in Italy). (The Netherlands is not included, since almost all respondents have taken such courses.) The rest have some computer skills, as shown in Figure 28a, including some with advanced skills: 9% in Spain, 17% in Italy, and 21% in Hungary. For internet skills, skill levels are somewhat better. Those with no e-skills make up 39% of this subgroup in Italy and 18% in Spain, but only 8% in Hungary. Those with basic skills are 20% in Italy, 46% in Spain, and 41% in Hungary. And a sizeable group have advanced skills: 15% in Spain, 18% in Italy, and 31% in Hungary.

The analysis strongly suggests that training matters: competence levels are lower for those who are not trained (See Figure 28b). But there are some differences between countries. In Italy, most have not taken any e-skills course (109 out of 136) and this sample also shows the lowest e-skills levels of the four countries. In Hungary, too, most of them have no training (39 out of 44), but this sample has higher skill levels than in Italy: almost a third of them have acquired advanced digital competence on their own.

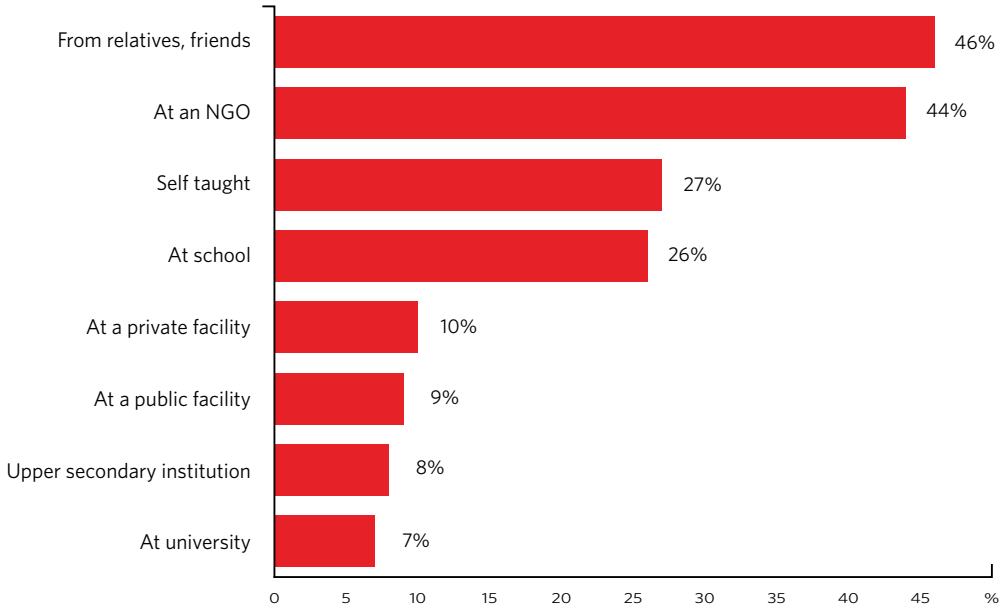
4.5.1 e-Skills as a catalyst for other types of training

The data also suggest that e-skills courses contribute to promoting participation in other training activities. Among immigrant women, 152 (41%) have taken a basic e-skills course and, on average, this group has attended 2.4 other courses of various kinds. A small minority (9%) of this group have *only* taken an e-skills course — the rest have participated in two or even three courses (45% and 46% respectively). If we look at the immigrant women who have *not taken* any e-skills courses, their participation in other kinds of training is lower compared with the group who took a basic e-skills course — only 12% (compated to 46%) participated in three or more other types of classes. This suggests that ICT training may act as a gateway to broader training and self-improvement behaviors.

Among respondents who have taken *two courses*, the other course is most often in a host-country language — either the official language (67%) or another host-country language (12%). Only 7% take an advanced e-skills course. Less than 15% have taken a vocational training course. Respondents who have attended *three courses* are more likely to take vocational training (84%) and advanced e-skills (31%) courses, and are equally likely to take language courses.

It seems likely that the first courses immigrants attend are those they consider most necessary to allow access to the social and training programs of the host-country (language and basic e-skills). After that, they take vocational training courses in order to get professional training certification, to upgrade their job skills, and to improve their position in the local job market.

Figure 30 Places for e-skills training



Less than one-tenth of the sample (32 respondents) have attended an *advanced e-skills course*. This group has also taken the highest number of training courses (3.3 on average) as compared to other groups — those who took a basic e-skills course (2.4), and those who attended at least one training course of any kind (2.0). This pattern illustrates the role of e-skills as a gateway for additional training opportunities, in sustaining educational and professional upgrading.

As to the type of courses taken by this group, *around 86% are related to vocational training* — roughly the same proportion as for the same subgroup who have attended a basic skills course (82%). In summary, even for these more advanced e-skills students, ICT may act as a catalyst for the world of training, multiplying the opportunities for adult education and supporting the upgrade of participants' professional competence.

Several studies and evaluation reports sponsored by the European Social Fund have documented the difficulties faced by immigrant women in accessing vocational training programs. In many cases they are required to provide a certificate of secondary education (i.e., high school diploma) — and for many this documentation is not available, even when requested from their embassies or cultural delegations. In addition, the course schedules are often inconvenient or impossible, especially for those who work more than 10 hours a day (as in home services). Finally, it is rare for employers to accommodate the training efforts of their immigrant employees. The reports also cite several positive steps taken by NGOs: organizing courses within a modular, flexible structure; establishing educational certification through curriculum assessment methods; arranging for reimbursement for participants' attendance; and supporting them with study facilities.

4.6 The importance of NGOs in e-skills training

People who are not familiar with their work might not associate social organizations with digital literacy courses. How important is their contribution to training in basic e-skills?

Respondents were asked where they learned ICT. The most often-cited answer is "self-taught" (27%), and the next most-cited, "at a nonprofit facility" (25%). Other options tend to be less accessible, due to admissions requirements (e.g., schools, upper secondary institutions, universities) or cost (private facilities). NGOs have other advantages as well: as they increasingly offer a range of non-formal training courses, they become a

valid adult training and lifelong learning channel.

Digital literacy courses offered by the participating NGOs cover a wide range of ICT-related training aspects. All of them offer training in basic use of PC and internet:

- Computer fundamentals (how to use the mouse, keyboard, etc.)
- Word processing (Word, Google Docs, etc.)
- Spreadsheets (for example, Excel)
- Presentation software (for example, PowerPoint)
- Internet browsing
- Email and chat
- Photo, video and music sharing (Flickr, YouTube, etc.)
- Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace)

And a few also cover advanced applications such as e-administration, social networking, web design, or multimedia production.

While NGOs offer this training outside of any formal training system, in most cases they provide a certificate. Even if it only proves attendance at the course, such certification has symbolic value for the participant and contributes to her self-esteem and empowerment. These certificates could become still more valuable if the NGOs could overcome the formalities required for official recognition — an effort that has so far been unsuccessful, despite some scattered efforts. The European Commission is currently promoting instruments to recognize the competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, creating an opportunity for NGOs to explore, in partnership with public bodies, how these certificates might formally validate a level of competence. At least for courses more closely related to professional training (for example, advanced ICT skills), NGO certification might be integrated into the formal vocational training system.

The NGOs consider basic e-skills critical to increase the employability of immigrant women. They report that the most common ICT activities, for both samples of women, are *editing the* CV and *job seeking*; the second most common activities are *study* and *self-training* (usually related to a training course taken at the NGO). The immigrant sample also uses ICT to communicate with relatives in their native countries.

The NGOs would like to make their digital literacy courses available to more participants, but they are limited by lack of resources. Obsolete facilities and equipment, as well as lack of funds, prevent them from updating their courses, adapting them for new audiences, or offering more specialized courses such as photo and video editing. One suggested strategy is to develop e-learning resources that could be shared by many organizations, such as the European project, *Key Competences for All*, which is developing an employability toolkit designed to be used in different languages and contexts (European Parliament & Council, 2006).

4.7 Summary of findings for the education and lifelong-learning path

PROVIDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING IS KEY TO ADVANCE THE EMPLOYABILITY OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Immigrant women clearly identify access to education and training opportunities as critical to improve their social and economic status in the EU, even though most (especially those with middle or high education level) have jobs that do not utilize their education or specialization.

Recognition of their educational credentials remains a central concern; e-government procedures, as an means of bureaucracy simplification, could be designed to alleviate this inequality.

Non-recognition of educational credentials is a barrier to formal education as well as to employability. Many immigrant women take advantage of non-formal training courses offered by NGOs, particularly courses in *language* and *basic computer skills*, and vocational courses for *homecare and nurse assistants and cultural mediators*. Many would undoubtedly welcome an opportunity for more formal training in these areas.

Immigrant women in Italy and Hungary show the lowest participation in training courses, reflecting both local conditions and migrant patterns. Training opportunities for immigrants in Italy are rather limited; while respondents in Hungary are mostly refugees and asylum seekers who are not formally entitled to the full range of public social services.

PARTICIPATION IN ICT SKILLS TRAINING AND EMPLOYABILITY VARIES AMONG COUNTRIES

Immigrant women in the Netherlands have the highest participation in basic e-skills training, but also the highest percentage that are neither working nor looking for a job.

Immigrant women in Spain have the second-highest participation in e-skills training, but also the highest unemployment rate. This reflects the national employment crisis: in January 2010, Spain's unemployment rate was 20%, the highest in the Eurozone and the second highest in EU27 (after Latvia).

In Hungary and Italy, high percentages of migrant women are self-learners who have reached medium or high levels of ICT competence on their own.

ICT KNOWLEDGE IS RELEVANT FOR EMPLOYABILITY

The three most common places to access ICT are: own home, social organizations, and home of friends or family.

There are strong correlations between length of residence and ICT skills level (the most recent immigrants tend to have the lowest digital competence level); between ICT skills level and educational background; and between ICT skills level and current employment status (immigrant women with basic or no ICT skills have higher levels of unemployment).

Immigrant women overwhelmingly use internet for looking for a job. They rate less important such other uses as practicing e-skills or taking online courses.

They indicate little appreciation for the opportunities that technology offers for entrepreneurship and commercial initiatives, reflecting the lack of specific support given by NGOs to this particular economic path — a topic for further research.

Innovative use of ICT (e.g., web 2.0 tools) could help them diversify and expand their social and professional networks, and thus their employment opportunities. However, social networking sites and blogs are little used by our sampled population.

DIGITAL COMPETENCE IS ESSENTIAL AND VARIES WIDELY

Immigrant women in general have a basic level of computer literacy, but there are differences among the countries. Italy has the highest percentage with *no* computer or internet skills, followed by Hungary and Spain. The Netherlands sample has the highest ICT skill levels.

E-Skills can help in overcoming language barriers, a significant factor in finding employment. Migrant women are motivated to acquire both host-country language *and* digital competence. The process of language acquisition could be facilitated or accelerated by ICT in various ways, including e-learning as well as the non-formal learning that occurs in digital literacy courses.

E-SKILLS COURSES ARE OFFERED BY PARTICIPATING NGOS

Social organizations are aware that digital competence has a broad range of benefits. Most use e-skills training not only to enhance language skills but also to promote self-esteem, autonomy, and social and cultural skills.

In keeping with their not-for-profit orientation, NGOs tend not to address the business potential of the internet. We suggest that immigrant women — as people who have already embarked on a major undertaking in immigrating — should be encouraged to assume a reasonable risk and create their own job or business endeavor.

The many opportunities presented by new technology constitute a challenge for the NGOs that serve as ICT learning channels for immigrant women. These important organizations need to adapt their strategies to fully address the needs of this population, taking advantage of e-learning and web 2.0 resources for social, professional, and commercial networking.

Chapter 5

The social inclusion path

"Women not only wanted, and want, to abolish and diminish any inequalities suffered, and acquire the right to be free to decide on their lives; but they have also made evident to everyone's eyes both problems and social and cultural behaviours so innovative that it would be impossible to define conceptually the contemporary world without taking into account their reflections and actions." — Alain Touraine (1997)

5.1 Introduction

The growth of migration to the European Union in the last decade has prompted a debate about strategies to assist immigrant groups to further their social inclusion in host societies. Social inclusion is emerging as a top policy agenda for the European Commission, and various programs are being designed and implemented to promote and increase immigrants' social and civic participation in EU host societies. Nevertheless, there are sometimes underlying assumptions relating to the definition of social inclusion that obscure the potential for immigrant groups to participate actively in shaping their social spaces, building new ties, and strengthening supportive social networks. It is vitally important to take into account the strategies developed by immigrants themselves, to cope with the demands and challenges of living within a culture different from their own.

The commonly-used definition of social inclusion assumes a binary process, *excluded* or *included* — a problematic assumption. As Sammers has noted, although *de facto* exclusion is a problem for immigrant groups in European societies, it is "often not specified what are immigrants exactly excluded from — the labor market, social welfare, political participation" (Sammers, 1998, p.126). We argue that a more useful way to conceptualize social inclusion for immigrant women is as a *path*, rather than as a binary concept: a path that has multiple roads and turns and that is by no means linear. By conceptualizing social inclusion as a path, we acknowledge from the start the multiplicity of ways in which immigrant women are socially active at *different stages*, recognizing that social inclusion is a process rather than a steady state.

We start from the premise that immigrant women are active participants in the societies where they live, and that they are capable of shaping and reshaping the social spaces they value. Applying Amartya Sen's (1999) definition of development and agency to immigrant women, we can say that there are many ways in which immigrant women "participate daily in shaping their spaces of residence in ways which enrich their lives" (p.1) — despite the fact that many of them are *de facto* excluded from the labor market. If we were to assess the capabilities of immigrant women to participate in the host country labor market exclusively on the basis of employment status or income level, we would limit our understanding of the role they play in their communities and their homes, and their contributions to the host societies.

There is no doubt that immigrant women experience several sources of unfreedom or deprivation, as conceptualized by Sen, such as discrimination in the labor market, lack of educational opportunities, and cultural traditions that may limit their agency and participation in different levels of society. However, this overt emphasis on the sources of unfreedom promotes "a victim perspective that can obstruct our understanding of the ways they manage to improve their situation" (Van Meeteren et al., 2009, p.882).

This study rather defines the social inclusion path for immigrant women as a product of the *capabilities* required to further promote social participation and mobilization, the *diversification* of social and civic roles, and the *opportunities* for expanding links into social networks.[29] In this context, we examine in particular the role that e-skills and communication technologies play in helping

29 This definition is in part based on the definition of interpersonal, intercultural and social and civic competencies outlined in the *European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Parliament & Council, 2006).

immigrant women along a social mobility path. Social inclusion is a complex phenomenon. Our definition is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to help shift the frame of reference for immigrant women from "victims" to "active participants," capable of shaping their social spaces and the societies where they now live.

In mapping some of the elements of the social inclusion path for immigrant women, we analyze five encompassing factors. (See Table 16 for the variables included in each factor.)

1. Awareness of the problems they face in the host society (i.e., sources of unfreedom) and of potential solutions to overcome these obstacles

2. Participation in different social spaces, indicated by their participation in social events and in non-governmental organizations

3. The diversity of their social networks, specifically as they relate to social participation and the labor market

4. The role of NGO-offered training and services in promoting social participation and social and civic skills

5. The role of digital competencies and ICT access and use, as a catalyst to promote further social participation

All these factors are cross-analyzed with respect to a common set of underlying variables: reasons for migrating, country of residence, geographic region of origin, and length of stay in the host country.

At the broadest level, the analysis of the social inclusion path would entail a full descriptive picture of the relevant social dimensions in the four European countries included in the research, a level of detail which is beyond the scope of this study. Here we focus on a secondary level of investigation, involving a detailed overview of the data, according to two main *dimensions of comparison*, aimed at identifying common elements and contrasting patterns among the four locales:

Table 16 Exploring the social inclusion path toward employability

Factors	Levels of primary analysis	Levels of secondary analysis
Immigration decision	Motivation to come to Europe	Multi-country analysis (Italy, Hungary, Spain, the Netherlands)
Immigration problems	Problems encountered in European receiving countries	Comparative analysis with the group of native-born women
	Recommendations to EU/national/ regional/city authorities	Importance of social and civic skills in relationship to employability
Social participation	Participation in social spaces	
	Participation in NGOs	
	NGO Membership	
	Diversity of social networks	
Role of NGOs	The role of NGOs	
	The value of NGO services	
Social and civic skills in the context of the EU's eight key competencies	Importance of social and civic skills in comparison to the other seven competencies	

- **Multi-country analysis.** A comparison of the four participating EU receiving countries: Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. The specific argument is that the context of integration plays a major role in shaping social inclusion processes as well as employability routes.

- **Parallel review**. Immigrant women are generally considered to suffer a double disadvantage, as *immigrants* and as *women*. We surveyed a comparison group of women native to the host country, to isolate some of the effects of migration on inclusion and employability. (As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this comparison is largely limited to a sample in Romania, and to a lesser extent, Hungary.)

Table 16 illustrates the levels of analysis of the social inclusion path.

5.2 What sources of unfreedom do immigrant women encounter in the European Union?

The 375 immigrant women in the sample are a diverse group, made up of 90 nationalities and 12 religions. They do have some commonalities:

- Most are between 15 and 49 years old. Most have substantial sentimental ties in the host country: many have a partner of that nationality and most have children living with them.

- Most are working and/or seeking work (86% of the immigrant sample, compared to 89% for the native-born).[30] Most are interested in pursuing further education or training opportunities (61% of immigrant women and 79% of the native-born).

- 81% of the immigrant women entered the EU within the last 10 years. (Many of the other 19% live in the Netherlands, long a destination for migrants.)

Their reasons for coming to Europe, however, are diverse: 52% came "to work," 32% "to join their families," 15% "to study," 11% for "political and humanitarian reasons," and 3.5% for "medical care."[31] (The predominant reasons for immigration differ among the receiving countries.)

Figure 31 illustrates the problems related to the social inclusion path and the acquisition of social and civic skills. These include language, employment issues, social marginalization (including racism and other forms of discrimination), and bureaucratic procedures (especially relating to residence permits and citizenship).

The difficulty most-often cited is learning the host-country *language*. Most of the women who cite no language problems come from former colonies of three of the countries sampled (Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands), or from other countries with a European official language or European-oriented school curriculum. Language problems were most often cited by women in the Netherlands (64% of that sample), Hungary (43%), and Italy (39%).

The challenges of finding *employment* appear to be more critical in Spain and Hungary, cited by two-thirds of the immigrants in those samples. Rates of unemployment are also higher in these two countries (75% and 77%, respectively). In the Netherlands, although 66% of the sample is unemployed, only 21% are currently looking for a job; 45% migrated primarily for the purpose of joining their families rather than for work (compared with only 21% of the immigrant women in Italy and 29% in Spain).

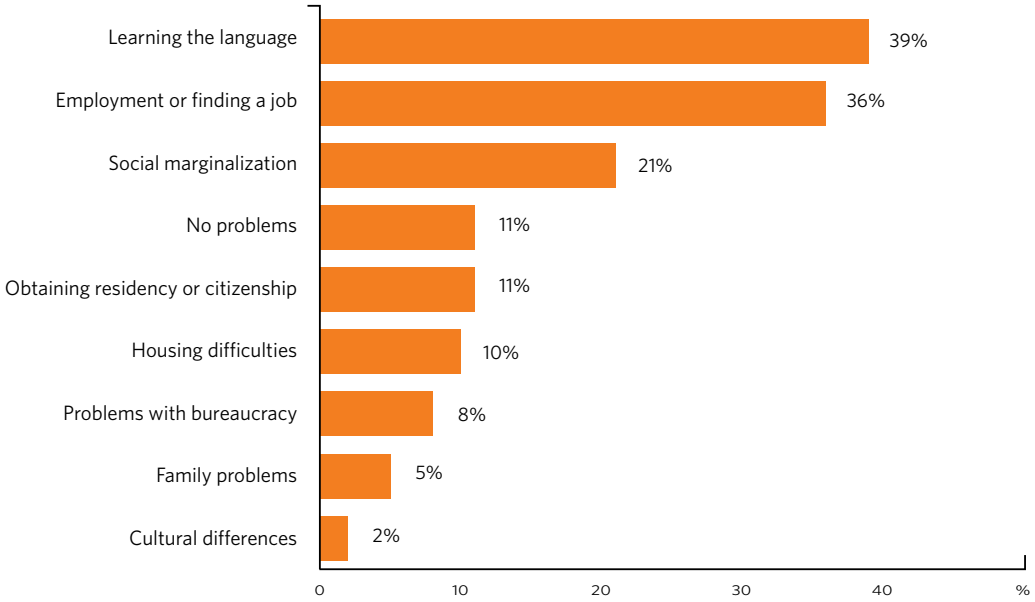
In Italy, by contrast, the large majority (71%) of the interviewed women currently work. The women in the Italian sample also report that their wages are adequate for their families' needs, more so than in the other countries (48% of cases, compared to 23–30%). On the other hand, those in Italy are less likely to have additional sources of income than those in the other countries (56%, compared to 90% in Hungary, 84% in the Netherlands, and 63% in Spain). Finally, 85% of the sample in Italy have medium- or high-skilled jobs — service workers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals, and clerks. In Spain and the Netherlands, by contrast, a large portion of the sample is employed primarily in elementary occupations (47% and 40%, respectively).

These contrasts reflect differences in motivation for immigration and also in family composition. In Italy, immigrant women tend to live on their own salary more than in the other countries. Fewer of the Italian sample have husbands/partners living with them (75%, as compared with 93% for the Netherlands, 85% for Hungary, and 80% for Spain).

30 "Native-born" refers to women born in the EU countries included in the research (Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Romania). The sample of native-born women includes 155 respondents, 70% of them in Romania and Hungary.

31 The total is not equal to 100%, as respondents could indicate up to two reasons for migrating to Europe.

Figure 31 Problems encountered by immigrant women in the EU



Note: The categories outlined in the graph were coded from an open-ended question, asking immigrant women to identify the problems encountered in the EU host country. The total is not equal to 100, as most provided more than one response.

Social marginalization is most often cited in the Netherlands and Hungary. The Netherlands also has the highest percentage who have already applied for citizenship (80%, as compared with around one third (or less) in Hungary, Spain, and Italy). A key factor in social marginalization is the difficulty of learning the Dutch and Magyar languages, as an avenue into the host country culture.

Applying for *citizenship* is cited as a problem most often by immigrants of five years or less (53%); it is most cited also by those living in Spain (77%). In Italy, a significant percentage has no interest in obtaining citizenship (23% — three times higher than elsewhere). Many in Italy also report that citizenship is a difficult objective (14%). Finally, of those immigrant women who cited problems with *bureaucracy* (as, in their words, "complex, contradictory, and puzzling"), half are resident in Italy and another 36% in Hungary.

For the group of native-born women,[32] the most-cited issues were finding or improving their job (46%), "promotion of women's rights" (15%), and "provision of access to higher education" (15%). They do not mention bureaucracy as an area for improvement, even though most report dissatisfaction with public services (60%, including 18% "not at all" satisfied and 42% "somewhat" satisfied).

5.3 Immigrant women offer their suggestions

The respondents were also asked to suggest ways of improving their life conditions in Europe. Note that this issue has broader implications: national policies on immigration flows and related issues — especially equal opportunity regulations (interpreting EU legislation) — are important factors conditioning the integration processes.

Well over half gave full responses to this open-ended question (82%) — almost as many as responded to the question about "problems they encountered" (89%). The issue most often cited is *employment services*, followed by "simplification of the bureaucracy," "improvement of services," and the promotion of "women's rights." (See Figure 32.)

32 Only 98 of the native-born sample answered this question (63% compared to 82% of the immigrant women).

A crucial issue for immigrant women is the effectiveness of *public services*, and specifically the availability of tailored social support, training, and employment programs. The opportunity to access local services to improve their health and their opportunities — social, cultural, training, and employment — is critical to their self-esteem and to capacity-building processes. One-fifth of the sample (24%) cited a need for improvement of services addressed to immigrants, with a slightly higher percentage reported in Hungary. Many also cited a greater need for receiving specific information in the native language, particularly in the Netherlands and Hungary — countries with more difficult languages to master.

Immigrant women were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of public services. More than 60% of the employed group expressed *dissatisfaction* with public services in supporting mobility and employment, responding either "not at all" satisfied (35%) or only "somewhat" satisfied (27%). This category showed wide variation, both between countries and within countries. The Netherlands fares the worst, with 55% responding that they were "not at all" satisfied. Italy fares slightly better, with 37% expressing dissatisfaction with public services. (Rome, however, represents a low point, with only 35% *favorable* to public services, rating their satisfaction as "fair.") Spain shows regional variation between southern and northern areas: 30% of the women employed living in the southern regions showed high level of dissatisfaction with public services; while 45% of women in Cataluña and 29% in Madrid rated their level of satisfaction as "fair."

In terms of immigrants' region of origin, those from Asia are the least satisfied (48% report services "not at all" useful). Those from Eastern European countries are the most satisfied (73% rate services "somewhat/fairly" useful).

Satisfaction with public services is strongly related to the reported quality of the *bureaucracy*. In three of the countries studied, significant and comparable percentages of respondents expressed a desire for simplified bureaucratic procedures affecting them and their families: 32% in Spain (mostly in Cataluña, with its two official languages), 26% in Hungary, and 25% in Italy.

In terms of region of origin, the American-born women are the least satisfied (30% negative) followed by Asians (29%). In contrast, the women born in the former Communist states of Eastern and Central Europe, who have passed part of their lives under centralized bureaucratic systems, were less likely to express criticism of the bureaucracy (15%).

Slightly more than one-tenth of the immigrant women cited "*promotion of women's rights*" as a priority for improvement. This group comes primarily from Africa (40%) and America (26%); most are living in Spain (48%) and Italy (26%). This group tends to be slightly younger than the sample average, even though most migrated more than six years ago (73%). They tend to have higher levels of education, and almost half of them have applied for citizenship (47% compared to 35% of the overall sample). They are more likely to work as artists, organizers, translators, promoters, and teachers (42% compared to 29% of the whole sample), and are somewhat more likely to be members of an NGO (29% compared to 20% of the whole sample). They are less likely to pursue vocational training or language courses, but more likely to attend e-skill courses (52% compared to 40%). They are also more likely to use PC and internet weekly, and they tend to have higher digital skill levels.

As emphasized by many authors, women worldwide have the capacity to play a leadership role — in managing difficult issues, in problem solving, and in mediation and negotiation.[33] The roles of immigrant women within the host country are complex, with much of their time devoted to the care of the family (children, the elderly, disabled, etc.). *More efficient public services, tailored to meet women's specific needs, can maximize their potential contribution and their opportunities to express their roles of social and economic agent.*

5.4 Paving the social inclusion path: Participation of immigrant women in social and civic spaces

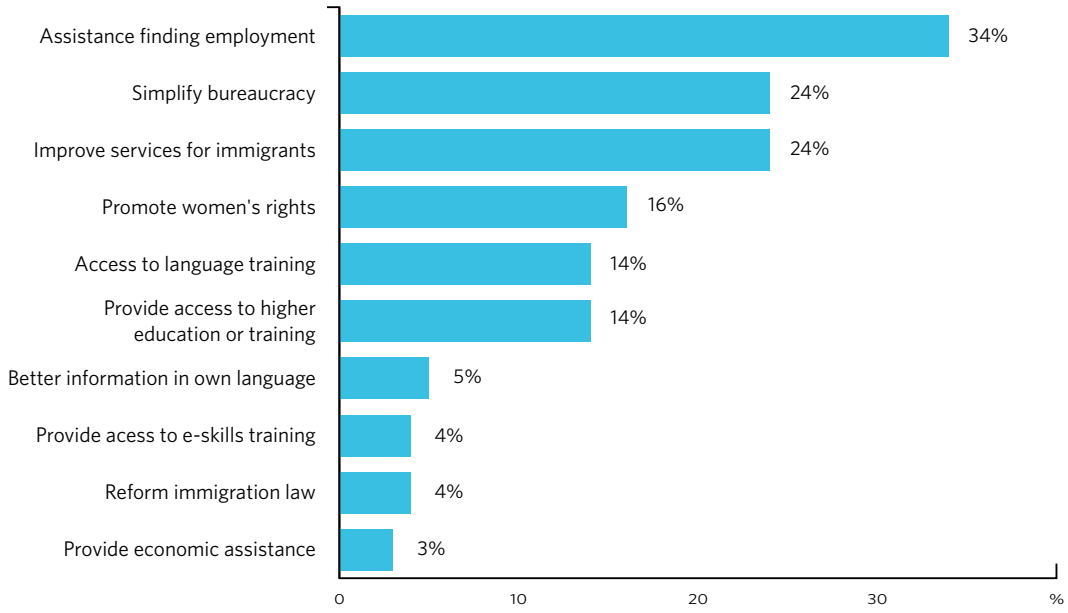
5.4.1 Participation in social events

Immigrant women in the sample, like the native-born sample, are active participants in various social and civic spaces.[34] Nearly all of them reported attending social events frequently: around 98% for the Netherlands and Hungary, and 90–93% for Italy and Spain. Among the wide range of types of social interaction, the immigrant group and the native-born group showed somewhat

33 Among them are Nobel Prize winners Muhammad Yunus and Amartya Sen.

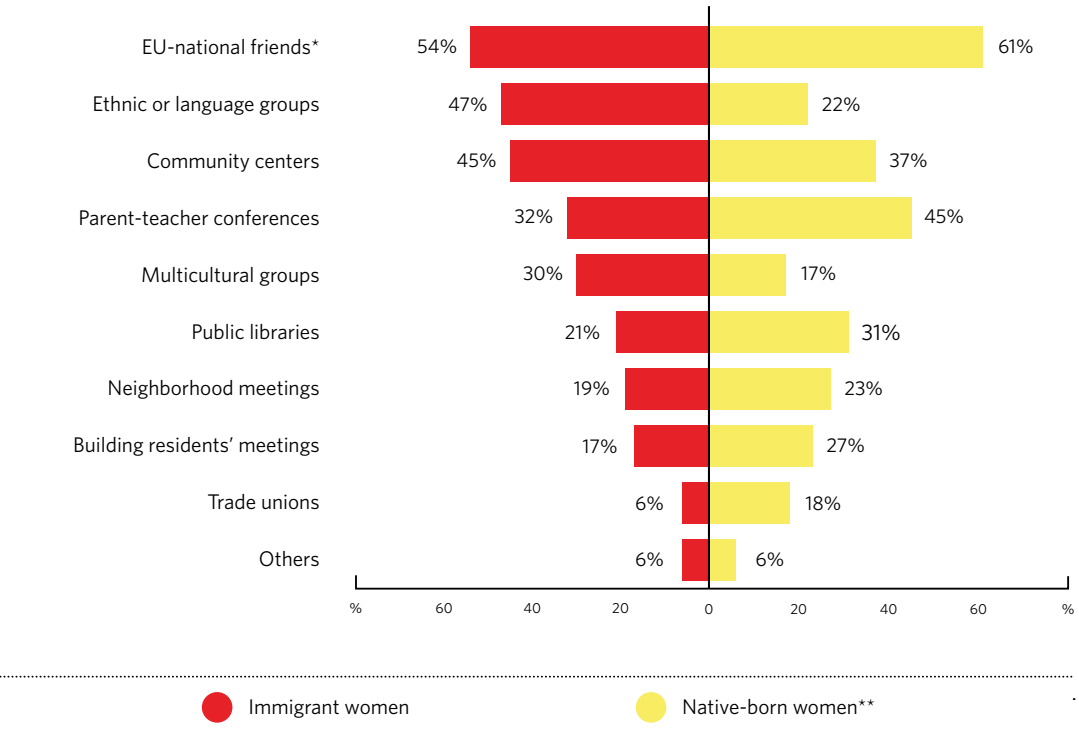
34 The findings presented in this section refer to questions with multiple answers; for this reason the answers do not equal 100%.

Figure 32 Suggestions for improvements offered by immigrant women



Note: Percentages are based on cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question)

Figure 33 Social and civic participation of immigrant and native-born women



Note: Percentages are based on cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).
*EU-National friends refers to citizens of the host country.
** Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Table 17 Social and civic participation of immigrant women (by host country)

Social and civic events	Italy	Spain	Netherlands	Hungary
Parent-teacher conferences	28%	39%	32%	26%
Building residents' meetings	12%	24%	7%	23%
Public libraries	18%	36%	35%	14%
Neighborhood meetings	5%	11%	63%	14%
Ethnic or language groups	62%	36%	40%	51%
EU-national friends	63%	48%	38%	67%
Community centers	25%	47%	87%	36%
Multicultural groups	27%	22%	49%	33%
Trade unions	8%	3%	3%	9%
Total number by country	**122**	**117**	**68**	**43**

Note: Percentages are based on cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

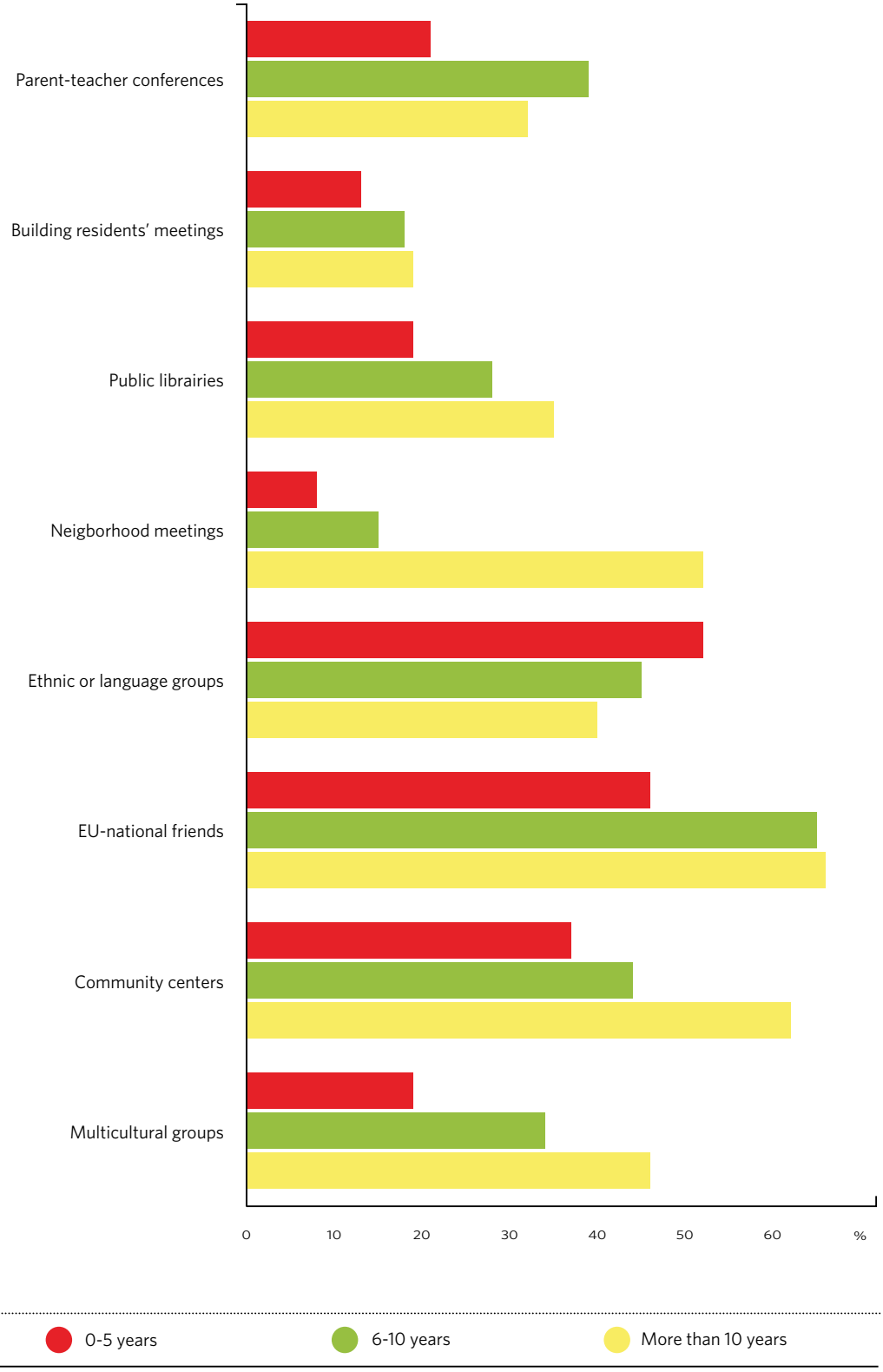
different combinations of activities (see Figure 33). The immigrant women are more active in more ethnic and multicultural groups, while the native-born women are more involved in meeting their children's teachers, joining public libraries, and meeting with neighbors (i.e., building residents). It is notable that, for both groups, the most regular social participation involves meeting with host-country friends (54% for immigrant women and 61% for the native-born group).

Table 17 shows the breakdown of types of social interaction of the immigrant women by country of residence. Respondents in the Netherlands show stronger participation at the local community level, focused on community centers. In Italy and Hungary, immigrant women's social participation is dominated (more or less equally) by interaction with EU-national friends and with their own ethnic or language groups. In Spain, respondents participate almost equally with EU-national friends and with the local community centers. Immigrant women in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands show substantial involvement in their children's schools (28%, 39%, and 32% respectively). The lower participation in Hungary in parent-teacher meetings is explained in part by the fact that a smaller percentage of immigrant women in that country have children.

Another perspective to analyze the ways in which immigrant women shape and reshape their social spaces is to consider *length of residence* in the host country. If we view social inclusion as a path rather than as a condition, the period of stay in the host country may be a useful proxy to indicate how social participation adapts and transforms over time, as immigrant women grow more aware of the various spaces available to them and more knowledgeable of the cultural and social codes of the host countries, and as their family, employment, and other circumstances change.

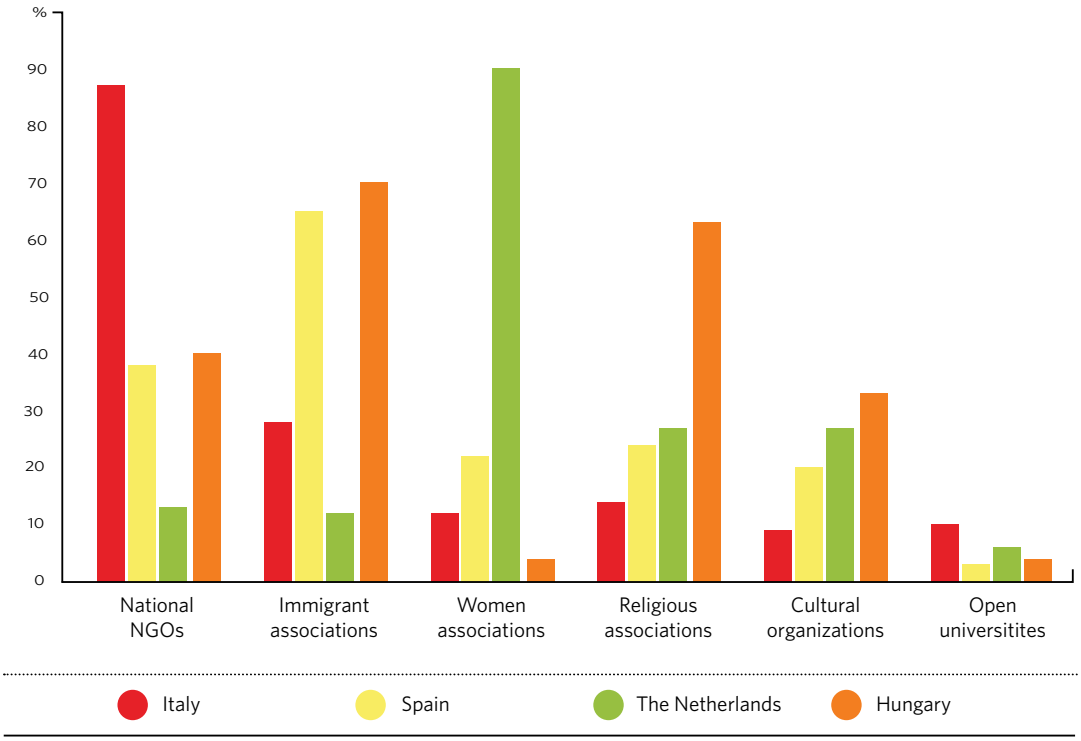
The vast majority of immigrant women in our sample migrated to the EU host country within the last ten years. 40% migrated between 2004 and 2009, and 42% between 1999 and 2003. The remaining 18% have been living in the country of residence longer than ten years. Hungary and Spain show the highest number of recent immigrants: 73% and 56% of women migrated in the last five years, compared to just 32% in Italy. The Netherlands shows the highest proportion that arrived *more* than ten years ago.

Figure 34 Participation in social and civic events (by length of residence)



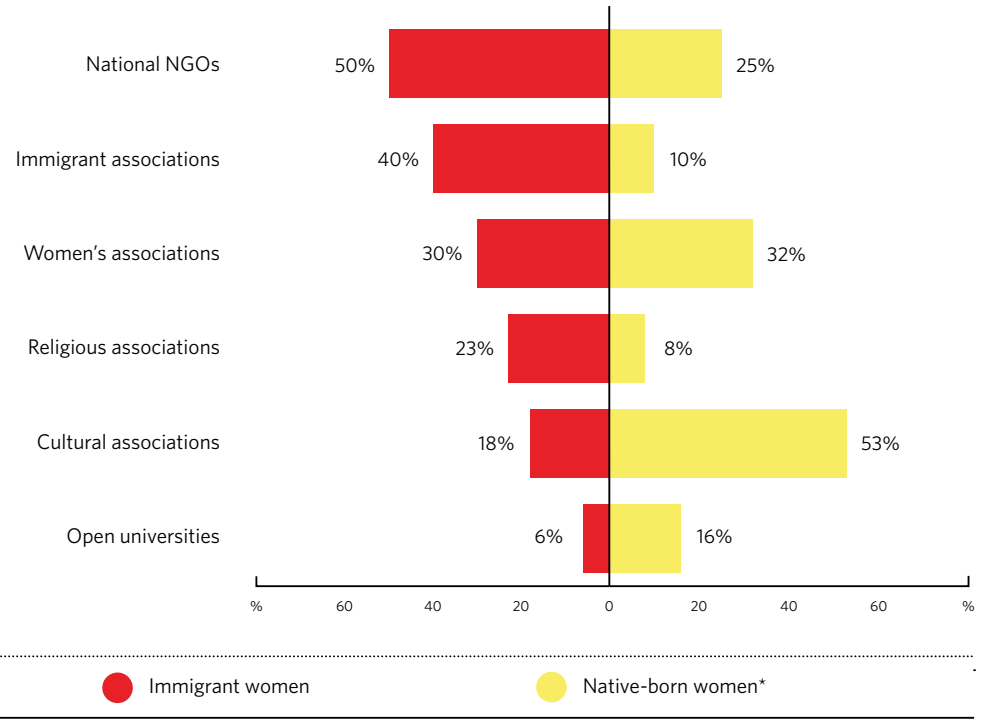
Note: Percentages are based on cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 35 Participation of immigrant women in NGOs, by country of residence



Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 36 Participation of immigrant and native-born women in NGOs



Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).
* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Controlling for all other factors, the length of stay appears to influence how immigrant women reshape their social participation in the host country. As Figure 34 shows, participation in building residents' meetings, neighborhood gatherings, and public libraries increases steadily with the length of residence. Even more striking is the increased participation with EU-nationals, community centers, and multicultural groups. Interestingly, social participation in events with own ethnic or language group decreases significantly — by almost 20% — for immigrant women that have lived in the host country for more than ten years.

5.4.2 Participation in non-governmental organizations

The participation of immigrant women in various NGOs is used here as another indicator of social and civic involvement. Although the nature and purpose of individuals' participation was not captured in the survey, the diversity of NGOs they frequent is a reflection of their civic engagement and, in some cases, of the social issues they value. NGO participation is affected by a wide variety of factors, ranging from personal motivation to the availability of organizations near their communities.

Overall, 88% of the immigrant women in our sample participate in NGO activities. Immigrant women in Italy and the Netherlands show the highest participation in NGOs, with roughly 80% participating in more than one organization. Hungary and Spain show the highest percentage of women who do not attend any organization (39% and 21% respectively).

The mix of activities offered by NGOs varies significantly between countries, as do the predominant types of NGO the women attend. The most-cited organizations in the Netherlands are *women's associations*; in Italy, they are the large *national organizations*; and in Hungary and Spain, *immigrant associations* (see Figure 35). In contrast, for the group of native-born women, the most prevalent organizations are cultural organizations and women's associations (see Figure 36).

Women cited as the most useful channels for connecting with NGOs "recommendations from family and friends" (44%), "community informal channels" (16%), "courses" (12%), and "the street" (9%). Again, if we think of social integration as a process or a path, we can understand that participation in NGO activities serves several interrelated functions for immigrant women. In addition to providing assistance with a range of practical challenges, and in addition to the specific training programs they offer, NGOs also serve as a kind of *social space* — less familiar than the circle of family and ethnic community, certainly, but more readily navigated than schools, jobs, and agencies. The NGOs tend to be well aware of this function as a social "gateway," and they design their programs to meet their clients halfway, often with bilingual staff and written materials and with a social networking component.

5.4.3 NGO membership as an indicator of social participation

Another indicator of social and civic involvement of immigrant women is their *membership* in non-governmental organizations. NGO membership, although not the only one, is an important indicator of civic engagement, social participation, and inclusion that is used in many EU national statistics and surveys. In this study, "membership" refers to any association, cooperative or mutual society to which the interviewed women belong, and is not limited to the NGOs supporting the survey.

Overall, we found that 20% of the immigrant women are members of nonprofit organizations, as are 31% of the group of native-born women.

The members of NGOs tend to have more extensive *education*, as compared to the rest of the sample. They have also attended a higher number of lifelong learning courses than non-members: 49% (compared to 16%) attended three or more learning/training initiatives since immigrating; 69% (compared to 49%) participated in EU-country language lessons; 59% (compared to 38%) have taken e-skill courses; and 51% (compared with 26%) attended vocational courses. A similar pattern holds for the native-born women: for members of NGOs, 88% have a secondary education degree or higher; and most have taken four or more training/learning courses, at a rate four times that of non-members.

The level of *digital skills* is significantly higher for those immigrant women who are members of NGOs. 62% report medium/high competence with computers, compared to 33% of non-members; and 65% report medium/high competence with internet (compared to 43% of non-members).[35] Substantial numbers also make use of digital social networking. For the

35 The degrees of e-skills knowledge and practice were defined by applying the Eurostat reference Model for the Community Survey on ICT usage (in households and by individuals).

group of immigrant women that are NGO members, this primarily means using internet communication channels (43% use chat or videocalls) and participating in online courses (21%, as compared to just 6.5% of immigrant women who are not members of NGOs). For the group of native-born women, NGO members are more likely to be members of online "social networks" (41%, as compared to 18% of non-members) and to participate in an online forum (8%, as compared to 6% of non-members).

Here, too, there are significant differences between countries of residence. Computer skills are especially strong among members of Spanish NGOs: 71% report medium/high skill level, compared to 61% in Italy and 58% in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, however, internet skills are stronger: 79% rate medium/high, compared to 64% in Spain and 62% in Italy. This pattern also holds for the group of native-born women: NGO members report a higher level of knowledge and use of computers (77%, compared to 59% for non-members) and internet (83%, compared to 52% for non-members).

Internet use is also substantially higher for NGO members. The immigrant women who are NGO members utilize the internet to support their children's studies and for online banking at a rate three times that of non-members. They also access public administration online services at a rate two-and-a-half times that of non-members, and they are twice as likely to use the internet for work or for writing in online forums and blogs.

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

If membership in NGOs represents a greater degree of social integration and civic involvement, we might expect to see a positive correlation with employability. Employability is measured here by four dimensions: employment rate, job type, satisfaction with current employment status, and wages. We examine each of these three factors in relation to the level of social integration and civic involvement.

1. **Employment rate** — NGO membership may be an asset for obtaining a job for both immigrant and native-born women. Among the immigrant women, 58 were employed at the time of the interview (44% of the sample), 74 wereNGO members (47% of the employed group), and 23 were employed directly by an NGO (15% of the employed group).

   To view the numbers another way: 64% of the NGO members in the sample have jobs (compared to 38% of the non-members), and approximately 40% of that group are employed in the nonprofit sector itself. It may be that the women who are NGO members are particularly attracted to that field because of their interest in social and civic issues, or it may be that membership provides an important network for finding employment in the nonprofit field. A similar pattern holds for the native-born women: NGO members are more likely to be employed than non-members.

2. **Job type —** The immigrant women who are members of NGOs are somewhat more likely than non-members to be self-employed (18% compared to 14%), and far more likely to work as entrepreneurs (13% compared to 1%). For the group of native-born women, we see a somewhat different pattern: NGO members are much more likely than non-members to be self-employed (14% compared to 3%), but less likely to be "entrepreneurial" (0% compared to 5%). (See Table 18.) Overall, we can say that, for the immigrant women, NGO membership appears to support the development of professional and entrepreneurial skills, while for the native-born group, membership is associated with developing a managerial rather than an entrepreneurial career.

3. **Job satisfaction** — For immigrant women, NGO membership is associated with a somewhat higher level of satisfaction with the current job (70% compared to 62%). Again, this suggests the overall benefit of social and civic skills in assisting integration into society and the workforce. However, for the native-born group, this pattern is reversed: 74% of NGO members express at least partial satisfaction with their job, compared to a striking 87% of non-members. (See Table 19.) This may in fact reflect their motivation for joining an NGO, as a path to finding a better job — since women born in the host country are less in need of the basic acculturation services (and social and civic skills) supported by NGOs.

   The research team expected to find that the level of job satisfaction reflects (in part) whether the job is related to the individual's training or field of study — that is, its degree of *congruence with career aspirations*. For the immigrant women, however, there appears to be no correlation between job satisfaction and

job congruence with training: for NGO members, both job satisfaction and congruence are higher than for non-members — but for both these groups of immigrant women, job satisfaction is much *higher* than congruence (62% compared to 43%, and 70% compared to 51%).

Here again, there was a difference between the immigrant women and the native-born women. For native-born women, NGO members were actually *less* satisfied with their jobs than non-members (74% compared to 87%), even though the jobs were mostly related to their training (81%).

The finding that the immigrant women are satisfied with jobs that are not congruent with their previous study or training probably reflects their sense of having found a new life. The migration to Europe in effect divides one's life into two parts — the part "before" and the part "after" the trip. The immigrant group are also more "satisfied" with success in finding any job, especially for the 52% who came to Europe to find work; and they are no doubt aware that many remain unemployed (like 57% of the survey sample).

4. **Remuneration** — The survey asked respondents two key questions relating to remuneration: whether they considered their employment income as "enough to cover the basic needs of their families"; and whether they had other sources of income within the family. The responses to these two questions were strikingly similar across all four sub-groups, varying within a 10-percentage point range (see Table 20). Most reported having another source of income; and only a minority of each group considered their remuneration sufficient for the family's needs. The sub-group *least likely* to have an additional source of family income were the immigrant women who are *not* members of an

Table 18 Type of job by NGO membership (immigrant and native-born women)

Type of Job	Immigrant women		Native-born women*	
	Non-members	NGO members	Non-members	NGO members
Employee	85%	69%	92%	86%
Self-employed	14%	18%	3%	14%
Entrepreneurial	1%	13%	5%	0%

*Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Table 19 Job satisfaction and NGO membership (immigrant and native-born women)

Type of Job	Immigrant women		Native-born women*	
	Non-members	NGO members	Non-members	NGO members
Job related to training	43%	51%	82%	81%
Satisfied with current job	62%	70%	87%	74%

Note: Percentages are based on responses of "partially" or "completely satisfied."
* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Table 20 Income and NGO membership

Type of Job	Immigrant women		Native-born women*	
	Non-members	NGO members	Non-members	NGO members
Income from job enough to cover needs	36%	43%	33%	33%
Other sources of income	68%	70%	73%	75%

*Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Table 21 Channels to improve employment (by country of residence)

Channel for finding jobs	Netherlands n = 38	Hungary n = 42	Italy n = 127	Spain n = 120
NGOs	89%	45%	43%	71%
Family and friends	24%	71%	71%	63%
Informal community channels	40%	24%	14%	9%
Public employment agencies	29%	19%	10%	49%

NGO, at 68%. The sub-group most likely to consider their remuneration sufficient were the immigrant women who are members of a NGO, at 43%.

5.5 The importance of social networks to advance employment outcomes

The value of social networks in advancing employment opportunities for individuals has long been recognized. Drever & Hoffmeister (2008) found that the extent to which an individual is able to establish diverse social connections can be an important factor in her successful incorporation into the labor market and her upward mobility. Numerous field studies indicate that a large portion of workers find their jobs through their social networks: in Europe and the United States it is estimated that about half of all jobs are obtained through social contacts (Armengol, 2006). Online professional networks such as LinkedIn, Xing, and Viadeo are accessed by many job-seekers — as well as by medium and large enterprises — around the world.

According to Drever & Hoffmeister (2008), for immigrant communities, discussions of the importance of social connections for finding jobs hinges primarily on one question: "Does the path to successful economic absorption lie in developing contacts with co-ethnics or in assimilating into the mainstream?" (p.427). For example, a study on immigrant populations and employment outcomes in Germany found that nearly half of all immigrant-origin job changes were to jobs found through ethnic networks, and these channels were even more important for immigrants who faced higher barriers to employment (the youngest and the least educated) (p.427). Other studies (see Alba & Nee, 1997) argue that the ability of immigrant groups to establish connections to networks outside their ethnic groups is a key factor, not only to improve their employment opportunities but also to soften cultural differences and facilitate social inclusion in the host society.

We asked respondents to cite the channels that were most important for them in finding employment. The overwhelming majority of both, the immigrant women

and the native-born group cited recommendations from friends / family and NGOs as the most important links to the job market (see Figure 37). The most effective network channels, as cited by respondents, differ by country of residence: in the Netherlands and Spain it is NGOs (and, in Spain, employment agencies as well); in Italy and Hungary, family and friends networks are rated most effective. (See Table 21.)

If we conceive of the process of social inclusion as a path rather than a condition, we might expect that longer residence would expand the composition of immigrants' social networks. The responses confirm that the importance of NGOs increases significantly with the length of residence, while the opposite trend holds for the importance of family and friends. And, as might be expected, the value of informal community channels increases: only 17% of the more recent immigrants cite them as important, as compared to almost 30% of those who immigrated at least 10 years ago. (See Figure 38.)

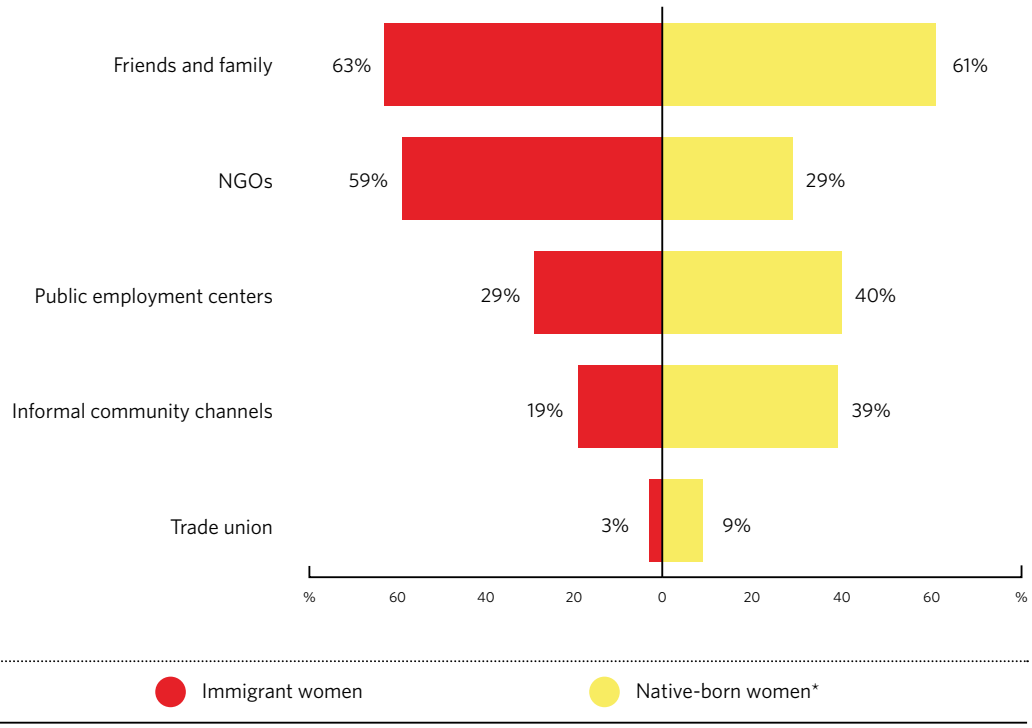
The diversity of social networks, established over time, is a critical factor for understanding the opportunities for immigrant women in the host-country labor maket. There may also be a "multiplier effect," as social connections not only lead to jobs but also serve as links to further social participation, including access to ICT training and use. Becoming more connected through particular social relationships and activities creates momentum for progressing along each of the paths of learning and inclusion.

5.6 Social and civic skills in the context of the key competencies

The key competencies for lifelong learning are a set of critical capabilities outlined in the 2006 recommendation of the European Parliament & Council. As defined in that document, "social and civic skills" are understood to include "personal, interpersonal, and intercultural competence."[36]

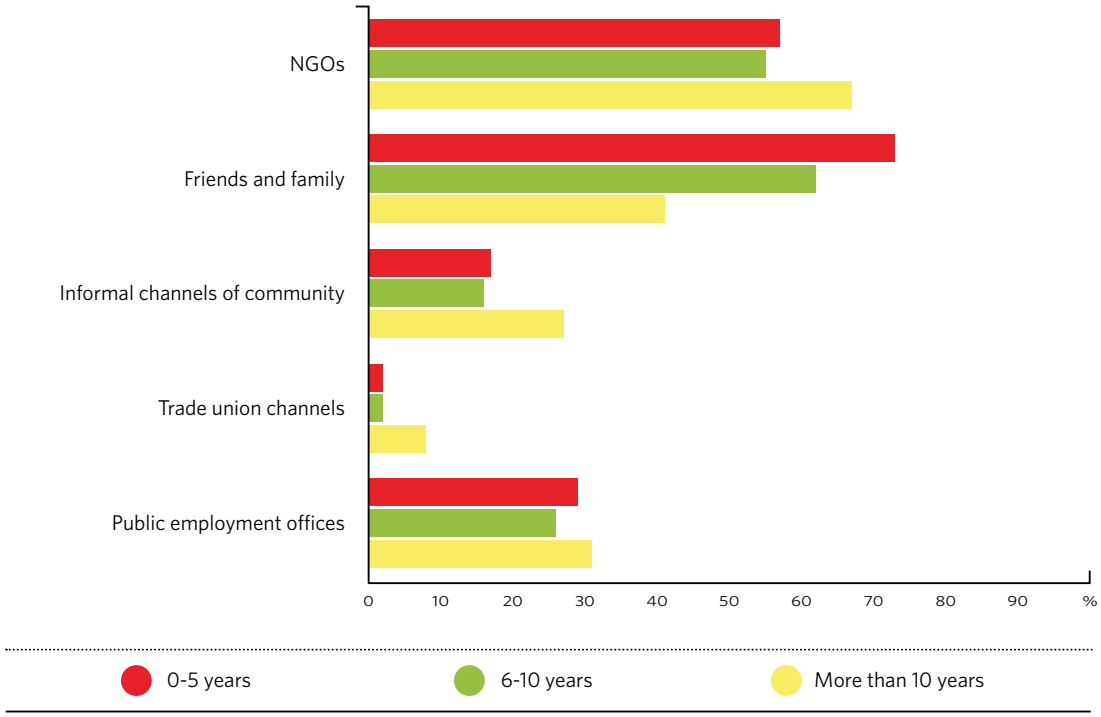
36 The recommendations (European Parliament & Council, 2006) state that "These skills cover all forms of behavior that allow individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence allows individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concept and structure and a commitment to active and democratic participation. . . . Civic competence is based on knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights. . . . Skills for civic competence relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in the public domain, and to display solidarity and interest in solving problems affecting the local and wider community. This involves critical and creative reflections and constructive participation in community or neighborhood activities, as well as decision-making at all levels, from local to national and European level, in particular through voting" (p.17).

Figure 37 Most-valued channels to improve, keep, or find employment



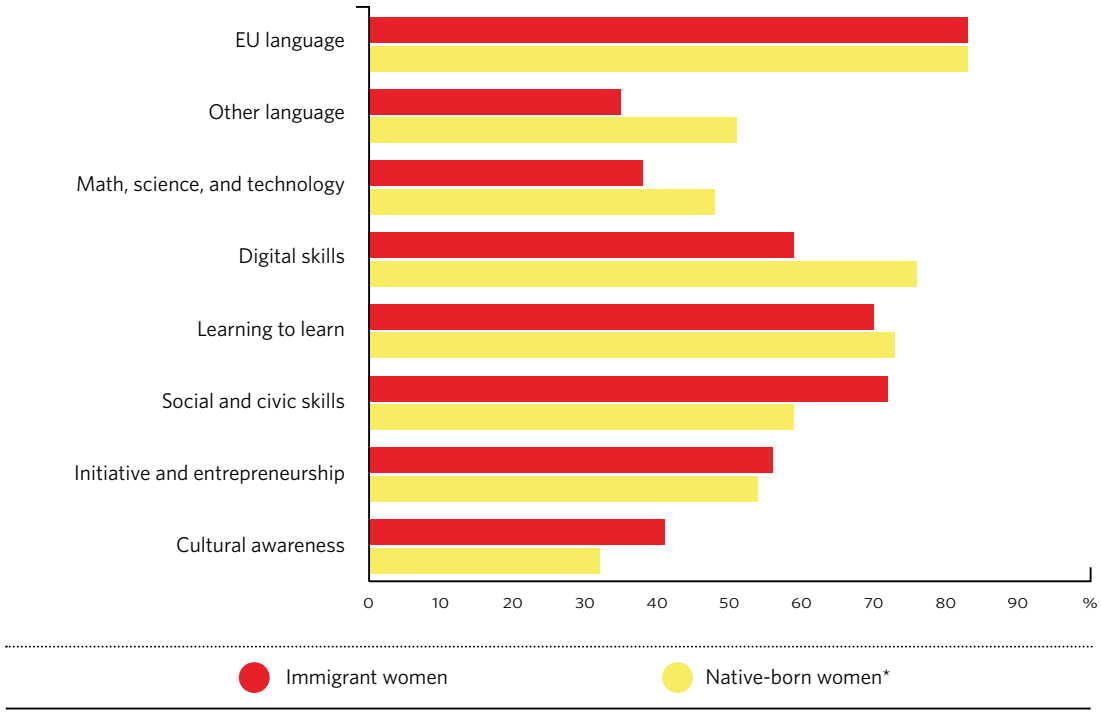
Note: Percentages are based on total number of cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 38 Value placed on social networks for employment (by length of residence)



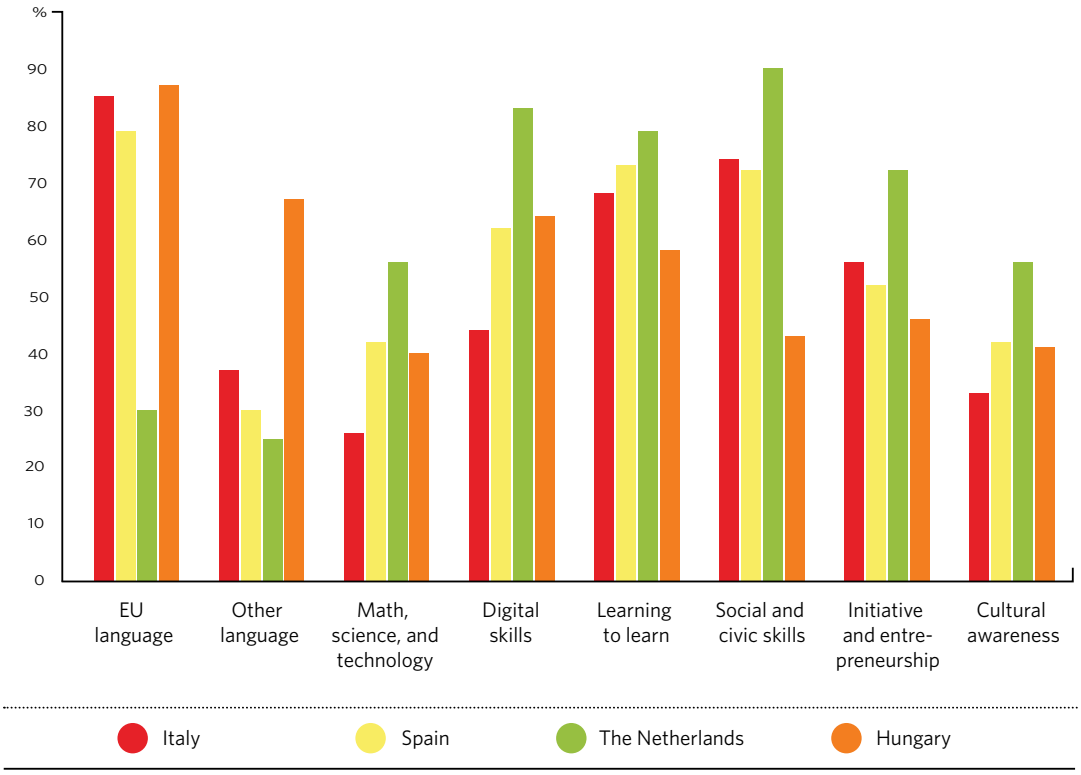
Note: Percentages are based on cases — that is, the total number of responses (where respondents can give more than one response to a question).

Figure 39 Self-assessment of the degree of relevance of key lifelong-learning skills to improve work situation



Note: Percentages show the ratio of "highly relevant" responses in relation to total responses (a rating of 4 or 5 on the scale of 0 to 5).
*Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Figure 40 Self-assessment of the relevance of the key lifelong-learning skills to improve work situation (by country of residence)



Note: Percentages show the ratio of "highly relevant" responses in relation to total responses (i.e., a rating of 4 or 5 on the scale of 0 to 5).

For our study, both groups of women (immigrants and native-born) were asked to assess the importance of each of the eight key competencies to improve their employability. *Social and civic skills* ranked second in importance for immigrant women, after language of the host country. Almost 75% rated social and civic skills as *highly relevant to improve their employment opportunities* in the host-country labor market. For the group of native-born women, in contrast, social and civic skills ranked fifth. (See Figure 39.)

A comparison of host countries shows that respondents in the Netherlands (with its long-standing immigrant community) value these skills especially highly. Respondents in Hungary show relatively low valuations, except for learning the host-country language, digital skills, and "learning to learn." (See Figure 40.)

The respondents who gave high relevance scores for "social and civic skills" (i.e., a score of 4 or 5 on a scale of 0-5) had significant shared characteristics:

- They showed a higher degree of integration into the host society, and they reported stronger ability in the host-country language. (74% reported having "medium-high" competence in the written language, compared to 52% for respondents who rated social and civic skills as less important.)

- They have stronger social connections and higher levels of civic participation. A remarkable 94% participate in NGOs (compared to 72% for the group who rated "social and civic skills" lower). 18% are associated with three or more NGOs (compared to 6%) and 27% are *members* of NGOs (compared to 10%).

- They have stronger educational background, both in terms of formal certification (66% have at least a high school diploma, compared to 51% of the others) and in educational activities in the host country. 50% of them have attended e-skills courses, compared to 23% of the others, and 39% have vocational training, compared to 23% of the others.

Figure 41 NGO services used by immigrant and native-born women

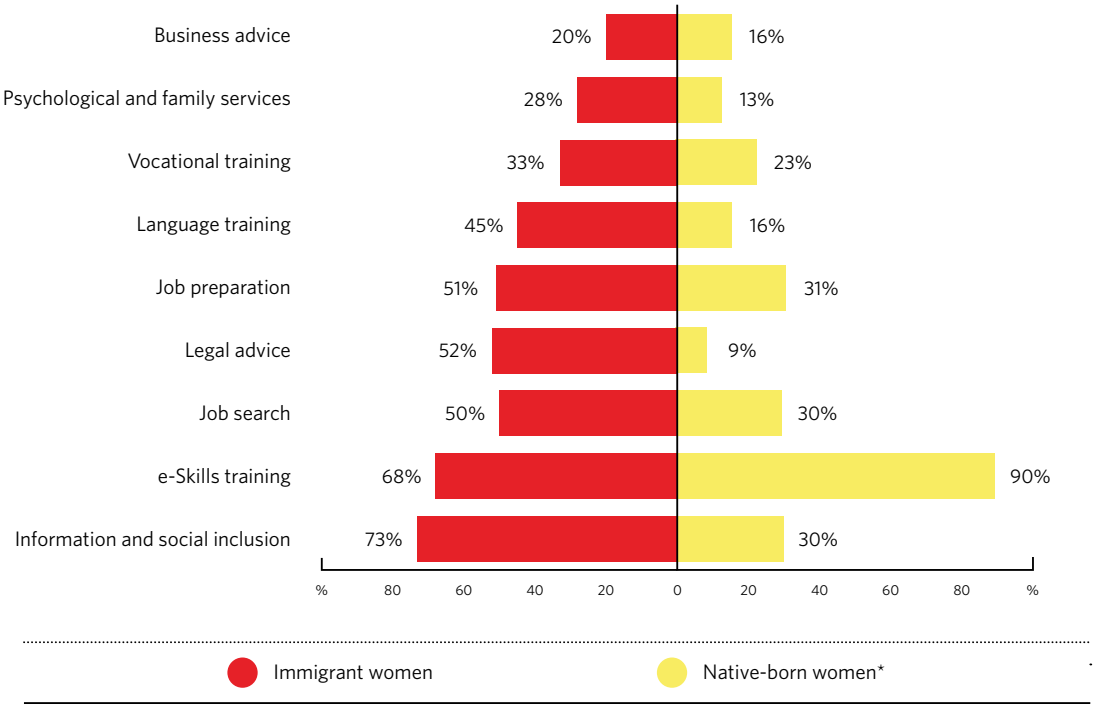
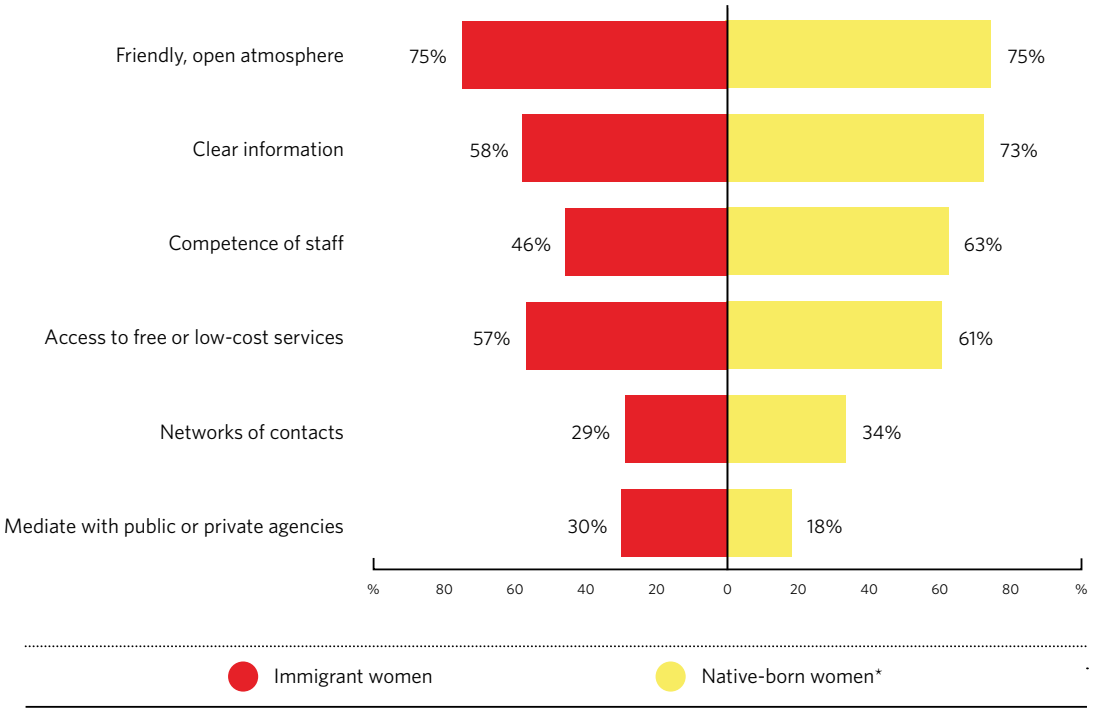


Figure 42 Most-appreciated aspects of NGO services



*Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

- They have longer experience in the host country: 66% arrived at least six years ago, compared to 43% of the others. They tend to be older as well: the high-rating group includes 57% of those under 25; 73% of those ages 25–49; and 82% of those 50 or older. (The same pattern holds also for the group of native-born women.)

- They are more likely to be employed (51%, compared to 33% of the others). (This pattern does not hold for the native-born group, however, where both subgroups have similar rates of employment.) Note that employment correlates also with participation in an NGO: for those who do *not* attend NGO activities, the employment rate is only 24%, compared to 46% for those who attend one or more NGOs.

5.7 The importance of NGOs

The study centered on 32 very diverse NGOs, varying in size, social mission, and the range of services they offer. All the organizations are active in social inclusion, e-inclusion, and educational issues. All are members of one or more regional, national, or European networks. At the same time, they have diverse legal status, as associations, foundations, unions, or charities. They also have different missions: they may focus primarily on the educational, social, or cultural dimension; and they may be generalist or specialist in orientation — focused primarily on immigrants' issues, for example, or on e-inclusion. But all play an important role in assisting immigrant women with a range of services.

5.7.1 Use of services

Figure 41 shows a high level of use of NGO services by immigrant women, ranging from 20% who accessed "business advice" to more than 70% who accessed general information and social inclusion services.

In general, the immigrant women reported using NGO services far more frequently than the group of native-born women — with one notable exception. While both groups made frequent use of NGOs' e-skills training programs, a stunning 90% of native-born women used this service, as compared to 68% of the immigrant group. For the immigrant women, e-skills training ranked second to general information and social inclusion services (cited by 73%).

Also striking was the difference in use of NGOs' legal services: 52% of the immigrant women made use of these services, compared to only 9% of the native-born group, no doubt reflecting the difference in the two groups' legal situation. For the immigrant group, until they obtain citizenship, their lives are organized around maintaining their residence status and complying with administrative and legal requirements. The two groups were roughly equal, however, in their use of NGOs for business advice (20% of immigrant women and 16% of European-born women).

Respondents were asked to choose, from a list, their main reasons for using NGO services. Both the immigrant women and the native-born group cited most often the "friendly, open atmosphere." Both groups also frequently cited three additional reasons (with the native-born group citing them more frequently): "clear information," "free or low cost services," and "competence of staff." Less often cited, for both groups, was accessing their "networks of contacts" and "mediating with public and private agencies." This last reason, "mediating with public and private agencies," was cited by immigrant women almost twice as often as by native-born women, no doubt reflecting the more difficult legal situation of the immigrants. (See Figure 42.) It is relevant here to recall that the bureaucracy is cited as a major problem by respondents, who identify public services as a key factor that should be improved to enhance women's condition.

The emphasis on a "friendly, open atmosphere" is significant. It points to a relationship between the beneficiaries and the suppliers of services that is "informal," based on trust and voluntary involvement, as a critical value.

Clearly, NGOs serve a crucial function for immigrant women, in both social integration and labor market integration:

- Welcoming immigrants and providing a shelter to those in difficulty

- Introducing women to a network that can support their integration (or re-integration)

- Empowering women to become self-respected, autonomous individuals, "respected by others"

- Empowering women as a group: to become aware of their rights, to take an active role in the wider society, to take part in social awareness initiatives and other campaigns, and to contribute to improving public services and conditions for immigrant women

- Enhancing the competence of members and non-members through lifelong learning programs; and supporting alternative certification methods such as "curriculum assessment" ("balance de compétence") — particularly relevant for those who come from a different European social/educational/employment system

- Acting as a "greenhouse" — employing women directly or facilitating employment through a network of links

The nonprofit sector thus plays a fundamental role in supporting the employability of immigrant women. One dimension of this function is providing training in e-skills. For both immigrant women and the native-born group, while the primary source of ICT learning was the personal network (family and friends), their secondary source was the nonprofit sector. For the most part, these organizations offer training well-suited to the needs of immigrant women:

- NGO training programs use interactive, informal teaching methods, such as "group dimension" and blended learning patterns.

- NGO training programs present ICT in concrete ways by applying the new skills to practical tasks: for example, using online private or public (e-government) services, as well as social networks.

- NGOs encourage responsible internet use, for "study and personal development" and to do work or search for a job.

- Many NGOs promote e-inclusion as part of a broader mission of social inclusion.

- NGOs provide free or low-cost access to PC and internet. For the immigrant women, the nonprofit center is the second most-used facility to connect to the internet (the most often used is home); for the native-born women, the centers represent the third most often used access point.

Interviews with NGOs administrators and staff indicate that these organizations embrace a mission of inclusion. They directly or indirectly combat social and cultural barriers and prejudices, aiming more broadly to transform the "male-centered" organizational culture to one that is more respectful of equal opportunities. More specifically, several NGOs are directly addressing three forms of labor discrimination that disadvantage women: wage differentials, vertical job discrimination, and professional segregation (Randstad, 2008). Finally, in some of the participating countries, beneficiaries are frequently given paid or volunteer assignments within the NGO, to serve as multilingual, quasi-professional staff in roles such as "cultural mediator," "social outreach operator," "trainer," "welcoming operator," or "guidance expert."

5.8 Summary of findings for the social inclusion path

5.8.1 Problems identified by respondents

Clearly, the public services of the four countries are far from adequate to address the needs of these immigrant women. The roles of immigrant women in the host country are complex, with much of their time devoted to caring for family members. More efficient public services, tailored to meet women's specific needs, can maximize their potential contribution and their opportunities to express their roles of social and economic agent.

Problems cited by respondents include language-learning, employment issues, social marginalization, and bureaucratic procedures. The suggestions they offered tend to focus on social inclusion at the local and regional level, and particularly on the quality of public and nonprofit services and employment centers.

5.8.2 Involvement with NGOs

Definite patterns distinguish the four countries, in terms of immigrants' initial motivation as well as the host country's institutional services — including the pattern of use of NGOs by immigrant women. There are also significant differences between the experiences of immigrants and the European-born women.

Both the immigrant women and the native-born group were active participants in social and civic networks, in most cases extending beyond their

own ethnic communities. The two groups differ in the predominant type of social involvement, as do the immigrant samples in the four countries.

In general, however, NGOs serve a crucial function for immigrant women for both social integration and labor market integration. Overall, 88% of respondents participate in activities organized by the participating NGOs, with the immigrant women making more use of NGO services than the native-born sample. Participation in NGO services is often the "diving board" for learning social and civic skills.

5.8.3 Employability

The nonprofit "third sector" plays a fundamental role in supporting the employability of immigrant women. One dimension of this function is providing training in e-skills. Several NGOs are also directly addressing three forms of labor discrimination that disadvantage women: wage differentials, vertical job discrimination, and professional segregation.

Another important dimension of NGO effectiveness is as a channel for finding employment: acting as a "greenhouse" by employing women directly, or facilitating employment through a network of links. In general, more respondents seek employment opportunities through their private social networks — including NGOs — than through public employment agencies.

Moreover, by participating in NGO activities, even apart from actual employment training and services, women are able to enhance their "social and civic skills" — a competence that they rank as highly relevant for improving their employment situation. The respondents who rated "social and civic skills" more highly, taken as a group, exhibit a higher degree of employability: they are better integrated in the host society, more self-confident, and conscious of their "human capital."[37] These findings support an important theme of current research on employment: several studies at the regional European level have demonstrated the positive effect of "the social economy" (CIRIEC, 2000).[38]

In general, the attitudes expressed by the sample of immigrant women show them to be "oriented to change," in the phrase used by Muhammad Yunus, and ready to engage in paths of growth in order to improve their lives (Yunus, 1997).

37 Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills and attributes that are embodied in each person and that facilitate the creation of different forms of well-being (Keeley, 2008).

38 In the 1990s the Jacques Delors European Commission Presidency put forward a *Programme regarding the 17th new sources of jobs*, citing social, cultural, and communication services as fields of local development and urban regeneration. In addition, Nobel award-winner Muhammad Yunus has said that poverty can be defeated only if new economic models are built on "social businesses" rather than profit maximization.

Chapter 6

Cutural inclusion path

"Globalisation is not only an economic and social process built around production, the market and the global consumers, is not simply a political, administrative or a strategic fact, but it is also a new historical condition to produce meanings, for instance for the symbolic production of reality by means of ICT, through the universalisation of "ethnicity," and transcultural situations." — Gerhard Steingress (2002)

6.1 Defining culture

The term "culture" may be defined in numerous ways. UNESCO (2006, p.12) provides several definitions:

- "The whole set of signs by which the members of a given society recognize…one another, while distinguishing them from people not belonging to that society."
- "The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group… [encompassing] in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."
- "All the factors that pattern an individual's ways of thinking, believing, feeling and acting as a member of society."
- "Culture is at the core of individual and social identity and is a major component in the reconciliation of group identities within a framework of social cohesion."

For present purposes, definition (2) is the most relevant, as the aspect of culture that is most accessible to immigrants to a given society. Immigrant women have varying degrees of access to cultural experience and participation, reflecting a number of social variables: prior education, as well as education and training in the EU-receiving country; type of employment; existing cultural habits; level of digital inclusion; level of awareness of the host culture; and host-country differences related to cultural offerings.

A number of working assumptions guided the analysis:

- "Cultural awareness and expression" skills may be related to educational level and work experience, professional status, ability in the local language, and digital skills.
- Cultural skills may be a powerful stimulus to learn to learn — that is, a motivation to upgrade skills, as well as a factor in self-confidence and enhanced autonomy.
- Cultural skills may support routes of professional improvement and satisfaction; they may play a key role in improving the employability of immigrant women and encouraging their career goals and plans.
- Cultural participation and expression may be related to active participation in intercultural groups and social networks, fostering leadership roles and a sense of social responsibility.
- The cultural sector may also be a possible source of employment.

It must be emphasized that cultural participation is very difficult to measure, as people don't all define "cultural activities" in the same way. Cultural awareness and expression are even more difficult to pin down quantitatively. The variables examined here give only a glimpse of the cultural participation of the sample groups; they are not intended to provide a definitive picture of how active they are culturally. Our aim is to understand

Table 22 Exploring the cultural inclusion path toward employability for immigrant women

Factors	Levels of primary analysis	Levels of secondary analysis
Cultural consumption	Kinds of cultural products In language of country of origin In language of host country	Multi-country analysis (Italy, Hungary, Spain, the Netherlands) Comparative analysis with the group of native-born women Importance of social and civic skills in relationship to employability
Cultural participation, self-expression and creativity	Type of participation Roles played Use of multimedia technology in cultural production	
Cultural participation in the context of the EU's eight key competencies	Importance of cultural participation in comparison to the other seven competencies	

some general patterns of participation and cultural consumption. The levels of analysis for the cultural inclusion path are outlined in Table 22.

The study as a whole uses an analytical framework based on three interrelated building blocks or paths, including the cultural inclusion" path, defined as:

The capabilities and attitudes of immigrant women to

- Acquire local language(s) and culture(s) while maintaining their own
- Increase local awareness of their own culture and to learn from local culture(s)
- Create positive links between different cultures and promote intercultural dialogue
- Actively participate in intercultural groups and activities
- Create artistic/cultural experiences/objects

6.2 Education, employment, and cultural consumption

We compared the samples in different countries with respect to education level, type of employment, and cultural consumption (primarily digital media). In the multi-country comparison, immigrant women in Italy and Hungary have the largest percentages with university-level educational qualifications. If we combine the percentages of high school, vocational, and university qualifications, those in Italy have the highest level of prior education: 76% of the Italian sample have secondary-tertiary education, compared to 60% for the overall sample.

As might be expected, the type of employment correlates with the level of prior education, at the country level. The samples in Italy and Hungary show the highest percentage of women employed in non-elementary occupations. The combined percentages of professional, clerk, and service employment are 87% for Italy and 100% for Hungary, compared with 42% for Spain and 50% for the Netherlands (Table 23).

Italy also has the highest percentage that are employed, at 71%, compared with just 44% for the entire sample of immigrant women. (See Table 23.)

6.2.1 Language and digital skills

Knowledge of the host-country language would presumably affect the type of media consumed: for instance, listening to the radio (apart from music) requires some knowledge of the host-country spoken language. This helps explain why the sample in Hungary, with greater language difficulties, have lower rates of use of such media as radio and cinema than those in Spain and

Table 23 Vocational training and work (by country)

	Immigrant women	Immigrant women (by host country)				Native-born women*
		ES	IT	HU	NL	
Work	44%	26%	71%	23%	34%	65%
Unemployed**	43%	66%	26%	58%	20%	24%
Prevailing job types		Elementary occupations (47%) Service workers (42%)	Service workers (58%) Professionals (20%)	Service workers (46%) Clerks (36%)	Elementary occupations (40%) Professionals (25%) Clerks (25%)	
Vocational training in host country	33%	41%	31%	27%	25%	NA
Most common vocational courses		Homecare	Cultural mediator	Cultural mediator	Cultural mediator	NA
		Cleaning technician	Social worker	Social worker	Translator	NA
		Entrepreneur	Interpreter	Interpreter	Homecare	NA

Note: Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).
* Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.
** Does not include women who were not looking for a job.

Table 24 Knowledge of host-country language before migrating and other languages spoken

		Immigrant (by host country)*				
		Total Sample	ES	IT	HU	NL
They knew the host-country language before migrating		30%	57%	19%	23%	6%
Medium/high knowledge of the host-country language	Comprehension	80%	86%	91%	67%	54%
	Spoken	77%	83%	89%	51%	49%
	Written	66%	83%	71%	30%	36%
Number of languages spoken	3 or more	50%	32%	65%	56%	51%

Note: Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).

Italy. (See Tables 24 and 25 and Figure 43.) Language knowledge and practice is a basic skill for immigrant social integration, not only as a "visiting card" — a way to be accepted by country nationals — but also as a means to exchange or acquire information and to participate actively in society.

Education correlates with access to culture, at least using digital media. The Italian sample, with the highest overall educational level, is also more likely to be cultural consumers, in several categories of internet use: online magazines and newspapers (59% compared to 39% overall); web radio and TV (36% compared to 23%); share music and video files (48% compared to 31%). The women in Hungary also have high levels of use of internet for these three categories. (See Figure 43.)

6.3 Participation in cultural activities

A clear indicator of cultural awareness and expression is direct participation in cultural activities (production or sharing). The survey included the question, "Do you take part in artistic-cultural activities?" Of the immigrant women, 108 (29%) answered this question positively, as did 52 of the native-born women (34%).

The profile of the immigrant women who reported being "culturally active" is similar to that of the

Table 25 Digital skills and frequency of computer and internet use (by host country)

		Immigrant women	Immigrant women (by host country)*				Native-born women*
			ES	IT	HU	NL	
Access to courses on e-skills		43%	56%	14%	9%	97%	
Prevailing job types	Home	51%	28%	79%	58%	47%	72%
	Work	14%	8%	20%	12%	15%	42%
	NGO	40%	46%	9%	22%	83%	19%
Use internet 3-5 times a week/daily		38%	33%	36%	75%	28%	60%
Use PC 3-5 times a week/daily for work		23%	25%	33%	22%	10%	49%
Use PC 3-5 times a week/daily for study		20%	19%	29%	26%	8%	22%
Use internet for studying and personal development		36%	42%	45%	33%	33%	52%
Basic computer skills		34%	41%	19%	30%	52%	29%
Intermediate/advanced computer skills		38%	35%	40%	42%	39%	58%
No computer skills		28%	24%	41%	28%	9%	8%
Basic internet skills		33%	38%	18%	37%	49%	29%
Intermediate/advanced internet skills		50%	42%%	50%	56%	45%	65%
No internet skills		17%	10%	33%	7%	6%	6%

Note: Computer and internet skill levels are based on Eurostat measurements.
* Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).
** Native-born women refers to women born in the countries included in the study, primarily Romania (RO) and Hungary (HU).

whole sample, with regard to both their reasons for migration (with particular reference to "studying") and their prior education. They live in all four countries — somewhat more in Italy (37%) and less in Spain (22%). They are somewhat younger than the sample: 80% are between 29 and 49 years old (compared to 75% of the whole sample).

The "culturally active" women show a different kind of involvement in the host societies and cultures: a greater proportion attend social events, 40% are NGO members (twice the rate of the whole sample), and 35% are part of a social network (compared to 21% of the whole sample). In 57% of cases, the immigrant women who practice regular cultural activities do so as part of a group, whether as artists, organizers, promoters, interpreters, or teachers. In making recommendations for improvements in their host country, they emphasize "promotion of women's rights," "access to higher education," and "language training." Their (self-evaluated) competence in the host-country language is substantially higher than for the whole sample — especially in Hungary and the Netherlands, the two countries where immigrants experience greater language difficulties (see Table 26). Finally, more of them participate in vocational training (49% compared to 32% for the whole sample).

The culturally active group use internet significantly more than the whole sample, and attend e-skills classes at a higher rate (Tables 26 and 27). Using the internet three to five times a week, or daily, characterizes 60% of those who are culturally active, compared to 38% of the whole sample. (For the native-born group, that figure is 82%.) Similarly, their knowledge and practice of the internet (as measured using the European Commission's survey on households and individuals model) is higher than for the whole sample, except in Italy (see Tables 25 and 27).[39] For the native-born culturally active group, the percentage with medium-to-high knowledge of the internet reaches 87%.

Computer skills, however, are *lower* than for the whole sample, for the culturally active (immigrant) group in all four countries. For the native-born group, on the other hand, computer skills tend to be higher for the culturally active group. Interestingly, there are some differences in reasons for using computers. The culturally active group is more likely to use computers for work than the rest of the sample (100% more likely) as well as for study (70% more likely). 20% can use "specialist programming languages," compared to 12% of the whole sample.

39 This survey does not take into account the difficulty of a particular practice or skill; it merely counts the number of types of internet use.

Table 26 Language knowledge and training participation of immigrant women who are more culturally active

		Immigrant women	Immigrant women (by host country)*			
			ES	IT	HU	NL
Knew the host-country language before migrating		26%	59%	20%	23%	0%
Medium/high knowledge of the host-country language	Comprehension	86%	92%	91%	70%	77%
	Spoken	85%	92%	93%	56%	59%
	Written	75%	88%	77%	67%	73%
Vocational training		49%	67%	52%	39%	27%
Access to e-skills courses		48%	59%	30%	0%	100%

* Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).

Figure 43 Cultural consumption of immigrant women in own language and language of the host country (by country of residence)

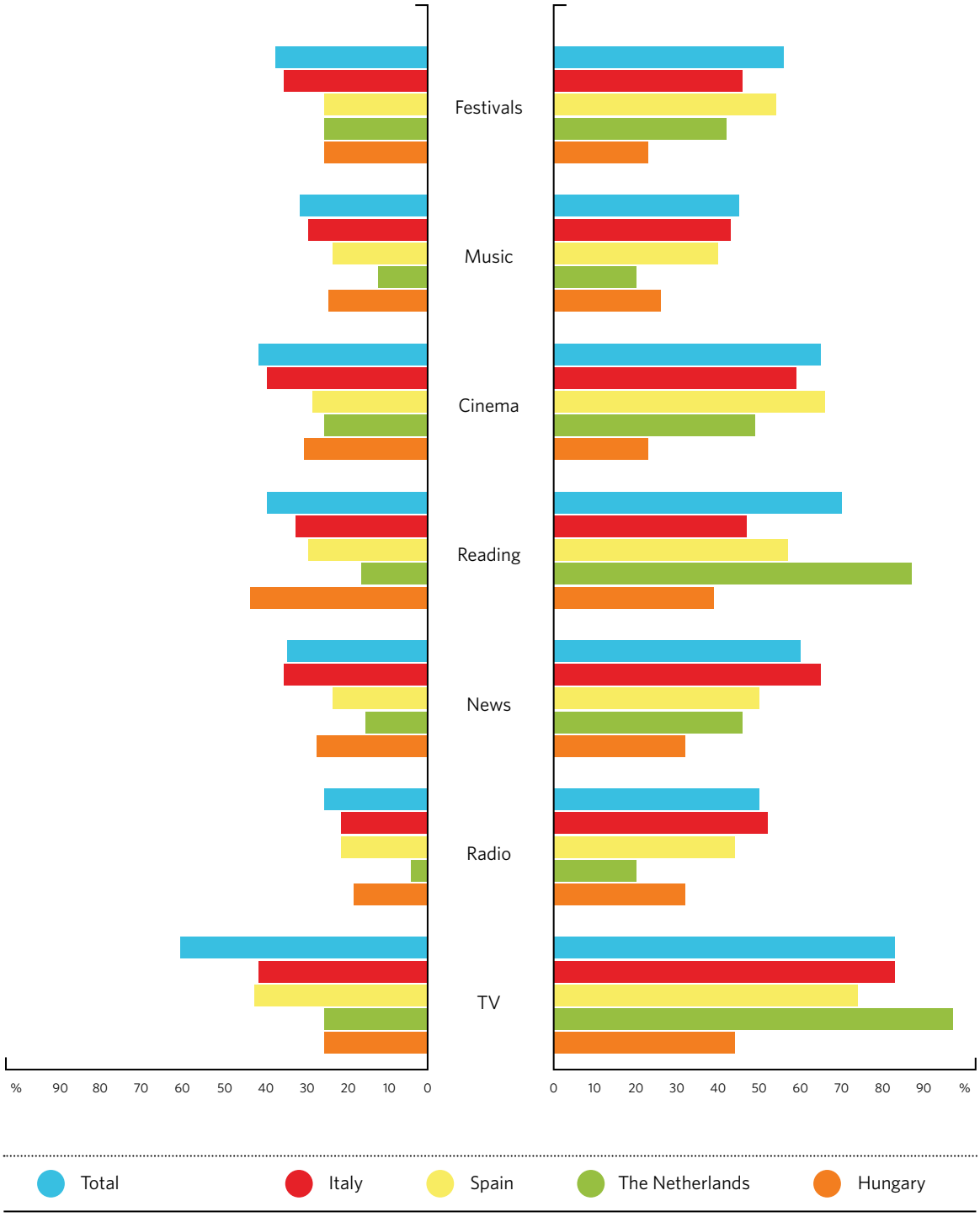


Table 27 ICT knowledge and practice by immigrant and native-born women who are more culturally active

	Immigrant women	Immigrant women (by host country)*				Native-born women
		ES	IT	HU	NL	
Medium/high knowledge of internet knowledge or practice	67%	66%	65%	77%	63%	87%
No internet knowledge or practice	14%	4%	22%	8%	14%	0%
Medium/high knowledge of PC knowledge or practice	55%	52%	59%	46%	55%	83%
No PC knowledge or practice	21%	15%	26%	23%	18%	0%

* Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).
** Native-born women refers to women born in the countries included in the study, primarily Romania (RO) and Hungary (HU).

6.3.1 Employment and job satisfaction

The culturally active group is 1.6 times more likely to be employed than the rest of the sample (58% compared to 36%). They are slightly more likely to be self-employed or entrepreneurs. They are 2.6 times more likely to be professionals (48% compared to 19%). The rate of job satisfaction is 1.4 times higher for the culturally active group than for the rest of the sample (Figure 44). In contrast, the native-born group shows far less correlation between cultural activity and employment, apart from a higher percentage of managerial positions. Possibly cultural activity provides the immigrant women a springboard into the labor market that the European-born women do not require.

6.4 Cultural awareness and expression skills

> *"Cultural awareness and expression" has been defined as follows: "Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts. . . . Skills relate to both appreciation and expression: the appreciation and enjoyment of works of arts and performances as well as self-expression through a variety of media using one's innate capacities. Skills include also the ability to relate one's own creative and expressive points of view to the opinions of others and to identify and realize social and economic opportunities in cultural activity"* (European Parliament & Council, 2006, p.12).

The main questions of this section are the following:

- Are "cultural awareness and expression" skills a stimulus to upgrade other skills, and to learn to learn?
- Are cultural skills and participation in cultural life a factor supporting social participation?
- Do "cultural awareness and expression" skills increase self-confidence and job opportunities?

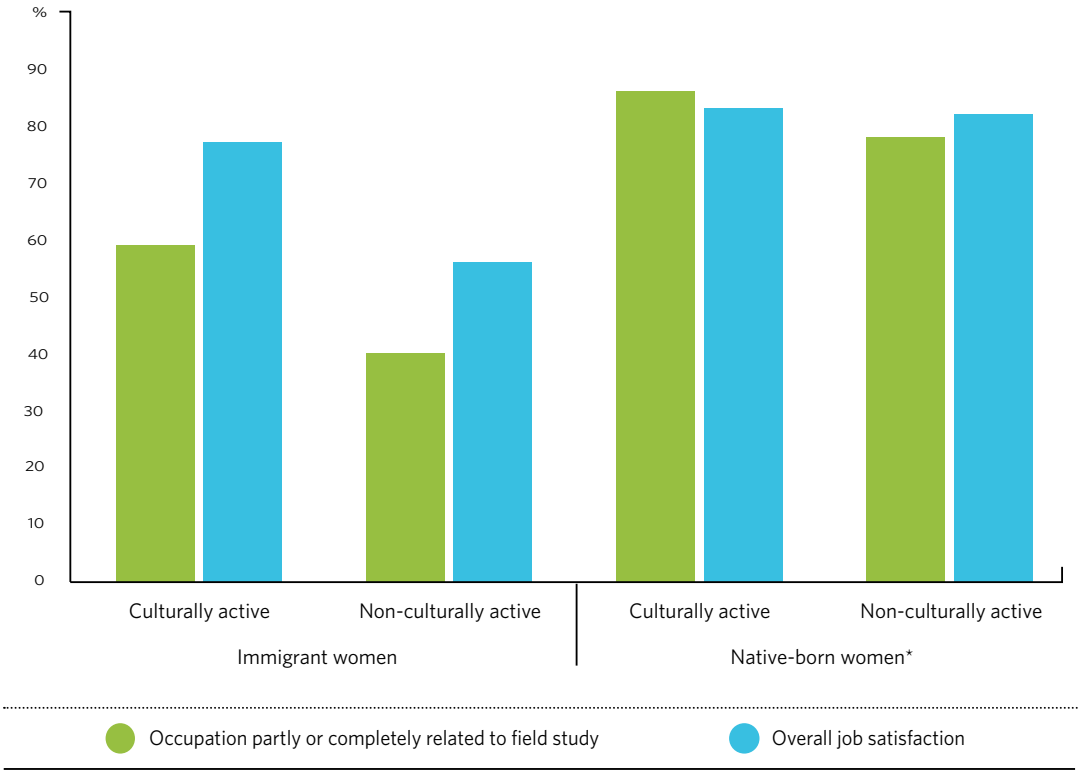
This study examined the importance attached to cultural awareness and expression, as compared to other skills and attitudes. Respondents were asked to assign ratings (from 0 to 5) to nine skill areas in terms of their importance for improving their employment situation. Figure 45 presents the results for each skill category. *Cultural awareness and expression* skills rank sixth for the sample of immigrant women, ahead of knowledge of the mother tongue, other languages, and math and science. Native-born women ranked cultural skills last, perhaps because they can take these skills for granted. Note that for all other skills (except for *sense of initiative* and *entrepreneurship*) the native-born group rated the skills more highly than the immigrant women.

Table 28 Types of ICT use by immigrant and native-born women who are more culturally active

	Immigrant women	Immigrant women (by host country)*				Native-born women
		ES	IT	HU	NL	
Use of internet						
Use internet 3-5 times a week or daily	60%	61%	56%	69%	57%	82%
Use internet for studying and for personal development	57%	48%	68%	64%	31%	77%
Use of shared files, exchange of music or videos in internet	53%	52%	62%	54%	36%	75%
Participate in social networks	35%	33%	31%	62%	30%	48%
Are able to create web pages	17%	30%	18%	0%	9%	35%
Have their own website	16%	37%	12%	0%	5%	24%
Have a personal blog	14%	28%	18%	0%	0%	17%
Write to online newspaper, web radio, TV	12%	13%	16%	15%	0%	22%
Use of PC						
Use PC 3-5 times a week or daily to work	46%	58%	54%	8%	35%	64%
Use PC 3-5 times a week or daily to study	34%	35%	49%	23%	18%	41%
Are able to write a program using specific programming languages	20%	23%	19%	8%	23%	14%
Use PC 3-5 times a week or daily for hobbies or creative projects	18%	35%	15%	11%	8%	23%
Use of different languages in artistic work	13%	7%	21%	3%	12%	20%
Use of multimedia technologies in cultural work	10%	7%	17%	5%	8%	59%

* Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), and the Netherlands (NL).
** Native-born women refers to women born in the countries included in the study, primarily Romania (RO) and Hungary (HU).

Figure 44 Types of ICT use by immigrant and native-born women who are more culturally active



* Native-born women refers to women born in the countries included in the study, primarily Romania and Hungary.

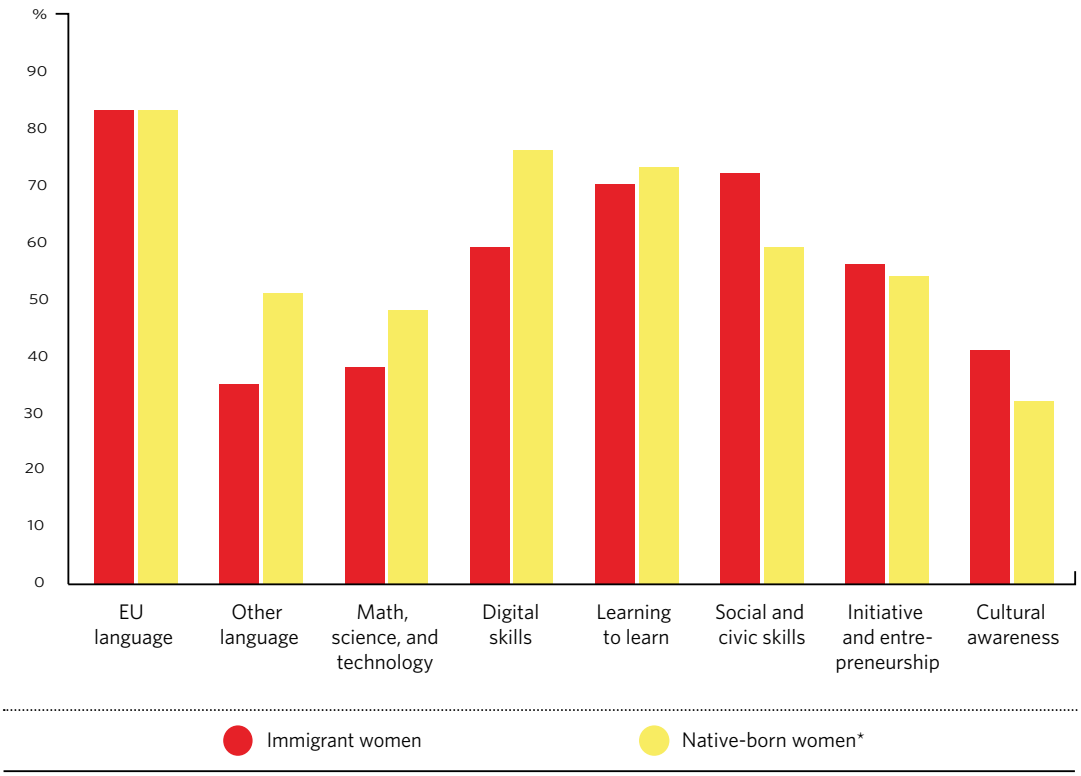
It is striking that the respondents assign relatively low importance to cultural skills as a way of improving their working situation — even though, as described above, those who are "culturally active" have better and more satisfying jobs. Individuals employed at NGOs are more likely to assign importance to cultural skills (61%), as do those employed as "professionals," "technicians," or "clerks" and those employed in the craft sector.

We also found differences in responses by country. The Netherlands and Spain showed the highest level of responses to this question. Respondents in these two countries had also taken more training courses in the host country, and they tend to have a lower level of formal education. Training programs undoubtedly help them to compensate for a relative lack of formal education — and perhaps help them to appreciate the importance of the cultural skills that enhance the training. The Netherlands sample are also more active in community women's associations.

In contrast, the sample in Italy has a higher educational profile and far higher employment rates (twice or three times as high as other country samples). This group relies more on "learning to learn" and the "sense of initiative and entrepreneurship." (Cultural skills are highly rated, however, in the regions of Campania, Puglia, and Lazio.)

Interestingly, the respondents who gave the highest rating to "cultural awareness and expression" (139 immigrant and 48 native-born) also give a higher rating to all the key lifelong-learning skills. Moreover, except for the category "mother tongue," the immigrant group and the native-born group are remarkably close in their ranking of these skills, suggesting that an appreciation of cultural skills in effect helps to close the gap between the foreign-born and the European-born respondents.

Figure 45 Self-assessment of the degree of relevance of the key lifelong-learning skills to improve employment situation



NOTE: Percentages show the ratio of "highly relevant" responses in relation to total responses (a rating of 4 or 5 on the scale of 0 to 5).
*Refers to women born in the EU countries included in the study: Romania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

6.5 Summary of findings for the cultural inclusion path

Our working assumptions included an important role for cultural awareness and expression, in relation to educational level, work experience, professional status, ability in the local language, and digital skills. We did not attempt to measure cultural skills directly: instead, respondents were asked to rate an array of skills in terms of their importance for employment, including the item "cultural awareness and expression."

We found that the cultural skills were not in fact generally accorded high ratings; those skills ranked sixth out of the nine skills for the sample of immigrant women, and last (ninth place) for the group of European-born women. (That difference is interesting, suggesting that those born in the host country simply take these skills for granted.) It may be that cultural skills in general tend to be less visible, more "taken for granted," as compared to language skills and digital skills. Interestingly, those respondents who gave the highest rating to "cultural awareness and expression," in both groups, also give a higher rating to all the lifelong-learning skills. Moreover, except for the category "mother tongue," the immigrant group and the native-born group are remarkably close in their ranking of these skills, suggesting that an appreciation of cultural skills in effect helps to "close the gap" in attitudes between the foreign-born and the European-born respondents.

Nevertheless, the evidence is that "the cultural awareness and expression" skills go along with an enhanced capacity for "learning to learn." The immigrant women who reported participating more actively in cultural activities tend to engage in more training and have better ability in the host language. The survey also asked respondents whether they participate in cultural and artistic activities. The group who ranked highest on this measure (the "culturally active" group) also shared some other characteristics in common. The culturally active

group tended to have higher rates of employment, especially in high-skilled jobs and as entrepreneurs, and higher levels of job satisfaction. They were more likely to attend social events and vocational training, and had a higher level of competence in the host-country language (self-reported). They use internet significantly more than the rest of the sample, and are more likely to attend e-skills classes; they are also more likely to use computers for work or study than the rest of the sample, though their overall (self-reported) computer skill level is lower. In short, there appears to be some relationship between cultural awareness and job satisfaction, language ability, and use of computers — an area that merits further study.

Finally, the culturally active group are more likely to be members of nonprofit organizations, to work in the nonprofit sector, and to participate in social networks. This finding appears to support one of our working assumptions — *cultural participation and expression may be related to active participation in intercultural groups and social networks, fostering leadership roles and a sense of social responsibility*. This is a complex question that would merit more detailed study in future research.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study examines the role of e-skills in advancing the employability of immigrant women in four countries: Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain.

The conceptual framework emphasizes (1) the *agency* of the immigrant women themselves, adopting a "capabilities approach" rather than a victimization perspective, and (2) the importance of inclusion *processes* rather than a binary inclusion/exclusion model. These processes are conceptualized as three interrelated paths toward greater economic and social participation: education and lifelong learning, social inclusion, and cultural inclusion.

7.1 Findings

Most of the immigrant women in the sample are fairly recent migrants: 80% immigrated within the past ten years. In general, the attitudes expressed by the immigrant respondents revealed that they are active participants, ready to engage in paths of growth in order to improve their lives. Fully 70% use computers and the internet at least once a week and most have a basic level of computer literacy, although there are dramatic variations between host countries.

All the immigrants in the sample are of working age. Most were employed in their country of origin, and more than one-third held professional or technical positions. Less than half, however, are currently employed — and most of them are employed in service or elementary occupations (cleaning, restaurant work, etc.).

There is a disconnect between the level of pre-migration education/employment and current employment status. Credentials are part of the problem: the lack of official recognition for home-country achievements severely limits access to educational and employment opportunities. e-Government procedures that simplify bureaucratic processes need to be put in place to alleviate this inequality.

Providing access to education and training is key to advance the employability of immigrant women. Respondents clearly identify access to education and training opportunities as critical to improve their social and economic status in the EU, even though most (especially those with medium or higher education levels) have jobs that do not utilize their education or specialization. Non-recognition of educational credentials is a barrier to formal education as well as to employability. Many immigrant women take advantage of non-formal training courses offered by NGOs, and would undoubtedly benefit from more formal training in these areas. Learning the host-country language is clearly a fundamental step toward social integration as well as toward participation in the training system and the labor market.

ICT skills are relevant to employability. There are strong correlations between ICT skill levels and:

- Length of residence — more recent immigrants tend to have the lowest digital competency levels
- Educational background
- Employment status — immigrant women with basic or no ICT skills have higher levels of unemployment

Cultural awareness and expression skills appear to play a role in motivating learning to learn, reinforcing

professional uses of ICTs, and strengthening professional satisfaction. Social and civic competencies also help catalyze the use of ICTs. Involvement in social networks — and especially membership in NGOs — serves to motivate wider use of ICT, while providing more opportunities to access ICTs.

ICT training makes a difference. Immigrant women who have had e-skills training show higher skill level and more diverse activities using computers and internet (especially for job search). However, taking training courses does not directly correlate with employment outcomes.

7.2 Recommendations

Developing e-skills, especially in combination with the training experience itself, can advance immigrant women's employability in several ways. In addition to developing basic digital competencies, training can help to expand social networks while imparting confidence in the ability to continue to learn. e-Skills training can also help overcome language barriers, a significant factor in finding employment. The process of language acquisition can be facilitated through ICT in various ways, including e-learning as well as the non-formal learning that occurs in digital literacy courses.

The survey asked the women to identify the problems they face and to suggest policy improvements. Problems cited included language-learning, employment issues, social marginalization, and bureaucratic procedures. Proposed solutions tended to focus on social inclusion and on the quality of public and nonprofit services and employment centers.

More efficient public services, tailored to meet the specific needs of immigrant women, can maximize their potential contribution and their opportunities to express their roles of social and economic agent. In addition, targeted awareness-raising campaigns could do much to promote the opportunities that technology offers for self-employment, entrepreneurship, and commercial initiatives. Related initiatives could emphasize the importance of lifelong learning, and open channels for dialogue with public agencies.

Survey responses indicate that NGOs serve a crucial function for immigrant women, for both social and labor market integration. Overall, 88% of respondents participate in activities organized by the participating NGOs, with the immigrant women making more use of NGO services than native-born women. Friends/families and NGOs are the two most important networks through which immigrant women find channels to secure employment, to improve their e-skills, and to access and use ICTs. NGOs play a pivotal role in promoting social, economic, and cultural integration and in promoting many of the competencies identified by the European Union as critical to success in today's labor market. Participation in NGO services often serves as the "diving board" for learning social and civic skills. NGOs also serve as a channel for finding employment, either by employing women directly, or facilitating employment through their networks.

An important element of NGO services is providing training in e-skills, as well as free or low-cost access to PC and internet. NGO training programs use interactive, informal teaching methods, presenting ICT in concrete ways by applying the new skills to practical tasks. *NGO ICT training could become still more valuable if their programs could provide some form of official certification.*

NGOs seeking to update and expand their digital literacy programs are limited by lack of resources. *One suggested strategy is to develop e-learning resources that could be shared by many organizations, such as the EU's Key Competences for All project.*

Social organizations are aware that digital competence has a broad range of benefits. Most use e-skills training not only to enhance language skills but also to promote self-esteem, autonomy, and social and cultural skills. Nevertheless, the many opportunities presented by new technology constitute a challenge for the NGOs that serve as ICT learning channels for immigrant women. *These important organizations need to adapt their strategies to fully address the needs of this population, taking advantage of e-learning and web 2.0 resources for social, professional, and commercial networking.*

NGOs serve a crucial function for immigrant women for both social integration and labor market integration. In view of the critical role they play in advancing social and economic inclusion, *NGOs represent a high-return area for public and private funding and support.*

Both the immigrant and native-born women were active participants in various social spaces and civic networks, in most cases extending beyond their own ethnic

communities. The overall picture of the background, activities, and aspirations of the immigrant women surveyed give strong support to an approach that views them as partners in the process of advancing their social, cultural, and economic inclusion in the host country.

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Appendix 1

List of organizations that participated in the study

Organization	Country	City	Website
L'APIS	Italy	Roma	www.lapiscoop.eu
ARCI	Italy	Roma	www.arci.it
CGIL	Italy	Roma	www.cgil.it
CNCA	Italy	Roma	www.cnca.it
UPTER	Italy	Roma	www.upter.it
Reformed Mission Centre	Hungary	Budapest	www.misszio.reformatus.hu
DEMNET Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights	Hungary	Budapest	www.demnet.org.hu
Menedék — The Hungarian Association for Migrants	Hungary	Budapest	www.menedek.hosting1.deja.hu
Southern Great Plain Regional Telecottage	Hungary	Szeged	www.telehaz-del-alfold.hu
TÁRKI Social Research Institute	Hungary	Budapest	www.tarki.hu
Artemisszio Foundation	Hungary	Budapest	www.artemisszio.hu
Asociación Candelita	Spain	Madrid	www.candelita.org
Asociación Iniciativas Fontarrón	Spain	Madrid	www.iniciativasfontarron.org
Asociación Proyecto San Fermín	Spain	Madrid	www.san-fermin.org

Organization	Country	City	Website
Asociación Redes Extremadura Cultura y Desarrollo ACUDEX	Spain	Badajoz	www.acudex.org
Cooperativa Abierto hasta el amanecer	Spain	Madrid	www.abiertomadrid.coop
Federación de Mujeres Progresistas	Spain	Madrid	www.fmujeresprogresistas.org
Fundación Adsis	Spain	Madrid	www.fundacionadsis.org
Fundación Akwaba	Spain	Barcelona	www.fundacioakwaba.cat
Fundación Balia	Spain	Madrid	www.fundacionbalia.org
Fundación CEPAIM Acción Integral con Migrantes	Spain	Sevilla, Almeria	www.cepaim.org
Fundación Esplai	Spain	Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia	www.esplai.org
Fundación Jovesolides	Spain	Valencia	www.jovesolides.org
EOS	Romania	Timisoara	www.eos.ro
Civitas	Romania	Transilvania	www.civitas.ro
Computerwickj	Netherlands	Amsterdam	www.computerwijk.nl
Buurtonline	Netherlands	Amsterdam	www.buurt-online.nl
Dock	Netherlands	Amsterdam	www.dock.nl

Appendix 2 List of people interviewed

Name	Organization	Position	Country
Dora Kanizsai	Reformed Mission Centre	Project Manager	Hungary
Orsolya Kiss	Reformed Mission Centre	Project Manager	Hungary
Brigitta Jaksa	DEMNET Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights	Policy Officer	Hungary
Ildiko Szasz	Menedék — The Hungarian Association for Migrants	Head of Social Workers	Hungary
Edit Takacs	Southern Great Plain Regional Telecottage	Office Manager	Hungary
Endre Sik	TÁRKI Social Research Institute	Senior Researcher	Hungary
Krisztina Papp	Artemisszio Foundation	Project Coordinator	Hungary
Barbara Alabruzzo	L'APIS	Researcher, L'APIS Operator	Italy
Matteo Angelici	L'APIS	Researcher, L'APIS Operator	Italy
Francesca Coleti	L'APIS	Responsible, L'APIS office, Salerno	Italy
Giancarlo Gizzi	L'APIS	Researcher, L'APIS Operator	Italy
Ilaria Graziano	L'APIS	Researcher, L'APIS Operator	Italy
Sara Picardo	L'APIS	Researcher, L'APIS Operator	Italy
Filippo Miraglia	ARCI	Head, Immigration Office	Italy
Stefania Cecchini	ARCI Genova	Manager	Italy
Francesca Coleti	ARCI Campania	President	Italy

Name	Organization	Position	Country
Daniela Frascà	ARCI Bari	Responsible, Immigration Department	Italy
Dagmar Schussler	ARCI Firenze	Responsible, Immigration Department	Italy
Massimo Spaggiari	ARCI Rimini	Responsible, Immigration Department	Italy
Bruna Dondoli	CGIL Lazio	Manager	Italy
Rossella Scatolini	CGIL Lazio	Manager	Italy
Alfredo Zolla	CGIL Lazio	Manager	Italy
Marina Galati	CNCA	Contact person, National CNCA Agency	Italy
Chiara Girombelli	CNCA	CNCA International Area Microsoft Project	Italy
Giorgio Sordelli	CNCA	CNCA National Coordinator Microsoft Project	Italy
Mauro Mancini	UPTER	ICT Trainer & Director	Italy
Paola Galesi	UPTER	Trainer	Italy
Rita Ricci	UPTER	Academic Coordinator	Italy
Ana Dobarta	CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society	Project Coordinator	Romania
AnnaMariaTötös	CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society	Project Assistant	Romania
Incşe Zsuzsánna	CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society	Project Assistant	Romania
Gabi Barna	Education for an Open Society (EOS)	Director	Romania

Name	Organization	Position	Country
Diana Gligor	Education for an Open Society (EOS)	Educational Programs Manager	Romania
Cornelio Popescu	Education for an Open Society (EOS)	Project Manager	Romania
Alina Zamfir	Education for an Open Society (EOS)	Project Manager	Romania
Samuel Chávez	Fundación CEPAIM	Coordinator, ITACA Network	Spain
Marina Huerta	Fundación CEPAIM	Coordinator of Programme for Equal Opportunities	Spain
Albert Bitoden Yaca	CEPAIM, Sevilla Acoge	Sevilla Centre Coordinator	Spain
Mª del Mar Castillo	CEPAIM, Almería Acoge	Almeria Centre Coordinator	Spain
Marc Botella	Fundación Esplai	Manager	Spain
Montserrat Carbonell	Fundación Esplai	Spain's Telecentre Network Coordinator	Spain
Joan Campello	Fundación Esplai	Esplai Telecentre Facilitator (Terrassa)	Spain
Olga Uribe	Fundación Akwaba	Telecentre Facilitator (L'Hospitalet)	Spain
Pere Boronat	Fundación Jovesolides	Telecentre Facilitator (Valencia)	Spain
Juan Sánchez	Fundación Esplai	Spain Central Area Coordinator	Spain
Javier Bravo	Fundación Balia	Responsible of New Technologies	Spain

Name	Organization	Position	Country
Dolores Gonzáles	Federación de Mujeres Progresistas	Responsible, New Technologies	Spain
Marta García	Cooperativa Abierto hasta el amanecer	Cooperative's partner	Spain
Rosendo Vilaseca	Asociación Iniciativas Fontarrón	Telecentre Facilitator	Spain
Wilma Borgt	Computerwijk	Director	Netherlands
Paul de Wit	Eigenwijks	Former project assistant Computerwijk	Netherlands
Natasja Boons	Eigenwijks	Former project assistant Computerwijk	Netherlands
Nazha Lemhadi	MVOA	Director	Netherlands
Lucienne van Kampen	Stichting DOCK	Social Worker	Netherlands
Phlip Korthals Altes	Stichting DOCK	Social Worker	Netherlands
Lieneke Jongeling	e-Inclusion Ambassador	We thank her posthumously	Netherlands
Cathy Staats		Independent Research Assistant	Netherlands
Hanneke Verdonk	Vrouw en Vaart	Social Worker	Netherlands
Kartini Hardjomohamad	Computerwijk	e-Skills Trainer	Netherlands
Judith Beyerbacht	Computerwijk	Operational Manager	Netherlands