

ERASMUS+ PROJECT GUIDE:
**INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP FOR ETHICAL AND
MULTICULTURAL FUTURE YOUTH LEADERS**



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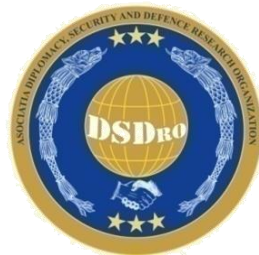
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Inclusive Leadership for Ethical and Multicultural Future Youth Leaders



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For every person who has contributed with responsibility and dedication to the creation of a more inclusive world, where everyone has the opportunity to become the best version of themselves.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	12
Part I – THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP	19
I.1.Definitions and Characteristics of Inclusive and Ethical Leadership	20
I.2.Inclusive vs. Classical Leadership: A Comparative Analysis	35
I.3.Leadership Theories: Foundations for Inclusive Leadership	39
I.4.The Pivotal Role of Young Leadership in a Globalized Society	44
Part II – PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF YOUNG LEADERS WORKING IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS	47
II.1.Introduction	48
II.2.Psychological Research Methodology on Inclusive Leadership Among Young People	50
II.3.Psychological Elements Specific to Staff Working in International Organisations	64
II.4.Psychological Good Practices in Supporting the Needs of Inclusive Young Leaders	69
II.5.Fostering Inclusive Leadership in Companies/Organizations to Address the Psychological Needs of Young Inclusive Leaders	77
II.6.Positive Psychological Effects in a Company/Organisation Where Inclusive Leadership for Young People Is Encouraged	84
II.7.Negative Psychological Effects in a Company/Organisation Where Inclusive Leadership for Young People Is Not Encouraged	87
II.8.Psychological Profile of the Inclusive Leader	90
II.9.Conclusions	101

Part III – CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS	102
III.1.Introduction	103
III.2.Cultural and Social Needs of the Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders	105
III.3.Addressing the Needs of the Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders	111
III.4.Case Studies: Highlighting the Profound Impact of Ethical Leadership	116
III.5.Cultural Differences and Needs in Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania	122
III.5.1.Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Malta	122
III.5.2.Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Italy	128
III.5.3.Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in the Maldives	133
III.5.4.Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Romania	141
III.6.Conclusions	148
 Part IV – ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS OF FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS	 149
IV.1.Introduction	150
IV.2.The Role of Young Leaders in Shaping Future Economies	153
IV.3.Economic Needs of Future Leaders	156
IV.3.1.Malta: Economic Growth and the Role of Young Leaders in Innovation	156
IV.3.2.Italy: Challenges in the Italian Economy and the Need for Fresh Leadership	158
IV.3.3.Maldives: Economic Reliance on Tourism and the Need for Sustainable Practices	160
IV.3.4.Romania: Economic Transition and the Role of Young Leaders in Sustainable Development	163
IV.4.Administrative Needs of Future Leaders	166

IV.4.1.Importance of Effective Governance and Administration	166
IV.4.2.Malta:Administrative Reforms and the Role of Young Leaders in Policy-Making	167
IV.4.3.Italy: Bureaucratic Challenges and the Need for Innovative Administrative Solutions	169
IV.4.4. Maldives: Governance Challenges in a Small Island Nation and the Role of Youth in Administration	171
IV.4.5. Romania: Decentralisation and the Empowerment of Local Leaders	173
IV.5.Training and Development for Young Leaders	176
IV.5.1.Importance of Education and Training Programs	176
IV.5.2.Malta: Leadership Programs and Educational Initiatives	177
IV.5.3.Italy: Developing Leadership Through Education and Mentorship	178
IV.5.4.Maldives: Building Leadership Capacity in a Vulnerable Nation	180
IV.5.5.Romania: Leadership Development in a Transitioning Economy	182
IV.6.Case Studies of Young Ethical Leaders	185
IV.6.1.Introduction to Young Ethical Leaders	185
IV.6.2.Malta: Profile of Alexia Galea, Environmental Advocate and Policy Innovator	185
IV.6.3.Italy: Profile of Luca Rossi, Social Entrepreneur and Anti-Corruption Activist	187
IV.6.4.Maldives: Profile of Ahmed Zahir, Youth Leader and Environmental Activist	189
IV.6.5.Romania: Profile of Andreea Popescu, Tech Innovator and Advocate for Digital Inclusion	191
IV.7.Challenges Faced by Young Leaders	194
IV.7.1.Introduction to Challenges	194
IV.7.2.Common Challenges Faced by Young Leaders	194
IV.7.3.Strategies to Overcome Challenges	196

IV.8.Conclusions	201

Part V – ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS, RELATED TO INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	204

V.1.Introduction	205

V.2.The Importance of Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Leadership and Management	212

V.2.1.Benefits of Migrant and Refugee Entrepreneurship	212

V.2.2.Challenges Faced by Migrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs	219

V.2.3.Entrepreneurial Skills and the Role of Inclusive Leadership and Management	225

V.3.Entrepreneurship and Young Migrants in the European Union	231

V.3.1.Overview of the Migrant Situation in the European Union.....	231

V.3.2.Legislative Framework for the Integration of Migrants	250

V.3.3.Employment and Self-Employment Policies for Migrants	264

V.4.Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants: A Comparative Study of Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania	306

V.4.1.Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Malta	306

V.4.2.Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Italy	314

V.4.3.Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in the Maldives	325

V.4.4.Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Romania	330

V.5.Conclusions and Policy recommendations	341

Part VI – NEEDS OF YOUNG MIGRANT WOMEN	345
VI.1.Introduction	346
VI.2.Methodology and Literature Review	347
VI.3.Factors Influencing Migration Among Young Women	351
VI.4.Needs of Young Migrant Women	354
VI.5.Country Perspectives	356
VI.5.1.Malta	356
VI.5.1.1.Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women	356
VI.5.1.2.Needs of Young Migrant Women	358
VI.5.2.Italy	362
VI.5.2.1.Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women	363
VI.5.2.2.Needs of Young Migrant Women	365
VI.5.3.Maldives	369
VI.5.3.1.Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women	375
VI.5.3.2.Needs of Young Migrant Women	376
VI.5.4.Romania	378
VI.5.4.1.Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women	380
VI.5.4.2.Needs of Young Migrant Women	383
VI.6.Conclusions	386
 Part VII – CAUSES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND BEST PRACTICES FOR TACKLING IT	 389
VII.1.Introduction	390
VII.2.Origins of Discrimination Against Young Women	391
VII.3.The Significance of a Study on Gender Discrimination	392

VII.4.Research Objectives	394
VII.5.Literature Review	396
VII.6.Causes of Discrimination Against Young Women	399
VII.7.Consequences of Gender Discrimination	402
VII.8.Effective Strategies for Combating Discrimination Against Young Women	405
VII.9.Country Status: Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania	408
VII.9.1.Gender Discrimination in Malta	408
VII.9.1.1.Causes of Gender Discrimination	409
VII.9.1.2.Consequences of Gender Discrimination	411
VII.9.1.3.Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination	414
VII.9.2.Gender Discrimination in Italy	416
VII.9.2.1.Causes of Gender Discrimination	416
VII.9.2.2.Consequences of Gender Discrimination	423
VII.9.2.3.Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination	427
VII.9.3.Gender Discrimination in the Maldives	429
VII.9.3.1.Causes of Gender Discrimination	436
VII.9.3.2.Consequences of Gender Discrimination	439
VII.9.3.3.Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination	440
VII.9.4.Gender discrimination in Romania	446
VII.9.4.1.Causes of gender discrimination	447
VII.9.4.2.Consequences of gender discrimination	450
VII.9.4.3.Strategies to combat gender discrimination	453
VII.10.Conclusions	456

Part VIII – PUBLIC POLICY TO SUPPORT YOUNG LEADERS, INCLUDING THOSE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND	458
VIII.1.Introduction	459
VIII.2.Theoretical Framework	462
VIII.3.Current Landscape of Public Policy for Young Leaders	466
VIII.4.Challenges Faced by Young Leaders with Migrant Background	470
VIII.5.Policy Recommendations	474
VIII.6.Case Studies	482
VIII.7.Future Directions for Public Policy	486
VIII.8.Conclusions	488
 Part IX – A PROJECT OF THE SOUL, FOR THE SOUL: INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP FOR ETHICAL AND MULTICULTURAL FUTURE YOUTH LEADERS	 489
Selective Bibliography	495

FOREWORD

The integration of youth into multicultural societies has become one of the most pressing challenges of our time, largely due to the significant migration flows into the European Union and its partner countries, as well as the increasing influx of refugees. As a result, social environments are shifting from national and monocultural frameworks to multinational and multicultural ones.

A detailed analysis of the social, psychological, economic, and political developments in recent years has revealed numerous challenges related to youth integration in these multicultural settings. Issues such as racial bias and discrimination based on gender, origin, nationality, and religion are on the rise, both in Europe and its partner countries. These challenges are particularly pronounced for young leaders who are tasked with ethically leading individuals from vastly different cultural backgrounds, making the need for effective strategies even more urgent.

Building on this urgent and timely issue, the Ministry for Gozo (MGOZ - Malta), Igor Vitale International srl (IVI srl - Italy), Addu Women's Association (AWA - Maldives), and Diplomacy, Security and Defence Research Organization (DSD RO - Romania) have come together to implement the ERASMUS+ project, **"Inclusive Leadership for Ethical and Multicultural Future Youth Leaders" (ILED EMFYL)**, with support from the European Union.

The Ministry for Gozo (MGOZ), established in 1987, serves as the primary administrative body for Gozo Island and is a ministry of the Government of Malta. Registered as an ERASMUS organization, MGOZ actively promotes environmental protection, the development of ecological tourism, inclusive sports, and equal opportunities for all residents. Its mission is to work in the interests of Gozo's residents, municipalities, and businesses by providing coordinated, interdisciplinary services in education, culture, and the economy. MGOZ is a driving force in fostering innovation, business growth, research, and social and cultural activities on the island. It also supports regional communities and businesses by encouraging job creation, providing effective information, and promoting comprehensive marketing efforts. Through these initiatives, MGOZ plays a leading role in the sustainable development and long-term prosperity of Gozo.

Igor Vitale International srl (IVI srl), located in Foggia, Puglia, is a small to medium-sized enterprise specializing in applied psychology across a range of fields, including clinical, social, forensic, organizational, environmental, and school psychology. With a network of 100 experts, it operates at both national and international levels, aiming to promote social inclusion, sustainability, and improved education through the integration of psychology, digital tools, and human sciences. IVI srl has trained over 1,000 learners in cities like Rome and Milan through training courses, conferences, and workshops on topics such as Emotional Intelligence, Crime Prevention, Non-Verbal Communication, Public Speaking, Environmental Psychology, and Social Inclusion.

The Addu Women's Association (AWA) empowers women and youth across the Maldives by providing training and development opportunities to help them reach their full potential politically, socially, and economically. AWA facilitates programs that build confidence, teach essential skills such as English and computer literacy, and offer training in business and income-generating activities. They also support women in marketing their products and organize workshops and exhibitions to promote home-based businesses. AWA is involved in both national and international projects, with a focus on promoting the rights of young women, preparing them for leadership roles in local government, and boosting their confidence to contribute to national development.

The Diplomacy, Security and Defence Research Organization (DSD RO) is dedicated to promoting excellence in research in security, diplomacy, defense, and environmental protection. It implements programs focused on training, education, and high-quality, scientifically-based consulting at internationally recognized standards. Key initiatives include ERASMUS+, NATO/STO, and POCA projects, as well as organizing courses, workshops, and conferences on leadership, diplomatic psychology, organizational analysis, and more. DSD RO also conducts research, publishes scientific articles and books, supports voluntary actions, and collaborates with NGOs, academic institutions, and companies. Its experts specialize in organizational, leadership, diplomatic, military, and personal development psychology, along with international relations, security, and public diplomacy.

The ILED EMFYL project, coordinated by MGOZ, seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice in shaping the next generation of young

leaders. The project focuses on developing a comprehensive set of inclusive leadership skills to prepare young individuals (aged 18-25) and their mentors for future social, psychological, economic, and political challenges. By fostering collaboration between youth and mentors, the project promotes intergenerational synergy and leadership development.

The project's activities specifically target young people, including migrants, refugees, and those facing socio economic marginalization, with an emphasis on empowering young women. ILED EMFYL equips participants with the tools needed to succeed in the workforce while encouraging ethical, culturally sensitive leadership. Through autonomous and digital learning, the project offers practical resources that close the gap between academic concepts and real-world application.

Additionally, the project promotes transnational cooperation, aiming to foster active citizenship, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion. By enhancing youth engagement and encouraging shared values, ILED EMFYL strengthens the quality and impact of youth work, cultivating future inclusive leaders equipped to thrive in diverse, multicultural environments.

Key initiatives of the project include the *Inclusive Leadership Guide* and the *Inclusive Leadership Digital Course*, which provides a straightforward tool for understanding the demands of leadership in a multicultural society. Additionally, the project features a *Digital Tools Kit* tailored to inclusive leadership for youth. This kit allows beneficiaries to deepen their knowledge interactively, offering access to the latest resources via a QR code. Another vital initiative is the *Guide for Policy Recommendations for Ethical and Multicultural Future Youth Leaders*. This guide will offer policy

recommendations on various critical topics: support for refugees and migrant youth, addressing vulnerabilities faced by young people, the benefits of inclusive leadership in an ethical, multicultural society, and recommendations for local and governmental policies that promote the development of inclusive youth leadership. It will also explore how inclusive leadership can create synergy between future youth leaders and society.

The dissemination phase of the ILED EMFYL project will focus on sharing its achievements and results, fostering networking among participants and stakeholders, and creating a foundation for trans-sectorial partnerships that support youth in understanding and practicing inclusive leadership. This stage will also involve promoting policies to central and local governments, institutions, and commercial agencies that advocate for young leaders in multicultural societies, with particular attention to young refugees and migrants. Additionally, it aims to establish long-term policies for sustainable development, ensuring the project's outcomes are multiplied through the use of digital tools. To further these goals, three National Multiplier Conferences will be organized in Italy, the Maldives and Romania, along with one International Multiplier Conference in Malta, hosted by MGOZ as the applicant organization.

The **Inclusive Leadership Guide** is a crucial component of the Inclusive Leadership for Ethical and Multicultural Future Youth Leaders (ILED EMFYL) project. Structured into nine comprehensive chapters, the guide draws on the collective expertise of the partner countries—Malta, Italy, the Maldives, and Romania—and addresses key aspects of inclusive and ethical leadership for young people in a multicultural society.

The creation of this guide is the result of a dedicated and collaborative effort by the entire project team, including Dr. Cristian Dobre, Anthony Briffa, Dr. Igor Vitale, Dr. Mariyam Shakeela, Daniel Dobre, Dr. Mariella Segreti, Saniya Farooq, Mariyam Ameerza, Andreea-Diana Done, Alexandra-Maria Piper, Florentina Blegu, Nina Dobre. Each chapter was meticulously researched, organized, and crafted with great care to ensure it resonates with its intended audience and fosters long-term impact in promoting inclusive leadership.

It covers critical topics such as: Theoretical Concepts of Ethical and Inclusive Leadership; Psychological Needs of Young Leaders Working in Multicultural Environments; Cultural and Social Needs of the Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders; Economic and Administrative Needs of Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders; Entrepreneurial Skills for Young Migrants, Related to Inclusive Leadership and Management Skills Development; Needs of Young Migrant Women; Causes of Discrimination Against Young Women and Best Practices for Tackling It; Public Policy to Support Young Leaders, Including Those with a Migrant Background.

The Inclusive Leadership Guide is an indispensable resource not only for young people aspiring to become inclusive leaders but also for a wide array of professionals who engage with youth in various capacities. Administrators and institutional leaders, educators, teachers, psychologists, and mentors will find the guide instrumental in shaping strategies that foster leadership qualities in young individuals. Moreover, entrepreneurs and business leaders seeking to recruit adaptable, culturally competent young talent capable of thriving in a globalized, multicultural workforce will benefit from the insights and practical

tools provided. The guide's comprehensive approach ensures that it meets the needs of both individuals and organizations aiming to build inclusive, resilient, and dynamic leadership for the future.

In conclusion, the Inclusive Leadership Guide is more than just a tool—it's a blueprint for creating a generation of leaders equipped to navigate and succeed in increasingly diverse social and professional landscapes. By addressing the complex challenges faced by young leaders today, the guide offers both theoretical knowledge and practical solutions that can lead to transformative change.

We encourage you to dive into this guide and discover its wealth of knowledge, actionable strategies, and insights that will empower you to foster a more inclusive and ethical future. Whether you're a young leader, an educator, or a business professional, this guide is designed to inspire and equip you for the leadership challenges of tomorrow.

Enjoy your reading!

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Part I:

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP



THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF INCLUSIVE AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

I.1. Definitions and Characteristics of Inclusive and Ethical Leadership

In today's interconnected and globalized world, **inclusive leadership** has become increasingly critical for organizations aiming to stay competitive and innovative. It is not just a leadership style but a commitment to creating environments where diversity is embraced, every voice is valued, and individuals feel empowered to contribute their best work. Inclusive leadership transcends hierarchical structures and promotes a culture of belonging, encouraging collaboration, creativity, and innovation (Crawford, 2023).

Inclusive leadership seeks to unlock the full potential of every team member by creating a psychologically safe environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds—whether defined by race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or cognitive style—feel respected, valued, and heard. This leadership style ensures that all perspectives are considered, which leads to better decision-making and problem-solving, making organizations more agile and resilient.

To better understand inclusive leadership from an ethical and multicultural perspective, a comprehensive body of literature reveals various definitions of the concept. These perspectives reflect both the practical and

philosophical dimensions of inclusive leadership, offering insights into its essence and significance. Some of the most prominent definitions include:

- Inclusive leadership creates a work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and heard, regardless of their identity, such as gender, race, age, or sexual orientation. This leadership style promotes collaboration and productivity and offers organizations a competitive advantage through inclusivity.
- Inclusive leadership involves the ability to lead and manage diverse teams effectively while respecting each individual's uniqueness. Leaders who adopt this style avoid bias, favoritism, and discrimination, creating an environment where employees feel valued for their contributions.
- Inclusive leadership is based on empathy, respect, and understanding of diversity, not only in terms of identity markers like race or gender but also in thought and experience. Inclusive leaders foster an environment where every employee feels empowered to contribute their best work.
- Inclusive leadership seeks collaboration and decision-making that incorporates diverse knowledge and perspectives, which is crucial for problem-solving. This leadership style is especially effective in multicultural contexts, where leaders must be adept at managing varying cultural and social dynamics.
- Inclusive leadership emphasizes the importance of leveraging the unique strengths of all team members to foster creativity and innovation. By embracing different backgrounds and experiences,

leaders can create a workplace that drives better problem-solving and decision-making outcomes.

- Inclusive leadership is essential for organizations aiming to serve diverse customer bases in an increasingly globalized world. Leaders who value diversity are better equipped to adapt to changing market conditions and develop more inclusive products and services.

Inclusive leadership is thus a transformative leadership style that goes beyond promoting diversity for diversity's sake. It seeks to create workplaces where individuals are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work, knowing that their contributions will be valued and respected.

Inclusive leadership requires a specific set of characteristics that enable leaders to harness diversity effectively while creating an environment where individuals can thrive. These attributes, as outlined by Bourke (2016) and Dillon & Bourke (n.d.), include:

- ***Commitment to diversity and inclusion***

Inclusive leaders are deeply committed to diversity and inclusion, not merely because it is a social expectation, but because they understand that diverse perspectives drive better outcomes. This commitment often stems from a personal belief in fairness and equity, which motivates them to dedicate time and resources toward creating an inclusive culture.

Leaders who prioritize inclusivity actively work to integrate diversity into all aspects of their organization—from hiring practices to decision-making processes. They recognize that diversity includes more than visible traits such

as race and gender; it also encompasses different perspectives, experiences, and ways of thinking.

Furthermore, this commitment is not passive. Inclusive leaders invest in long-term strategies that promote inclusion, including mentorship programs, diversity training, and the establishment of inclusive policies. They know that fostering an inclusive culture requires continuous effort and engagement.

➤ ***Cognizance of bias***

One of the hallmarks of inclusive leadership is the awareness of personal and systemic biases. Inclusive leaders are cognizant of how bias—both conscious and unconscious—can shape decisions, behaviors, and interactions within an organization. They take proactive steps to recognize and mitigate these biases to ensure a fair and equitable environment for all team members.

This cognizance of bias involves engaging in self-reflection and developing an understanding of how one's own experiences and perspectives might influence judgment. Inclusive leaders encourage their teams to do the same, fostering an organizational culture where individuals are comfortable challenging biases and advocating for fairness.

To address biases, inclusive leaders may implement structural changes, such as blind recruitment processes or inclusive decision-making frameworks that prevent the overrepresentation of dominant voices. By being aware of biases, they create spaces where diverse voices are heard and valued.

➤ ***Curiosity and open-mindedness***

Inclusive leaders are characterized by their curiosity and open-mindedness. They actively seek out different perspectives and are eager to learn from others. This curiosity extends to understanding not only the cultural and social identities of their team members but also their unique ideas, experiences, and approaches to problem-solving.

An open-minded leader does not see diversity as a challenge but as an opportunity for growth and innovation. They are willing to question their assumptions and consider alternative viewpoints. By doing so, they create an environment where creative solutions can emerge from a variety of perspectives, and where all team members feel encouraged to contribute.

Moreover, inclusive leaders recognize the limitations of their own experiences and are unafraid to admit when they need to learn more. This willingness to be vulnerable and seek out knowledge demonstrates humility and creates a space where employees are more likely to share their insights without fear of judgment.

➤ ***Collaboration and empowerment***

Collaboration is a key element of inclusive leadership. Inclusive leaders recognize that diverse teams thrive when they are encouraged to collaborate and share their insights freely. They actively foster a culture where everyone feels empowered to voice their opinions, knowing that their contributions are valued and will be taken seriously.

Inclusive leaders go beyond mere delegation—they work alongside their team members, ensuring that the team operates as a cohesive unit. They

are skilled at bringing people together to collaborate on solutions, particularly in problem-solving scenarios where the integration of diverse viewpoints leads to more innovative and well-rounded outcomes.

Empowerment plays a critical role in this collaborative process. Inclusive leaders empower their teams by giving them the autonomy and confidence to contribute without fear of being dismissed or overlooked. This empowerment comes from creating safe spaces for expression, providing opportunities for growth, and ensuring that everyone has access to the resources they need to succeed.

➤ ***Courage to challenge the status quo***

Inclusive leadership often requires challenging established norms and questioning the status quo. Inclusive leaders demonstrate courage by advocating for underrepresented groups, even when it may be uncomfortable or unpopular. They are willing to confront systemic inequalities and work toward dismantling practices that perpetuate exclusion or disadvantage certain individuals.

This courage is particularly important when addressing issues of inequality or discrimination within an organization. Inclusive leaders do not shy away from difficult conversations or decisions—they embrace the opportunity to create meaningful change. Whether it's revising policies that perpetuate bias or standing up against discriminatory behavior, they lead with integrity and ensure that their organization upholds inclusive values.

Courage also manifests in a leader's willingness to acknowledge their own limitations. Inclusive leaders understand that they do not have all the

answers and that fostering an inclusive environment requires continuous learning and self-improvement.

➤ ***Cultural intelligence***

Cultural intelligence is a crucial trait of inclusive leaders, especially in multicultural and global environments. Cultural intelligence refers to a leader's ability to adapt their behavior and communication style to different cultural contexts. This includes understanding and respecting cultural differences and using this knowledge to navigate diverse environments effectively.

Inclusive leaders with high cultural intelligence are able to connect with individuals from various cultural backgrounds, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. They adapt their leadership approach depending on the cultural needs of their team members, ensuring that communication is clear and respectful across different cultural perspectives.

Culturally intelligent leaders also challenge cultural stereotypes and biases. They make a conscious effort to avoid generalizations, instead embracing the complexity and richness of cultural diversity within their teams.

➤ ***Accountability for inclusion***

Inclusive leaders hold themselves accountable for creating an inclusive environment. They understand that diversity and inclusion efforts must be measured and tracked to ensure progress. Inclusive leaders set clear diversity goals for their teams and organizations, ensuring that inclusion is not just a theoretical concept but a practical and measurable commitment. Accountability also extends to ensuring that all voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Inclusive leaders make it a point to include diverse perspectives when making decisions that affect the organization. They regularly solicit feedback from their team members, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalized groups, to ensure that their policies and practices align with the needs of all individuals.

By holding themselves and their organizations accountable for inclusion, these leaders demonstrate a long-term commitment to equity, fairness, and respect.

While inclusive leadership focuses on diversity and empowerment, **ethical leadership** is grounded in moral principles that guide a leader's actions and decisions. Ethical leadership is essential in building trust, promoting fairness, and ensuring accountability within organizations. Ethical leaders prioritize the well-being of their stakeholders, making decisions that reflect their integrity and moral responsibility.

Ethical leadership is defined by its adherence to fundamental ethical values such as honesty, fairness, transparency, and respect for others. It is about doing the right thing, not because it is easy but because it is ethically correct. Ethical leaders inspire others to act ethically and cultivate an organizational culture based on trust, responsibility, and shared values.

The characteristics that define ethical leadership are not just theoretical ideals but actionable traits that shape the behavior of a leader. These characteristics empower leaders to create environments that uphold moral standards while also driving performance and success.

➤ ***Integrity and character***

At the heart of ethical leadership is integrity. Integrity involves consistency in actions, decisions, and communication, aligning one's behavior with moral and ethical standards. Leaders with integrity do what is right, even when faced with difficult choices or when it may be easier to take an alternative route. They are transparent in their decision-making processes, ensuring that they are honest with their teams and stakeholders.

Integrity also involves being trustworthy. Ethical leaders build trust by consistently acting in accordance with their values and principles. This trust is crucial for maintaining credibility and legitimacy as a leader. When employees believe that their leader will act in their best interests and uphold moral principles, they are more likely to trust and follow their leadership.

Character, as defined by Resick et al. (2006), refers to the leader's "pattern of intentions, inclinations, and virtues" that provide the foundation for ethical behavior. A leader's character is shaped by virtues like humility, generosity, and the ability to forgive. Leaders who exhibit strong moral character demonstrate these virtues in every situation, building a foundation of ethical conduct that influences their teams.

➤ ***Fairness and justice***

Ethical leaders are champions of fairness and justice. They treat all individuals equitably, avoiding favoritism, discrimination, or bias. Fairness in leadership ensures that decisions are made based on merit and need, rather than personal relationships or prejudice. Ethical leaders establish clear and

transparent criteria for decision-making, making sure that all team members have equal opportunities to succeed.

Justice in leadership also extends to addressing systemic inequalities within the organization. Ethical leaders work to eliminate biases, ensuring that their workplace is inclusive and equitable. This can include reviewing policies and practices to identify any unintentional biases or barriers that disadvantage certain groups. By promoting fairness, ethical leaders create a culture where employees feel valued and respected, which increases engagement and commitment.

Additionally, fairness involves acknowledging the contributions of every individual within the team. Ethical leaders make it a priority to recognize and reward employees based on their achievements, fostering a meritocratic environment where hard work is appreciated and success is earned.

➤ ***Accountability and responsibility***

Ethical leaders take full responsibility for their actions and decisions, holding themselves accountable both to their teams and to broader stakeholders. Accountability involves recognizing when mistakes are made and taking appropriate corrective action, rather than deflecting blame or covering up errors. Ethical leaders lead by example, demonstrating that no one is above the rules or standards they set for others.

Responsibility also means that ethical leaders hold others accountable. They ensure that their team members adhere to ethical guidelines and that any lapses in judgment are addressed promptly and fairly. By maintaining high

ethical standards for themselves and their teams, these leaders reinforce the importance of ethical behavior across the organization.

Accountability is particularly important in maintaining transparency within the organization. Ethical leaders openly communicate the reasoning behind their decisions, allowing others to understand how ethical considerations have guided their actions. This fosters an environment of openness, reducing the likelihood of mistrust or conflicts arising from unclear or secretive decision-making processes.

➤ ***People and community orientation***

Ethical leaders are people-oriented, focusing on the well-being of their teams and the broader community. They prioritize the interests of the group over their own self-interest, demonstrating altruism in their leadership. Altruism involves engaging in actions that benefit others without expecting anything in return. Ethical leaders consistently make decisions that uplift their teams and contribute to the welfare of the organization as a whole.

A people-oriented approach means that ethical leaders are deeply aware of how their actions affect others. They consider the broader impact of their decisions, understanding that leadership is not just about achieving organizational goals but also about contributing positively to the lives of the people they lead. By focusing on the needs of others, ethical leaders foster a sense of loyalty and mutual respect within their teams.

This orientation also extends beyond the immediate team to the broader community. Ethical leaders often engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, ensuring that their organizations give back to society.

Whether through charitable work, sustainability efforts, or promoting diversity and inclusion, ethical leaders recognize their role in contributing to the greater good.

➤ ***Empowerment and encouragement***

Ethical leaders empower their employees by fostering a sense of autonomy and competence. They create an environment where team members feel capable of making decisions and taking initiative. By encouraging personal growth and development, ethical leaders build their employees' self-efficacy, enabling them to take on more responsibility and contribute more meaningfully to the organization's success.

Empowerment involves trusting employees to make decisions that align with the organization's ethical standards. Ethical leaders delegate authority, allowing employees to take ownership of their roles and encouraging innovation and problem-solving at all levels of the organization.

Additionally, ethical leaders actively encourage their team members to develop their skills and talents. This may involve providing access to professional development opportunities, mentorship, and resources that enable employees to grow. By investing in their employees' growth, ethical leaders demonstrate a commitment to their team's long-term success.

➤ ***Motivation and inspiration***

Ethical leaders not only motivate their teams but inspire them to achieve their best. Motivation in ethical leadership is not just about driving employees to reach goals but involves fostering a shared sense of purpose.

Ethical leaders help their teams connect their individual roles to the broader mission and values of the organization, creating an emotional engagement that drives collective success.

This emotional connection between the leader and the team often mirrors transformational leadership, where the leader inspires others by embodying the vision and values of the group. Ethical leaders engage with their teams, providing clear, value-based direction that aligns with the moral principles of fairness, integrity, and respect. This helps employees feel that they are contributing to something larger than themselves, increasing both motivation and job satisfaction.

➤ ***Ethical awareness and sensitivity***

Ethical leaders possess a high level of ethical awareness, meaning they are sensitive to the moral dimensions of the decisions they make. This awareness extends beyond personal values to include the recognition of how decisions impact various stakeholders. Ethical awareness allows leaders to identify potential ethical dilemmas and approach them with a clear understanding of the values and principles that should guide their actions.

This sensitivity to ethical issues ensures that leaders do not overlook the broader consequences of their decisions. Ethical leaders consider the needs of multiple parties—whether employees, customers, or the community—and weigh the potential outcomes to ensure that their actions align with the organization's ethical standards.

Leaders who demonstrate ethical awareness are also attuned to the ethical climate of their organization. They actively work to promote a culture

where ethical behavior is encouraged and rewarded. This may involve setting clear ethical guidelines, providing training on ethical decision-making, and creating channels for employees to voice concerns about unethical behavior.

Ethical leadership is not just about personal values or character; it has a profound effect on the broader organization. Research suggests that ethical leadership positively impacts organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Celik et al., 2015). Employees are more likely to feel engaged and motivated in organizations where leaders act ethically. Ethical leadership also creates a culture of trust and accountability, which fosters long-term success.

Furthermore, ethical leadership enhances the ethical behavior of individual employees through mechanisms of social learning and role modeling. Leaders who embody ethical values set a standard for behavior that others in the organization are likely to follow (Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2019). This creates a ripple effect, where ethical behavior becomes the norm across all levels of the organization.

Inclusive and ethical leadership are complementary approaches that, when combined, create a powerful framework for organizational success. Inclusive leadership ensures that diversity is valued and that all individuals, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to contribute. Ethical leadership, on the other hand, ensures that leaders act with integrity, fairness, and moral responsibility, guiding their organizations with a strong ethical compass. When leaders embrace both inclusive and ethical leadership, they create environments where diversity, fairness, and innovation thrive. These

leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities of today's globalized world, ensuring that their organizations remain adaptable, resilient, and socially responsible. Together, these leadership styles drive sustainable success and contribute to the development of more just and equitable organizations and communities.

In today's globalized world, inclusive leadership is essential for fostering innovation and collaboration by embracing diversity and creating environments where all individuals feel respected and empowered. This leadership style values diversity not only in identity but also in thought, promoting a culture of belonging where every voice is heard, leading to better decision-making and problem-solving. Inclusive leaders actively mitigate biases, encourage collaboration, and are committed to continuous learning and improvement. When combined with ethical leadership—characterized by integrity, fairness, and moral responsibility—these approaches create organizational cultures rooted in trust, accountability, and innovation, driving long-term success and social responsibility.

I.2. Inclusive vs. Classical Leadership: A Comparative Analysis

In a rapidly evolving world, where organizations increasingly operate in multicultural environments, the conversation around leadership styles has shifted. Classical leadership, often characterized by top-down, rigid decision-making, is no longer sufficient to meet the diverse needs of modern organizations. Inclusive leadership has emerged as a crucial alternative, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as central tenets. This section explores the key differences between these two leadership approaches and underscores the advantages of inclusive leadership in fostering innovation, employee engagement, and organizational success.

Inclusive leadership is built on the principles of valuing diversity and ensuring equity in decision-making, communication, and team dynamics. Its core objective is to harness the full range of talent within an organization, particularly from employees of different cultural and social backgrounds. This approach thrives on the belief that diversity is not merely a box to be ticked but a crucial driver of creativity, problem-solving, and overall business performance.

Inclusive leadership is essential for several reasons:

- ***Diverse perspectives:*** It enables the use of various viewpoints within international teams, enhancing creativity and problem-solving.
- ***Organizational performance:*** By involving employees from diverse backgrounds, inclusive leadership boosts organizational productivity and innovation.

- **Cultural integration:** It fosters a positive culture that encourages multiculturalism, paving the way for cross-border collaborations and ideas that couldn't be realized within national boundaries.
- **Talent attraction and retention:** Organizations led inclusively are more likely to attract and retain high-quality talent from international backgrounds.

The role of inclusive leadership in combating bias, providing psychological comfort, and creating a sense of belonging among employees is unmatched. It helps avoid conflicts, prevents isolation, and builds a supportive environment for all team members.

On the other hand, classical leadership is typically more hierarchical, with a single leader or small group making most of the decisions. This style tends to emphasize uniformity, authority, and established ways of working, often at the expense of innovation and inclusivity. Classical leaders are more likely to implement national, familiar solutions to challenges, and might be less inclined to involve diverse employees in decision-making.

Some key features of classical leadership include:

- **Top-down decision-making:** Classical leaders often make decisions unilaterally, relying on their own experience or traditional methods, and may not seek input from team members.
- **Rigid communication styles:** Communication under classical leadership tends to be one-sided and directive, focusing more on instructions than dialogue.

- ***Authoritative culture:*** Organizational cultures led by classical leaders can be rigid, focusing on maintaining hierarchy and authority.
- ***Conflict avoidance:*** Classical leaders may prefer to avoid conflict or manage it through authoritative measures rather than fostering open dialogue.
- ***Limited flexibility:*** In a fast-changing environment, classical leaders often struggle with adaptability, preferring traditional methodologies and practices.

To better understand the distinctions between these two styles, the following contrasts are critical:

- ***Diversity and inclusion:*** Inclusive leadership actively values and promotes diversity within the team, leveraging the unique perspectives of multicultural employees. Classical leadership tends to favor conformity, with less emphasis on fostering a diverse work environment;
- ***Decision-making:*** Inclusive leadership involves team members in decision-making, considering a wide range of viewpoints, leading to more creative and innovative outcomes. In the case of classical leadership, decisions are often made by leaders unilaterally, without much input from diverse team members;
- ***Communication style:*** Inclusive leadership encourages open dialogue and active listening, ensuring that every team member feels heard. In the case of classical leadership, communication is more

directive, with leaders issuing instructions rather than fostering a two-way conversation;

- **Organizational culture:** Inclusive leadership builds a culture of respect, collaboration, and mutual trust, promoting a sense of belonging for employees from all backgrounds. In the case of classical leadership, the culture may be more rigid, focused on maintaining traditional structures of authority and hierarchy;
- **Conflict management:** Inclusive leadership sees conflict as an opportunity for learning and encourages open dialogue to resolve issues. Classical leadership often manages conflict through authority, potentially stifling constructive solutions;
- **Employee development:** Inclusive leadership provides personalized mentoring, encouraging both personal and professional growth across the workforce. Classical leadership may offer less tailored development, focusing instead on uniform standards;
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** Inclusive leadership is open to change, adapting policies and practices to suit diverse teams. Classical leadership is often resistant to change, clinging to established processes.

Inclusive leadership, which emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, is vital in today's multicultural organizations for fostering innovation and engagement. Unlike classical leadership's top-down approach, inclusive leadership values diverse perspectives, encourages open communication, and creates a collaborative, adaptable culture. This approach enhances performance, problem-solving, and talent retention, while classical leadership often stifles innovation with rigid, hierarchical methods.

I.3. Leadership Theories: Foundations for Inclusive Leadership

The development of inclusive leadership is deeply intertwined with historical movements advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. From the Civil Rights Movement to present-day initiatives for gender, racial, and LGBTQ+ equality, the concept of inclusion has grown from a social imperative to a strategic necessity in organizational leadership. Over time, scholars in psychology, sociology, and leadership studies have highlighted the tangible benefits of diversity and inclusion for both organizational performance and employee well-being. This ongoing evolution of inclusive leadership has been shaped by resilience, reflection, and continuous adaptation to the demands of an ever-changing society.

Inclusive leadership draws upon and enriches several established leadership theories, offering fresh perspectives and valuable insights into the traditional frameworks. Each of these theories provides an essential foundation for understanding and fostering inclusive and ethical leadership:

➤ *Organizational Leadership*

Organizational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of strategic vision, goal-setting, and team collaboration. Leaders who adhere to this theory are skilled at aligning individual and group efforts toward common objectives. In the context of inclusive leadership, organizational leadership becomes even more critical as fostering inclusion requires leaders to create environments that support diverse perspectives while maintaining cohesion.

Effective teamwork in inclusive settings demands empathy, adaptability, and the ability to integrate varied viewpoints into strategic decision-making.

➤ ***Transformational Leadership***

Transformational leadership is one of the most closely aligned with inclusive leadership. It focuses on inspiring and motivating individuals to exceed their potential by fostering a sense of collective purpose. Transformational leaders create a shared vision and empower their followers to engage in positive change. This approach overlaps with inclusive leadership as both frameworks emphasize empowerment, motivation, and creating a culture where everyone feels valued. Leaders such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi exemplified transformational leadership, as they motivated and unified diverse communities to address social inequities and advocate for justice.

Moreover, the transformative leadership theory, as described by Shields (2011), integrates the principles of justice and democracy into leadership, critiquing inequitable practices and offering a vision of leadership that promotes inclusivity and equity. In this way, transformational leadership builds on earlier frameworks such as social justice leadership (Brooks et al., 2017) and culturally relevant leadership (Khalifa, 2018), both of which focus on addressing inequities and fostering environments where diversity is embraced.

➤ ***Authentic Leadership***

Authentic leadership theory underscores the importance of self-awareness, transparency, and integrity. Leaders who are authentic are driven by core values, which guide their actions and decisions. This transparency fosters trust and credibility, which are essential qualities for inclusive leaders. Authentic leadership aligns closely with inclusive leadership, as both approaches emphasize building trust with diverse stakeholders and acting with integrity in ways that reflect the needs of all individuals, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. According to Northouse (2018), authentic leaders are committed to fairness and openness, two key components of fostering inclusion.

➤ ***Servant Leadership***

Servant leadership, as articulated by Greenleaf (1977), positions the leader as a servant to their followers, prioritizing the well-being of others over personal gain. This leadership theory resonates with inclusive leadership, particularly in its focus on empathy, ethical behavior, and community building. Servant leaders seek to empower those around them, especially those from marginalized communities, by listening, offering support, and fostering a sense of belonging. For young leaders from diverse backgrounds, servant leadership serves as a powerful model of ethical leadership, reinforcing values of social justice, humility, and collective empowerment.

➤ ***Trait Theory***

Trait theory, one of the earliest approaches to understanding leadership, suggests that certain inherent qualities—such as confidence, resilience, and charisma—predispose individuals to become effective leaders. While this theory has been critiqued for its determinism and lack of emphasis on social and environmental factors, it provides useful insights into how young leaders, particularly those who exhibit these traits, can be nurtured and developed. For inclusive leadership, however, trait theory falls short in addressing the broader systemic challenges that leaders face when trying to foster inclusion within diverse environments.

Understanding the theoretical foundations of leadership is crucial for building inclusive and ethical leadership models. Inclusive leadership draws from the strengths of these frameworks, integrating key aspects of organizational, transformational, authentic, servant, and trait-based leadership. However, inclusive leadership goes beyond these theories by actively addressing the unique challenges of leading diverse groups, promoting equity, and creating environments where all individuals can thrive.

In practice, inclusive leaders must adopt a multifaceted approach, leveraging the visionary aspects of transformational leadership, the integrity of authentic leadership, and the empathy of servant leadership to navigate the complexities of diverse and multicultural organizations. In addition, the critique of inequity found in transformative leadership theory provides a foundation for inclusive leaders to actively work toward more just and equitable organizational practices.

Inclusive leadership is rooted in the history of social justice movements and intersects with established leadership theories like organizational, transformational, authentic, servant, and trait-based leadership. Each theory offers valuable insights—organizational leadership emphasizes teamwork, transformational leadership focuses on empowerment, authentic leadership builds trust, servant leadership prioritizes empathy, and trait theory highlights individual qualities. Inclusive leadership enriches these frameworks by actively addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion, promoting ethical leadership in multicultural contexts. Ultimately, it synthesizes these elements to create environments where diverse individuals can thrive, fostering justice, collaboration, and social responsibility.

I.4. The Pivotal Role of Young Leadership in a Globalized Society

In a world that is increasingly interconnected and fast-paced, the development of young, ethical, and inclusive leaders has never been more critical. These leaders stand at the forefront of addressing global challenges—ranging from economic volatility and technological disruption to climate change and deep-rooted social inequalities. As the future decision-makers, young leaders hold the responsibility of shaping not only their nations but also the global community.

The importance of fostering young leaders lies not only in their potential to bring fresh perspectives and innovation but also in their ethical and inclusive approach to leadership. These leaders, with a strong ethical foundation and a focus on inclusivity, are uniquely equipped to navigate the complexities of today's world, where cultural, economic, and political differences can easily lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. By fostering environments of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect, young leaders can drive positive societal change on a global scale. Their ability to bridge divides and foster unity makes them key players in addressing global issues that require coordinated, inclusive approaches.

One of the most pressing reasons to develop young leaders is the current climate of distrust surrounding traditional institutions. With public trust in governments, corporations, and other institutions steadily declining, there is a growing call for leaders who embody transparency, accountability, and

fairness. Young leaders, by prioritizing ethical conduct and inclusivity, are ideally positioned to restore this trust. They can foster confidence in leadership that is more attuned to the needs of diverse communities and future generations. This sense of accountability and moral leadership will be essential for making decisions that benefit not only current stakeholders but also the broader society and the environment in the long run.

Young leadership refers to the active participation of individuals under 40 in positions of influence and decision-making, spanning politics, business, civil society, and beyond. They bring with them an energy and dynamism that is vital for addressing some of the most urgent challenges of our time, such as climate change, economic inequality, and social justice. As Bass (2008) notes, young leaders are often more inclined to question the status quo, embracing new approaches that can lead to breakthroughs in tackling these entrenched problems.

The active engagement of young leaders in the political and economic landscape is essential for sustainable development. They ensure that the voices of future generations are not only heard but are a key part of the decision-making process. By integrating diverse perspectives and advocating for policies that reflect the aspirations of their peers, young leaders contribute significantly to the evolution of societal norms and structures. This is particularly true when it comes to entrepreneurship and technological innovation. Young leaders are often at the helm of these domains, driving job creation and injecting economic dynamism into both developed and emerging markets (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010).

In addition to their role in governance and economics, young leaders are crucial in leading social movements and fostering activism. Their passion for change and their refusal to accept outdated norms positions them at the heart of movements advocating for social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights. They are frequently the voices that demand more equitable systems and push for reforms that resonate with their generation's values and visions for the future.

Globally, nearly half of the population is under the age of 30 (United Nations, 2020), a staggering statistic that underlines the urgency of empowering this demographic to take on leadership roles. Failing to harness the potential of young people in leadership would be a missed opportunity for progress, especially as they represent the world's future workforce, consumers, and leaders. By fostering their development now, society ensures that it is better equipped to deal with the emerging challenges of tomorrow.

The development of young leadership is not merely a societal benefit but a necessity in our current era. Young leaders are not only the bearers of new ideas but also the torchbearers of ethical and inclusive leadership practices. Their capacity to foster collaboration, bridge divides, and inject innovation into stagnating systems makes them invaluable to shaping a more equitable, sustainable, and dynamic future. By investing in the growth of young, ethical leaders today, society lays the foundation for a more resilient and prosperous tomorrow.

Part II:

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF YOUNG LEADERS WORKING IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS



PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF YOUNG LEADERS WORKING IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

II.1. Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized world, organizations are navigating complex multicultural environments, requiring leaders who can embrace diversity and foster inclusion. This shift is particularly relevant for young leaders, who are often at the forefront of managing diverse teams. As organizations expand across borders, the psychological needs of these emerging leaders, particularly in multicultural settings, must be understood and addressed for leadership success and organizational cohesion.

This section examines the psychological needs of young leaders working in multicultural environments, with a focus on inclusive leadership. The study aims to explore the unique challenges these leaders face, including cultural adaptation, communication barriers, and the demands of managing teams with varied backgrounds. The importance of understanding these psychological needs is underscored by the increasing demand for inclusive leadership in international organizations, where young leaders are expected to navigate cultural complexities while fostering collaboration and innovation.

Using a comprehensive methodology that includes interviews, surveys, and case studies, this paper delves into the psychological elements specific to staff working in international organizations, highlighting the mental and emotional demands of managing multicultural teams. The paper also identifies good practices in supporting the psychological needs of young leaders,

emphasizing the role of training, mentorship, and organizational policies in fostering an inclusive leadership culture.

Moreover, the research explores how to encourage inclusive leadership within organizations to meet the psychological needs of young leaders, offering practical insights for creating supportive environments that promote both personal and professional growth. The study further examines the positive psychological effects evident in organizations where inclusive leadership is embraced, as well as the negative psychological effects that arise in the absence of such leadership practices.

Finally, the paper presents a detailed psychological profile of the inclusive leader, outlining the traits, skills, and emotional intelligence required to lead effectively in multicultural settings. This profile provides a framework for understanding how young leaders can be empowered to meet the challenges of leading diverse teams.

By exploring these aspects, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive leadership, offering strategies for supporting the psychological well-being of young leaders. It underscores the need for organizations to cultivate inclusive leadership practices that not only benefit individual leaders but also enhance team dynamics and organizational performance in today's multicultural world.

II.2. Psychological Research Methodology on Inclusive Leadership Among Young people

The following scientific methods were used to carry out this study: informative documentation of experiences in the field of inclusive leadership, interviews with leaders and managers from different fields of activity, the inclusive leadership questionnaire and the inclusive leaders self-assessment quiz.

Based on the background documentation, common elements of inclusive leadership were identified, which can be applied broadly within the project, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of young leaders to approach multiculturalism in an ethical way.

Public statistics have consistently demonstrated the advantages of inclusive leadership, revealing a direct link between inclusive practices and improved employee productivity as well as market growth. According to an ECCP White Paper, organizations that prioritize inclusive leadership and diversity are 70% more likely to tap into new markets compared to their competitors. In terms of profitability, McKinsey & Company research shows that companies with diverse executive teams are 33% more likely to achieve above-average profits. Additionally, Korn Ferry Research found that organizations fostering inclusive leadership are 87% more likely to make better decisions than their peers. Similarly, a study by Deloitte found that inclusive teams outperform others by 80% in team-based evaluations (IMD, 2024). Younger employees increasingly expect inclusive leadership. A recent Monster

survey revealed that 83% of Gen-Z candidates consider a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion to be a key factor when selecting an employer (Kratz, 2023). Inclusive management is 70% more likely to tap into new markets compared to traditional management. When the principles of inclusive leadership are applied effectively and ethically, profitability can increase by approximately 36%. Additionally, companies where leaders are trained in inclusive leadership see innovation levels rise by up to 19% compared to traditional organizations (Qualtrics, n.d.).

The conclusions are presented below.

Interviews with over 130 leaders on the subjects of inclusion and multiculturalism revealed key insights that emphasize the importance and relevance of these concepts today. The findings highlight the growing need to train young people in these areas, as the future of business and organizations increasingly lies in multiculturalism. Companies that are well-prepared in this domain are likely to see greater success in the market. With people moving across borders in search of better opportunities, they bring their unique ideas and customs, enriching the value of individuals, teams, and organizations—provided these elements are effectively managed and understood by leaders.

For young people, this presents an opportunity to adapt to the evolving work landscape and become effective inclusive leaders. However, recognizing and addressing the psychological needs of young inclusive leaders is essential to achieving this.

The **"Inclusive Leadership A1" questionnaire** was developed to evaluate leaders' perspectives on the international labor market and its influence on their business. From the application of the "Inclusive Leadership

A1” Questionnaire, created, piloted and validated by the project team, the following relevant issues emerged:

- The need to work with employees from outside the national space has increased significantly over the last 5 years (by more than 15%);
- The mobility of staff from multicultural backgrounds has increased by over 18% and even more in certain peak periods (especially in the agricultural and construction area) for seasonal workers;
- Companies looking to boost their turnover and expand are adopting strategies to hire employees with proven technical expertise from diverse international backgrounds (37%);
- Hiring staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds should be specifically addressed as a key component within the broader concept of inclusive leadership (69%);
- Management of firms/companies/organisations need specialised training, with a focus on the psychological side, to manage staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds ethically (74%);
- Young leaders and managers have strong advantages in approaching inclusive leadership, as they already know one or two international languages, have had international experience in mixed work teams, are quicker to understand the imperatives of the moment, compared to old-style leaders and managers who are more conservative by nature and sometimes rigidly apply the rules they have acquired in their careers at purely national level (69%);
- Integrating employees from multicultural backgrounds requires more attention at company/organisation level (64%).

The "Inclusive Leadership A1" questionnaire contains the following questions:

How would you rate the following aspects of inclusive leadership on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "not important" and 5 is "very important"?

Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
The need to work with employees from multicultural backgrounds?	1	2	3	4	5
Using employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds for seasonal projects (agriculture, construction, tourism, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5
Selecting and recruiting highly qualified staff from abroad?	1	2	3	4	5
Different treatment of staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds?	1	2	3	4	5
The need for company/organisation leadership and management training to better understand the challenges of multiculturalism and working with international employees?	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
Harnessing the strengths of young leaders and managers in an ethical and inclusive way?	1	2	3	4	5
Does integrating employees from different multicultural backgrounds require special attention from leaders and managers?	1	2	3	4	5

The questionnaire also contains demographic questions such as: length of time as a leader/manager, age, gender, size of company/organization, percentage of employees from multicultural backgrounds, etc. These aspects enabled the identification of the psychological needs of inclusive leaders and other relevant psychological aspects related to the concept. These findings will be the focus of this research study.

The **”Inclusive Leadership A2” questionnaire** was designed to evaluate leaders' and managers' understanding of the concept of "inclusive leadership." The results of this survey can provide valuable insights for identifying areas of strength and improvement in an organization's inclusive leadership initiatives.

Inclusive leadership is a transformative approach that embraces diversity, fosters a sense of belonging, and maximizes the potential of both individuals and organizations. By valuing diverse perspectives, promoting

equal opportunities, and cultivating empathy, inclusive leadership creates an environment where every voice is heard and appreciated. Prioritizing inclusion enables leaders to inspire collaboration, drive innovation, and enhance employee engagement. Ultimately, inclusive leadership not only delivers significant organizational benefits but also lays the foundation for a more equitable and harmonious workplace, positively influencing both individuals and society as a whole.

From the application of the "Inclusive Leadership A2" Questionnaire, created, piloted and validated by the project team, the following relevant issues emerged:

- Most leaders/managers have heard of the concept of "inclusive leadership" (84%);
- Most leaders/managers have read about inclusive leadership before hiring international staff (67%);
- Relatively few leaders/managers have attended courses/trainings related to inclusive leadership (23%);
- Few leaders/managers sent their subordinates to training courses/trainings related to inclusive leadership (14%);
- Most companies/organisations have initiated some concrete actions related to inclusive leadership (67%);
- Many managers have tried to adopt specific inclusive leadership behaviours when dealing with staff from multicultural backgrounds (89%);
- The majority of leaders/managers provide equal opportunities to multicultural and national staff (94%);

- Most leaders/managers take into account the particularities of multicultural staff (87%);
- Most leaders/managers take into account the understanding of the specific characteristics of employees from different multicultural backgrounds (87%);
- Leaders/managers recognise the efforts of subordinates to implement "inclusive leadership" in the company/organisation (80%);
- Leaders/managers seek to combat biases and prejudices of some national employees regarding staff from multicultural backgrounds (76%);
- Leaders/managers take into account the views and initiatives of employees from different multicultural backgrounds (75%);
- Some leaders/managers involve staff from different multicultural backgrounds in the decision-making process of the company/organisation (36%);
- Leaders/managers recognise the efforts of subordinates to implement "inclusive leadership" in the firm/organisation (90%);
- The majority of leaders/managers affirms that an organisational culture specific to the values of inclusive leadership should be developed in the organisation/firm.

The "Inclusive Leadership A2" questionnaire contains the following questions:

How would you rate the following aspects of inclusive leadership on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "never" and 5 is "very often"?

Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
I heard about the concept of "inclusive leadership"	1	2	3	4	5
I researched the concept of "inclusive leadership" on my own	1	2	3	4	5
I have attended at least one course/training organised by experts on "inclusive leadership"	1	2	3	4	5
I sent my subordinates to a course/training on "inclusive leadership"	1	2	3	4	5
We have initiated concrete actions in our company/organisation on the subject of "inclusive leadership"	1	2	3	4	5
I try to behave as a leader/manager who follows the principles of inclusive leadership	1	2	3	4	5
I offer equal opportunities to employees from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I take into consideration the multicultural characteristics of	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
employees from international backgrounds					
I am open to understanding the specificities of employees from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I take into account the needs of employees from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I'm trying to solve problems for employees coming from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I am trying to fight the biases and prejudices of some national employees towards staff from multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I take into consideration the views and initiatives of employees from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
I involve staff from different multicultural backgrounds in the decision-making process of the company/organisation	1	2	3	4	5
I acknowledge the efforts of my subordinates to implement	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
"inclusive leadership" in the company/organization					
The organisational culture of the company/organisation should include specific elements of inclusive leadership	1	2	3	4	5

The questionnaire also contains demographic questions such as: length of time as a leader/manager, age, gender, size of company/organization, percentage of employees from multicultural backgrounds, etc. These aspects enabled the identification of the psychological needs of inclusive leaders and other relevant psychological aspects related to the concept. These findings will be the focus of this research study.

The **"Inclusive Leadership A3" Quick Self-Assessment Test (Quiz)** is designed for leaders and managers to evaluate their personal skills in relation to "inclusive leadership." The results of this self-assessment can help raise awareness of their strengths and areas for growth regarding inclusive leadership, while also guiding their ongoing development in this crucial leadership area.

From the application of the "Inclusive Leadership A3" questionnaire, created, piloted and validated by the project team, the following relevant issues emerged:

- Most leaders/managers have skills on inclusive leadership, but these skills have been acquired from practical experience in dealing with staff from multicultural backgrounds;
- Many leaders and managers require ongoing development and practice of inclusive leadership skills to ensure they act consciously, knowledgeably, and ethically in their interactions with company or organization staff;
- Some leaders possess only a few specific inclusive leadership skills, highlighting the need for them to focus more on training in this area, while also reassessing their attitudes toward employees from multicultural backgrounds.

The "Inclusive Leadership A3" questionnaire contains the following questions:

How would you rate the following aspects of your skills related to inclusive leadership on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents "very low" and 5 "very high"?

Nr.	Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
1	Ability to get to know cultures different from your own	1	2	3	4	5
2	Ability to make national and multicultural employees feel useful in the company/organisation	1	2	3	4	5

Nr.	Question	Not important	Less important	Medium	Important	Very important
3	Ability to communicate easily with staff from multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
4	Empathy	1	2	3	4	5
5	Ability to fight bias and prejudice	1	2	3	4	5
6	Sensitivity to the problems of staff from different multicultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
7	Ability to implement in your company/organisation an organisational culture specific to inclusive leadership, based on ethical and non-discriminatory relationships between employees	1	2	3	4	5
8	Ability to build trust between employees from multicultural and national backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
9	Ability to build a multinational team that meets the purpose and objectives of the company/organisation	1	2	3	4	5
10	Ability to ensure the psychological comfort of all employees in the company/organisation, including international employees	1	2	3	4	5

Interpretation of Quiz answers:

Between 40 - 50 points: **You are a leader with real skills in the area of inclusive leadership.** You are adept at connecting with employees in a multicultural environment and can successfully build diverse teams that contribute significantly to the success of the company or organization. As a result, employees will feel comfortable in the environment you lead, benefiting both them and the organization as a whole.

Between 25 - 39 points: **You are a leader who knows the basics of inclusive leadership.** However, you may not have had sufficient practice with the specific skills of this leadership style so far. With perseverance and targeted training, you can refine your inclusive leadership abilities, making your company or organization even more effective.

Between 10 - 24 points: **You are a leader with only a few inclusive leadership skills.** You tend to adopt a more traditional, rigid leadership style, possibly viewing employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds as "cheap labor" and neglecting their psychological well-being. Additionally, you may harbor biases and prejudices toward staff from different cultural backgrounds. Significant effort is needed to develop your inclusive leadership skills, not only through specialized courses and training but also by rethinking your mindset. Embracing the concept of inclusive leadership will enable you to better recognize the benefits it can bring to your company or organization.

This subchapter details the methodology used to explore inclusive leadership among young people, utilizing interviews, surveys, and self-assessments. It reveals that most leaders develop inclusive leadership skills through experience, though formal training is lacking. The findings emphasize the positive impact of inclusive leadership on business success, and highlight the growing demand for such leadership among younger employees. The subchapter concludes by emphasizing the importance of supporting the psychological needs of young leaders in multicultural settings.

II.3. Psychological Elements Specific to Staff Working in International Organisations

International organizations and companies offer excellent examples and opportunities for collaboration across various fields, driven by inclusive leadership.

Leaders in these organizations have recognized that a diverse and inclusive workplace fosters a better environment for everyone. It encourages employees to innovate, collaborate creatively with those who are different from them, and develop improved products and services. This approach promotes fresh perspectives, leads to unexpected discoveries, instills a sense of pride, and enhances overall well-being.

To illustrate this, we present examples of internationally-oriented organizations where inclusive leadership is actively promoted.

➤ ***International and regional organisations (UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, SCO, etc.)***

At the **UN** level, all the world's states are represented, and the Organisation has over 125,400 direct employees, plus many more as service subcontractors and collaborators. All the teams working for the UN are multinational teams, and staff come from very different multicultural backgrounds. To this number we add national contributions of staff, including military personnel, who act as "peace keepers" or/and military observers in different hot spots around the globe.

This way of running the UN has enabled the development of a genuine style of inclusive leadership, where each person feels psychologically comfortable and has a sense of belonging to the UN in a real way. The organisational culture of the UN has gradually developed from its inception (24 October 1945) to the present day.

More than 6000 civilians are employed at **NATO** level, working both at headquarters and in NATO commands and agencies. In addition, several thousand military personnel are temporarily seconded from their countries to North Atlantic Organisation headquarters.

Periodically, NATO organises military exercises, on the territory of member states and in other areas of interest, involving large numbers of forces. Partner states which are not NATO members may also be involved in these activities, thus increasing the multicultural diversity of the organisation. These military exercises contribute to increased interoperability between member states and partners.

The culture of inclusive leadership at NATO level has gradually developed from the organisation's inception (4 April 1949) to the present day. Staff relations within NATO is another example of inclusive leadership, as every member state has representatives in this politico-military organisation.

The European Union (EU) employs more than 46,350 people, working both at EU headquarters and in its various sub-organisations. In addition to these staff, who come from the Member States, there are thousands of subcontractors from all over the world who work with EU staff. Member States also contribute staff on a temporary basis to the running of the EU, including military personnel. Given the EU's missions in different parts of the

world, it can be said that the level of multicultural networking is at its highest and the principles of inclusive leadership are applied in strict accordance with European values.

➤ ***Multinational companies (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Nvidia, Tesla, Alphabet, IBM, Nestle, Samsung, Deloitte, etc.)***

These multinational companies have gradually expanded their markets from national to international. As a result, the number of employees from very diverse multicultural backgrounds has progressively increased, integrating staff from local markets as well as international staff. This has resulted in multinational companies growing at a considerable speed in their quest for profit. Inclusive leadership has manifested itself in the recruitment, selection and retention of valuable staff and has ultimately led to increased company efficiency and turnover/profit.

Some companies have, over time, developed an organisational culture of inclusive leadership that supports both the company's goals and the psychological comfort of employees.

➤ ***National firms, temporarily employing workers from other cultures***

Due to local labor shortages, many national companies are compelled to hire staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds, either temporarily for seasonal work (such as agriculture, construction, and tourism) or highly skilled professionals to address complex technological challenges. Some businesses are just beginning to employ multicultural staff, while others have years of

experience in this area, resulting in varying stages of development in inclusive leadership.

Public statistics indicate that incorporating staff from diverse backgrounds has had positive effects on national companies, consistently improving efficiency and boosting turnover.

When discussing organizations that involve international staff, it's essential to consider the different levels of inclusive leadership. Several tiers of this leadership style have been identified:

- ***Inclusive Strategic-Level Leadership*** - At this level, top leaders and managers create policies, establish guiding principles, shape the organizational culture, and align the company with market demands (Antonakis et al., 2004; Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Dansereau, Alutto, & Yammarino, 1984; Wang & Howell, 2010);
- ***Tactical-Level Inclusive Leadership*** - Here, leaders and managers from various divisions down to team level establish local rules that best facilitate a multicultural work environment. This fosters a sense of belonging, loyalty, and collaboration among employees, regardless of their cultural background (Ferdman and Deane, 2013);
- ***Employee-Level Inclusive Leadership*** - At this individual level, staff members have internalized the principles of inclusive leadership and naturally apply them in their interactions with colleagues. This level often emerges organically as employees work together and strive to contribute to the success of the organization.

The subchapter presents the psychological elements related to inclusive leadership in international organizations. It highlights the importance of diverse and inclusive workplaces in fostering innovation, well-being, and collaboration. Examples from international organizations like the UN, NATO, and the EU, as well as multinational and national companies, illustrate how inclusive leadership enhances organizational culture and efficiency. It also outlines three levels of inclusive leadership: strategic, tactical, and employee-level, emphasizing how leadership styles shape organizational success and the psychological comfort of employees.

II.4. Psychological Good Practices in Supporting the Needs of Inclusive Young Leaders

Beyond the principles of inclusive leadership, which are inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core values of the European Union, implementing this concept in real-world scenarios requires a set of concrete actions that impact behavior at every level—from strategic to individual. These actions are inspired by practical experiences, including both successes and challenges, exceptional outcomes in specific fields, and lessons learned from working in multicultural environments.

To illustrate, the following section presents good practices that can ethically support the needs of young inclusive leaders:

- ***Participate in training sessions and courses for inclusive young leaders:*** This approach entails providing professional training for leaders within the company or organization, conducted by experts in inclusive leadership, such as psychologists, social workers, and government representatives. As a result of this training, improvements in inclusive leadership practices within the organization are anticipated. In some cases, a "train the trainer" model is employed, creating a positive ripple effect throughout the organization;
- ***Prepare yourself psychologically as a leader on the challenges of inclusive leadership:*** This approach requires young leaders to understand not only the positive aspects of multiculturalism but also

the potential challenges and negative outcomes, such as extremist movements, fundamentalism, separatism, and discrimination;

- ***Mark multicultural staff holidays on the company calendar:*** Such an approach requires the inclusive leader to take each employee/group of employees seriously and pay attention to their cultural particularities. Some holidays may be very important for staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds and ignoring them may cause great psychological discomfort to employees if they are not observed or at least marked by the company/organisation's leadership;
- ***Establish "Multi-Cultural Day" in the company:*** A day like this is intended to foster mutual understanding among employees. Both multicultural employees and national staff can participate, depending on the organization's structure. A cultural day within the company undoubtedly holds significant team-building value;
- ***Send congratulatory messages to team members from other cultural backgrounds:*** On the occasion of important holidays, it is advisable for the leadership of the company/organisation to send written congratulatory messages to workers from multicultural backgrounds. Such a gesture of courtesy is in fact an action of public diplomacy, with major positive effects at company/organisation level;
- ***Ensure equal and non-discriminatory opportunities for every team member, regardless of gender, race, religion:*** Within the multicultural team there may be major differences related to gender,

race, religion, etc. It is important that these differences do not lead to discrimination and that each team member has a sense of absolute usefulness within the company/organisation;

- ***Integrate marginalised groups into the team:*** While inclusive leadership discussions often focus less on marginalized groups, these groups are very much present and active in real-life organizational settings. At times, they can become sources of tension within the company, whether through protesting management decisions, creating work conflicts, engaging in unfair competition with other multicultural groups, or displaying negative behaviors such as undermining colleagues' achievements or self-segregating based on religion or language. Early identification of these groups and addressing their genuine needs through inclusive leadership can help prevent conflicts and diffuse potential tensions;
- ***Conduct interviews with people from different cultural groups:*** Halting engagement with employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds after the employment contract is signed can be a significant oversight for the company or organization. International employees should regularly communicate with their managers about any concerns, and HR departments should, where possible, invite them to professional interviews for feedback to maintain ongoing support and engagement;
- ***Allocate responsibility for integrating all members, including those from different cultural backgrounds, into the team:*** Adapting to a new culture can be a time-consuming process that requires

significant psychological effort. Employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds need a period of adjustment, during which they should receive guidance from an inclusive leader or designated colleagues. This support helps them understand the new societal norms, what to avoid, what is acceptable, and how to handle dilemmas or unfamiliar situations, as well as how to respond to various incidents;

- ***Exchange experiences with other inclusive leaders who have employees from different cultural backgrounds:*** This type of initiative can be implemented both within a company or organization and between different companies or organizations. At times, such exchanges of experience can be facilitated by non-governmental organizations or governmental and local institutions, focusing on issues like multiculturalism, employment, work permits, law compliance, immigration, and refugees;
- ***Share responsibility for inclusive culture with all employees:*** This approach allows the inclusive leader to delegate some responsibility for managing employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds to other subordinates, and more importantly, to the entire team. It is essential that every team member feels responsible, supportive, adaptable, and open to change. In this way, both the team and individuals benefit, while the inclusive leader can focus on other critical aspects of the company or organization;
- ***Use mentors and sponsors:*** Many companies and organizations implement this system with some of their employees. Although more

limited in scope, it fosters a stronger interpersonal connection between the mentor or sponsor and the mentee, providing better integration into the new working environment;

- ***Fight your own biases and prejudices:*** While many leaders believe they are inherently inclusive due to their training and education, underlying biases and prejudices may persist. It's essential to acknowledge these biases, address them thoughtfully, and eliminate them gradually, one by one. This approach will help inclusive leaders become more adaptable and receptive to the challenges they face;
- ***Combat bias and prejudice among employees from multicultural backgrounds:*** Having employees from various multicultural backgrounds can sometimes result in biases and prejudices that impact individuals, groups, the organization, and the host country. It is crucial to recognize these biases with care and diplomacy, and to address them effectively. Doing so will empower employees to think and act freely, creating a more inclusive environment;
- ***Provides support for the adaptation and integration of employees from international backgrounds*** (legal issues, accommodation, schooling for children, language courses for staff from other cultural and linguistic areas, etc.): At times, psychological measures alone may not be enough to support the adaptation process of staff from multicultural backgrounds. Consequently, it is also the inclusive leader's responsibility to address the administrative and legal needs

of their team members. This comprehensive approach will naturally enhance employees' psychological comfort;

- ***Organize "Family Day" in the organization:*** On such a day of celebration, employees from multicultural and national backgrounds who have children can engage more informally with one another. This can be achieved by organizing competitions, small musical and dance events, showcasing traditional foods, screening films from employees' countries of origin, and explaining local customs, among other activities;
- ***Combat separatist and discriminatory manifestations within the company/organisation:*** At times, employees from multicultural backgrounds may self-isolate due to various factors such as religion, race, or nationality, and in some cases, they may even become radicalized for reasons like distorted perceptions of reality, influence from extremist leaders, negative habits from their home countries, or involvement in illegal activities. It is crucial to identify and address any signs of this early on, as it can pose significant risks to the organization. A well-trained inclusive leader possesses the skills to manage these situations effectively. If needed, local or central authorities can be consulted for expert assistance;
- ***Develop your empathetic sensitivity as an inclusive leader to the real needs of employees:*** In other words, empathize with your employees by considering their needs from their perspective;
- ***Integrate employees from multicultural backgrounds into the organisational culture of the company/organisation:*** This process

can take time and occurs gradually, with each employee engaging voluntarily, often even unconsciously. It's not something that can be mandated; however, using slogans and other materials—such as videos and posts on the company's website—can help convey powerful emotional messages to employees;

- ***Encourage psychological counselling for staff from other cultures:*** Sometimes, employees may experience sensitive psychological challenges, such as the loss of a relative back home, homesickness, longing for family and local customs, issues of self-isolation, sub-clinical psychological problems, hidden distress, unresolved issues from their home country, or new challenges that arise while they're away. These concerns can often be addressed, either fully or partially, with the support of a qualified psychologist;
- ***Transform the organisation into a place where the commercial-financial side is not the only motivation for employees from other cultural backgrounds to work in the organisation:*** While financial compensation is a primary motivator for everyone in a company, as an inclusive leader, strive to highlight other motivations for work among employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds. Many of these motivations are rooted in moral values, such as having a supportive team, the opportunity to learn new things, the enjoyment of collaborating with skilled colleagues, and experiencing ethical and fair behavior from peers;
- ***Involve employees from multicultural backgrounds in volunteering:*** Such initiatives foster civic spirit and enhance social

responsibility among employees. Many will carry these experiences with them throughout their lives, sharing them in their home countries and future workplaces, resulting in positive effects for everyone involved;

- ***Creates a sense that the employee belongs to the organization, regardless of culture:*** This approach must be developed gradually, as it is integral to the organization's culture. The inclusive leader plays a supportive role in shaping employees' sense of belonging within the company;
- ***Learn new words and expressions from employees from different cultural backgrounds:*** These efforts can benefit both current and future employees. When individuals hear words and expressions in their native language from an inclusive leader or colleagues, it fosters feelings of enjoyment and appreciation, enhancing their psychological comfort and, in turn, their work performance;
- ***Encourage the involvement of employees from different multicultural backgrounds to come up with ideas and initiatives:*** Individuals are more likely to invest in their work when they sense a social purpose and feel appreciated.

This subchapter outlines key practices for supporting young inclusive leaders in multicultural environments, focusing on professional training, cultural awareness, and bias reduction. It encourages supporting marginalized groups, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering belonging. Recommendations include organizing multicultural events, offering mentorship, and providing psychological support to boost integration and morale.

II.5. Fostering Inclusive Leadership in Companies/Organizations to Address the Psychological Needs of Young Inclusive Leaders

Young leaders require guidance, counseling, and training to develop into truly inclusive and ethical leaders. As they gain training and experience within the organization, these leaders will increasingly showcase their skills and be able to impart valuable competencies for managing employees from multicultural backgrounds to their subordinates.

To promote inclusive leadership within the organization and support the needs of young inclusive leaders, our study has identified several key areas for action:

- ***Involving young leaders in training programmes on inclusive leadership:*** This type of training is already a good practice in many companies/organisations, which allows a very useful set of information on inclusive leadership to be conveyed to the audience in an organised way;
- ***Developing a culture of inclusive leadership for young people:*** Working with staff from different multicultural backgrounds also means building a culture of inclusive leadership. Often, this kind of psycho-social approach to the concept is subordinated to the organisational culture of the company;
- ***Develop the institution of mentoring for young leaders:*** The institution of mentoring for inclusive young leaders involves a

process of mentoring by people with extensive experience in human resource management from diverse multicultural backgrounds. Mentors already have experience in the field of inclusive leadership and pass it on to young leaders;

- ***Involving employees in multicultural activities:*** Working with staff from different multicultural backgrounds also means involving them in multiple activities, both related to their current job, but also cultural and social activities. Without this involvement, employees from different multicultural backgrounds may feel neglected and even abandoned, which can create problems for their psychological comfort and thus for their effective involvement in the life of the company/organisation;
- ***Develop programmes to facilitate real intercultural inter-connectivity between employees:*** Although they come from different multicultural backgrounds, many employees find common values. These can be connected both to the customs of their home countries and to those that characterise the organisational culture of the company/organisation in the country where they work. This helps to facilitate communication and develop similar behaviours;
- ***Avoiding separation of employees on the basis of religion, gender, nationality, culture, etc:*** It is essential that employees within the company/organisation are not separated on the basis of race, gender, religion, ideology, nationality, culture, etc. This kind of separation can be massively detrimental to the efficiency of the company/organisation;

- ***Maintain an ethical, transparent, fair and open environment in the organisation:*** Young inclusive leaders must be concerned with maintaining an ethical environment within the company/organisation. This will enable employees from different multicultural backgrounds to better understand the challenges of the workplace and to communicate openly and transparently on issues of concern. Such a working environment will increase both the individual employee's and the company's/organisation's efficiency;
- ***Creating real development opportunities for every employee in the organisation:*** Every team member seeks recognition and personal growth, which can lead some to be promoted to management positions. This strategy aligns well with the principles of inclusive leadership;
- ***Fighting inequalities and discrimination in the organisation:*** Inequalities and discrimination are undoubtedly present in some organizations. It is the responsibility of inclusive leaders to identify these issues early and find effective solutions to address them. If left unaddressed, these problems can become chronic and cause significant harm to the organization;
- ***Creating a mindset for young leaders to work in multicultural environments:*** Such an approach requires an intrinsic internalisation of the values of inclusive leadership, out of conviction and a way of behaving typical of inclusive leaders;
- ***Develop talent management programmes at the organisational level:*** Such a programme enables employees with outstanding skills

in specific areas of work to be selected and promoted. Harnessing the experience, training, talent, creativity of employees from different multicultural backgrounds can be a priority for the company/organisation. Teams that embrace diverse perspectives and backgrounds can develop more innovative solutions to complex problems. Inclusive leadership fosters a culture of creativity and innovation, which can lead to improved results;

- ***Stimulating inclusive leaders to stay connected with diverse cultural environments, by developing international communication and knowledge network:*** Such an approach helps to better understand the international multicultural environment, develop international communication, facilitate recruitment and selection processes for future employees;
- ***Promoting a culture of collaboration at the company/organisation level:*** When team members feel valued and respected, they are more likely to trust each other, leading to better teamwork and collaboration. Teams that work together effectively can achieve more and produce better results;
- ***Educating employees from different cultural backgrounds about the rules of society and the organisation and preventing crime of any kind:*** Employees from diverse multicultural backgrounds must understand the norms of the host society, which can differ significantly from those in their home countries. What may be deemed 'legal' or 'normal' at home might be 'illegal' or inappropriate in the new environment. Regular meetings with relevant authorities

(such as police, migration agencies, and company experts) or distributing guides and informational materials can help these employees familiarize themselves with the rules of the host society;

- ***Integrate the principles of inclusive leadership into the assessment criteria for leaders at all levels:*** In most companies and organizations, leaders undergo regular evaluations. It is important that these assessments include criteria related to the integration of inclusive leadership principles into their current work;
- ***Cultivate a culture of continuous learning in the organisation:*** Lifelong learning is fundamentally a journey of personal development, but it also serves as a means for the company or organization to continuously enhance itself;
- ***Develop programmes for all employees to learn and improve the language spoken within the organisation:*** Knowledge of an international language is useful, but sometimes it is necessary for staff to know other languages (e.g. the language of the host country). Inclusive leaders can also learn words and expressions from staff from multicultural backgrounds;
- ***Unlocking collective intelligence:*** Inclusive leadership not only benefits individuals but also brings numerous advantages to teams. By embracing inclusive leadership, organizations can tap into the full potential of their teams and enhance their collective intelligence. According to a Harvard Business analysis, teams led by inclusive leaders report 29% higher levels of collaboration and 17% greater productivity;

- ***Developing the idea that the team is strong because it is international,*** and united through diversity and common organisational goals. This approach cultivates employee loyalty and provides them with opportunities for growth within the organization;
- ***Anticipating cultural challenges in the organisation and meeting them with innovative rather than passive and reactive solutions:*** At times, the proportion of employees from various cultural backgrounds can shift significantly, with national staff potentially becoming a minority. Inclusive leaders must consider all aspects of staff dynamics to maintain a healthy balance within the organization;
- ***Involving psychologists in the work of the organisation to monitor the integration and adaptation process of new employees from different cultural backgrounds:*** Psychologists can utilize profession-specific methods to assess the morale and mental well-being of employees from multicultural backgrounds, as well as provide individual support when these employees encounter psychological challenges;
- ***Review company/organisation policies to adapt them to employees from different multicultural backgrounds:*** It is beneficial to conduct this periodically as the organization expands and incorporates staff from international backgrounds;
- ***Implement reverse mentoring:*** This involves young leaders instructing senior leaders on specific aspects of inclusive leadership. Occasionally, senior leaders cling to outdated working styles and may be hesitant to adopt new practices. Implementing a reverse

mentoring program will facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer regarding inclusive leadership, resulting in positive outcomes for the organization.

These initiatives aim to promote inclusive leadership at the organizational level while providing support to young leaders.

This subchapter focuses on promoting inclusive leadership by providing training, mentoring, and encouraging multicultural involvement. It emphasizes ethical practices, fighting discrimination, continuous learning, and incorporating inclusive leadership in assessments. It also highlights the importance of talent development, international collaboration, and using reverse mentoring to bridge generational gaps. Psychologists are recommended to support employee adaptation and well-being.

II.6. Positive Psychological Effects in a Company/Organisation where Inclusive Leadership for Young People is Encouraged

Promotion and development initiatives based on inclusive leadership can offer substantial psychological benefits to companies and organizations.

- Promoting intercultural tolerance;
- Enhancing mutual understanding among employees;
- Fostering creativity, work efficiency, team cohesion, and reinforcing organizational values;
- Preventing and discouraging separation based on race, culture, religion, gender, and other factors;
- Improving communication among employees;
- Ensuring the psychological well-being of employees and their families;
- Cultivating positive emotions;
- Reducing aggression within teams;
- Eliminating bias and prejudice;
- De-escalating conflicts;
- Enhancing employees' sense of social contribution;
- Boosting employee loyalty to the organization;
- Raising awareness among employees;
- Increasing employee involvement in problem-solving;
- Reducing the number of sick days;
- Decreasing counterproductive behaviors;

- Encouraging innovation;
- Improving employee motivation;
- Strengthening inclusion in work teams;
- Retaining valuable staff within the organization;
- Reducing organizational stress;
- Enhancing staff resilience to new challenges;
- Improving job satisfaction;
- Building a sense of belonging to the organization;
- Strengthening positive interpersonal relationships within the team;
- Creating a sense of unity through diversity;
- Encouraging creativity within the organization;
- Enhancing the organization's reputation;
- Building organizational trust;
- Increasing appreciation of employee efforts;
- Eliminating unfair competition;
- Promoting mutual understanding;
- Preventing negative psychological states such as anxiety, frustration, depression, anger, and rebellion.

All these psychological effects will be reflected in the efficiency of the company/organisation on the one hand and in the psychological comfort of the employees on the other. These should be important benchmarks for inclusive leaders.

This subchapter highlights the positive psychological effects of promoting inclusive leadership for young people in organizations. Key benefits include enhanced intercultural tolerance, mutual understanding, creativity, team cohesion, and communication. It also emphasizes reducing biases, conflicts, and stress while boosting employee motivation, loyalty, job satisfaction, and a sense of belonging. These improvements lead to increased efficiency and overall psychological well-being within the organization.

II.7. Negative Psychological Effects in a Company/Organisation where Inclusive Leadership for Young People is Not Encouraged

Unfortunately, negative psychological effects can arise in organizations with staff from diverse multicultural backgrounds. These issues often stem from the absence of genuine inclusive leadership, the dominance of authoritarian or traditional leadership styles, and the disregard for inclusive leadership principles.

Additional causes include the removal of authentic inclusive leaders, leaders' lack of concern for the real challenges faced by multicultural staff, entrenched biases and prejudices, segregation based on race, nationality, culture, or religion, and the tolerance of extremist, racist, or xenophobic behaviors. In some cases, ignoring illegal or criminal activities, such as drug trafficking or other illicit acts, also contributes to these negative effects.

As a result of these underlying causes, negative psychological effects are likely to persist. These effects can include:

- Decreased intercultural tolerance;
- Reduced mutual understanding among employees, leading to conflicts;
- Declining creativity, work efficiency, and team cohesion;
- Non-compliance with ethical standards within the organization;
- Segregation of employees based on race, customs, religion, gender, etc.;
- Diminished communication between employees;

- Lowered psychological comfort for employees and their families;
- Development of negative emotions such as frustration, dissatisfaction, rebellion, verbal aggression, fear, low self-confidence, guilt, loneliness, envy, worry, hatred, boredom, and contempt;
- Increased aggression within the team;
- Reinforcement of personal biases and prejudices;
- Diminished sense of social usefulness and reduced work performance;
- Decreased employee loyalty to the organization;
- Lowered conscientiousness among employees;
- Reduced involvement in addressing organizational problems;
- Increased number of sick days;
- Escalating counterproductive behavior;
- Declining innovation;
- Reduced employee motivation and increased turnover;
- Lowered inclusion in work teams;
- Heightened organizational stress;
- Weakened resilience to new challenges;
- Decreased job satisfaction;
- Diminished sense of belonging to the organization;
- Erosion of organizational trust;
- Increased tendency for employees to isolate based on nationality, religion, ideology, or race;

- Growing extremism within multicultural groups, particularly along religious or ideological lines.

This subchapter discusses the negative psychological effects that can arise in organizations lacking genuine inclusive leadership. Causes include authoritarian leadership, entrenched biases, and segregation based on race, religion, or nationality. These factors can lead to decreased intercultural tolerance, reduced communication, increased conflicts, lowered creativity, and diminished employee loyalty and job satisfaction. Additional effects include rising stress, counterproductive behaviors, isolation, and extremism within multicultural groups.

II.8. Psychological Profile of the Inclusive Leader

One of the key objectives of the research was to develop a psychological profile of the inclusive leader.

This approach is valuable as it enables management staff within the company or organization to compare their own leadership style with the standardized profile proposed by the project team. The psychological profile of the inclusive leader helps individuals recognize the skills they currently possess while encouraging personal growth to acquire new competencies specific to inclusive leadership. This method addresses the real needs of young, ethical inclusive leaders.

Drawing from the responses of leaders who participated in the opinion survey (via Questionnaires A1 and A2) and interviews, as well as insights from relevant literature (studies, research, books, articles), the following inclusive leader profile was created:

- ***Embrace curiosity and openness towards other cultures:*** This attitude not only allows inclusive leaders to gain comprehensive insights into their employees but also demonstrates their willingness to engage with diverse perspectives. Expanding cultural knowledge is invaluable for effective leadership;
- ***Exhibit strong communication skills:*** Clear and effective communication is essential, ensuring that thoughts are conveyed in a straightforward, unambiguous manner. Inclusive leaders should

adapt their tone, pace, and clarity to the situation, and use tools such as repetition and clarification to ensure mutual understanding;

- **Show compassion:** Compassion involves responding to others' problems with care and understanding, creating a supportive work environment;
- **Demonstrate empathy:** Empathy allows inclusive leaders to understand the emotions and thoughts of others, regulate their own emotions, and foster altruistic, helpful behavior toward their team, especially in high-stress situations;
- **Value all employees, including those from multicultural backgrounds:** Recognizing and appreciating employees for their work contributes to higher productivity, loyalty, and overall satisfaction;
- **Eliminate biases and prejudices:** It's vital for inclusive leaders to actively work against biases, as they can lead to unethical behavior and conflict within the organization;
- **Cultivate self-awareness in a multicultural context:** Leaders must regularly assess their strengths and weaknesses, especially in interacting with employees from diverse backgrounds;
- **Admit mistakes:** Inclusive leaders are not infallible, but their ability to acknowledge and correct mistakes demonstrates strength and integrity;
- **Build intercultural connections:** Strengthening ties between cultures within the team enhances cohesion and organizational success;

- ***Develop emotional intelligence:*** Understanding one's own emotions and those of others is crucial for managing relationships and fostering a positive work environment;
- ***Foster trust:*** Trust is built gradually and is one of the most impactful aspects of leadership, contributing to both individual and organizational success;
- ***Manage and prevent conflicts:*** Inclusive leaders must be proactive in identifying and mitigating potential conflicts to maintain team morale and organizational efficiency;
- ***Recognize employee performance:*** Acknowledging the accomplishments of employees, particularly from diverse backgrounds, fosters confidence and motivation;
- ***Enhance interpersonal communication in multicultural teams:*** Effective communication fosters collaboration, problem-solving, and team cohesion;
- ***Promote a culture of respect:*** Respect within an organization is fundamental to optimal functioning and contributes to positive employee experiences;
- ***Practice active listening:*** Leaders should spend more time listening than speaking, enabling them to better understand and address issues within the organization;
- ***Exhibit humility:*** Despite their knowledge, inclusive leaders should remain modest and open to new perspectives, avoiding arrogance that can harm relationships;

- ***Recognize personal limits and work to overcome them:*** Inclusive leaders must be aware of their own challenges and continually seek to improve;
- ***Be resilient:*** The ability to recover from setbacks is crucial in maintaining leadership stability in difficult times;
- ***Practice assertiveness:*** Leaders must express their thoughts and needs clearly and respectfully, without infringing on others' rights;
- ***Continuously develop cultural intelligence:*** Inclusive leaders should actively seek to understand cultural differences and adapt their behaviors accordingly;
- ***Be creative:*** Solving complex problems in diverse teams requires innovative approaches;
- ***Remain focused on organizational goals:*** While inclusive leaders prioritize people, they also stay committed to achieving the organization's objectives;
- ***Recognize and harness multicultural talents:*** Inclusive leaders must appreciate fresh ideas from diverse employees and integrate them effectively;
- ***Provide real-time feedback:*** Feedback should be timely and adapted to the situation, whether it involves solving issues or evaluating performance;
- ***Uphold ethics and fairness:*** Fairness builds a positive organizational climate and ensures that all employees feel valued;

- ***Ensure equal opportunities:*** Inclusive leaders must guarantee that every employee, regardless of background, has equal access to opportunities and is not subjected to favoritism;
- ***Encourage initiative:*** Leaders should promote and support valuable ideas from all employees;
- ***Lead by example:*** Leaders should consistently exhibit positive behavior and attitude, as this sets the tone for the rest of the team;
- ***Delegate inclusive leadership skills:*** Empowering others by delegating leadership roles fosters growth and accountability within the team;
- ***Celebrate diversity:*** Properly managed diversity can significantly enhance the organization's success;
- ***Ensure psychological comfort:*** Inclusive leaders create environments where employees feel safe to express themselves and contribute optimally;
- ***Think outside the box on diversity and inclusion:*** Creative thinking in these areas gives leaders a competitive edge in decision-making;
- ***Show courage in challenging the status quo:*** Leaders must be willing to confront outdated prejudices and promote a more inclusive work environment;
- ***Identify and eliminate biases:*** Although biases exist, inclusive leaders must be vigilant in identifying and addressing them;
- ***Demonstrate flexibility:*** While rules are important, inclusive leaders should apply them with flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs of their employees;

- ***Encourage multinational teamwork:*** Leaders should create spaces where team members can freely share their ideas and collaborate;
- ***Maintain a positive attitude:*** Staying positive, even in difficult conversations, fosters a more uplifting and productive work environment;
- ***Acknowledge employee vulnerabilities:*** Recognizing that everyone has weaknesses allows leaders to manage challenges with empathy;
- ***Seek guidance when necessary:*** Inclusive leaders should know when to seek expert advice, whether from psychologists, mentors, or experienced colleagues;
- ***Be visionary:*** Having a clear sense of purpose and direction is essential for leading effectively in diverse environments;
- ***Develop integrative capacity:*** Leaders should be skilled at integrating diverse viewpoints in a constructive way;
- ***Optimize situations tactfully:*** Leaders must analyze situations carefully and choose the best course of action;
- ***Apply an adaptive mindset:*** Flexibility and openness to different perspectives are key traits of an inclusive leader;
- ***Promote a culture of belonging:*** Ensuring every team member feels included and valued is essential for long-term success;
- ***Take responsibility:*** Inclusive leaders must be courageous in making decisions and inviting team members to share in that responsibility;
- ***Manage resistance effectively:*** Sensing and addressing resistance within the organization is a key leadership skill;

- ***Incorporate environmental awareness:*** Inclusive leaders also show concern for the environment and encourage their teams to do the same;
- ***Be prepared for surprises:*** Working with diverse teams can bring unexpected challenges, and inclusive leaders should be ready to tackle them creatively.



All of these skills, which form the psychological profile of an inclusive leader, enable them to better understand and contribute to the growth of the company or organization.

The study identified that key attributes of the inclusive leader's profile, rooted in psychological competencies, can be categorized into four main areas: moral and ethical qualities, entrepreneurial traits, managerial capabilities, and psychological strengths. By reflecting on these areas, inclusive leaders can

pinpoint where further development is needed to enhance their effectiveness. These aspects of the psychological profile are particularly valuable for young, ethical, and aspiring inclusive leaders.

The psychological profile of an inclusive leader must also acknowledge their potential vulnerabilities. Despite their many strengths and skills, inclusive leaders may still have areas of weakness. Recognizing these vulnerabilities is crucial for managing and overcoming them as part of personal and professional growth. Our research has identified the following key vulnerabilities of inclusive leaders:

- ***Tendency to avoid conflict:*** An inclusive leader may hesitate to address conflicts out of concern that it could disrupt the harmony and cohesion of a multicultural team;
- ***Excessive perfectionism:*** Striving for flawlessness, an inclusive leader may place unrealistic demands on themselves or others, which can lead to unnecessary stress and pressure within the team;
- ***Difficulty making difficult decisions:*** Being open to a wide range of perspectives, an inclusive leader may struggle to make firm and decisive decisions during critical situations;
- ***Attempting to please everyone:*** In an effort to be inclusive, a leader may try to accommodate everyone, potentially leading to compromises that do not serve the overall interests of the company or organization;

- ***Excessive delegation:*** Inclusive leaders may sometimes delegate too much responsibility, which can result in a lack of clear direction and reduce team coherence;
- ***Confirmation of biases:*** After a negative experience with certain employees in a multicultural setting, an inclusive leader may inadvertently validate stereotypes or biases about their team members;
- ***Tendency to get lost in details:*** While being open to diverse perspectives, an inclusive leader might lose sight of the organization's core goals and priorities by becoming overly focused on minor details;
- ***Reluctance to assert authority:*** An inclusive leader may sometimes hesitate to assert authority or set clear boundaries, which could undermine their leadership and respect within the organization;
- ***Difficulty prioritizing:*** In trying to meet the needs of everyone, an inclusive leader may struggle to maintain focus and prioritize important tasks and objectives;
- ***Overconfidence in others:*** An inclusive leader may overestimate the ability of team members to make decisions or manage tasks independently, which can lead to underperformance or failure;
- ***Stress and emotional exhaustion:*** By being highly empathetic and responsive to others' emotions, an inclusive leader may be more vulnerable to stress and emotional burnout, particularly in tense or conflict-laden situations.



INCLUSIVE LEADER VULNERABILITIES

- Tendency to avoid conflict
- Excessive perfectionism
- Difficulty in making difficult decisions
- Trying to please everyone
- Excessive delegation
- Tendency to get lost in details
- Fear of asserting authority
- The tendency to confirm some prejudices
- The inability to prioritize
- Overconfidence in others
- Stress and emotional exhaustion

To avoid these vulnerabilities and the challenges posed by multicultural environments, inclusive leaders should steer clear of the following behaviors and practices:

- ***Exclusion or marginalization:*** Avoid any behavior or actions that could exclude or marginalize team members based on cultural, ethnic, or other criteria;
- ***Promoting stereotypes and biases:*** Avoid perpetuating stereotypes and biases, and instead cultivate an open-minded perspective toward diversity;
- ***Undue favoritism:*** Refrain from favoring certain groups or individuals over others. Favoritism—whether towards national or multicultural employees—can be a significant source of conflict;
- ***Lack of listening and empathy:*** Avoid neglecting the different needs and perspectives of international team members. Create an environment where everyone feels heard and respected;
- ***Unclear communication:*** Avoid unclear or ambiguous communication that could result in misunderstandings, and instead promote transparency and clarity;

- **Lack of action and commitment:** Avoid passivity in promoting diversity and inclusion, as it can prevent the creation of a respectful, fair working environment for all employees;
- **Discriminatory speech or behavior:** Avoid any form of discriminatory or offensive language or conduct, regardless of intent or context;
- **Unilateral decision-making:** Avoid making decisions unilaterally. Instead, foster a transparent and participatory decision-making process that values diverse perspectives;
- **Ignoring feedback:** Avoid disregarding or minimizing feedback from team members on diversity and inclusion issues. Instead, take a proactive, responsive approach;
- **Cultural insensitivity:** Avoid ignoring or dismissing the traditions, values, and cultural perspectives of employees from different backgrounds. Cultivate cultural sensitivity to enhance workplace harmony.

This subchapter focuses on the psychological profile of the inclusive leader, outlining key traits that support effective leadership in multicultural environments. It emphasizes the importance of qualities like empathy, strong communication, cultural intelligence, resilience, and the ability to foster trust and creativity within teams. It also identifies potential vulnerabilities such as conflict avoidance, excessive delegation, and stress, urging leaders to be self-aware and proactive in managing these challenges. By developing these skills, young inclusive leaders can contribute to the growth and success of their organizations.

II.9. Conclusions

The psychological analysis of young inclusive leaders working in multicultural environments has highlighted the key aspects that define inclusive leadership, offering new research opportunities in this evolving field. By comparing inclusive leadership with traditional leadership styles, a clearer understanding of the inclusive leadership approach in international organizations has emerged.

The exploration of best practices has provided concrete strategies for inclusive leaders to enhance the psychological well-being of employees within their organizations. Additionally, the discussion on fostering inclusive leadership has created a synergy between multicultural staff and other employees, promoting a more cohesive work environment.

By presenting both the positive and negative psychological effects of leadership, the research enabled an objective evaluation of how the promotion or neglect of inclusive leadership impacts employees from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the analysis of multicultural dynamics within organizations has helped identify valuable experiences and traditions that newer or reforming companies can adopt to better align with market demands.

Finally, the identification of the psychological profile of an inclusive leader has paved the way for self-reflection and personal development, empowering leaders to enhance their own leadership skills and effectiveness.

Part III:

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS



CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS

III.1. Introduction

The challenge of integrating youth into a multicultural society stands as one of the biggest challenges of our time. This challenge stems from the significant influx of migrants into EU countries from various regions, including the recent wave triggered by the conflict in Ukraine. This migration wave is not only reshaping the demographic landscape of certain European nations, but also fundamentally altering the social fabric. Within this evolving milieu, it becomes increasingly apparent that both the European economy and its partner countries are becoming reliant on migrant labor, thereby thrusting individuals into a multicultural work environment. Consequently, the once homogenous national, social and economic structures are transitioning into multicultural ones.

In this context, the examination of recent social, psychological, economic, and political phenomena has revealed a plethora of issues concerning youth integration within this diverse framework. This challenge is further compounded for young individuals tasked with leading ethnically diverse groups. As such, promoting an impartial approach that respects and values all individuals, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, becomes crucial. Embracing universal ethical values that prioritize respect, inclusion, and human dignity is essential. Simultaneously, acknowledging and celebrating

cultural diversity promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance for all, cultivating richer and more cohesive communities.

Recognizing the importance of preparing young leaders to navigate future social, psychological, economic, administrative, and political challenges, initiatives focused on fostering inclusive leadership development are essential.

III.2. Cultural and Social Needs of the Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders

Professional leadership addressing multicultural and social justice issues within organizations and other contexts is acknowledged to be challenging. Biases, assumptions, microaggressions, and a lack of awareness about experiences with interpersonal oppression are encountered daily, hindering progress toward inclusivity and equity. For this reason, in the increasingly diverse global societies of today, there is a growing demand for social justice leadership.

In this context, the difficulties and needs of future ethical and inclusive leaders among the youth are multifaceted. First, some young leaders may lack a comprehensive awareness of multicultural aspects. This gap in knowledge often stems from the fact that in many educational institutions and workplaces, multicultural issues are not given adequate attention in curricula or training programs.

As a result, young leaders may graduate or enter the workforce without a thorough understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of their peers or colleagues. Without exposure to multicultural perspectives and experiences, individuals may struggle to recognize and appreciate the value of diversity, leading to a lack of inclusivity and understanding in their interactions and decision-making processes. To address this gap, it is essential to implement small-scale training courses or workshops aimed at educating individuals about cultural diversity and fostering respect for different cultures and knowledge

systems. These training initiatives can cover topics such as cultural competency, intercultural communication, unconscious bias, and the historical context of different cultures. By providing young leaders with opportunities to learn about multicultural issues and engage in meaningful discussions and activities, organizations can promote greater awareness, empathy, and inclusivity among their members.

Managing conflicts deriving from cultural differences presents another significant challenge for future leaders. Such conflicts can arise due to varying communication styles, differing cultural norms and values, and misunderstandings stemming from cultural ignorance or stereotypes. One difficulty lies in the need for communication and conflict resolution skills. In fact, standard conflict resolution approaches may not suffice when cultural factors significantly influence perceptions and behaviors. For instance, cultural differences in communication styles, such as direct versus indirect communication or high-context versus low-context communication, can complicate interactions and exacerbate conflicts if not properly managed. Future leaders need training to adapt their communication approach to accommodate diverse cultural preferences and effectively convey their messages while respecting cultural differences.

Active listening is another essential skill for managing conflicts arising from cultural differences, because listening can help bridge cultural divides, build trust, and facilitate constructive dialogue, ultimately leading to more effective conflict resolution. Moreover, negotiation techniques tailored to multicultural contexts are essential for resolving conflicts and reaching mutually beneficial outcomes. Future leaders need training in culturally

sensitive negotiation strategies that account for cultural differences in negotiation styles, decision-making processes, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Another significant difficulty young leaders face is the need for ethical leadership in navigating complex ethical dilemmas within multicultural contexts. Ethical leadership involves making principled decisions that prioritize fairness, justice, and integrity, even in challenging or ambiguous situations.

For example, consider a scenario where a young leader is tasked with developing a marketing campaign for a multinational company operating in various cultural contexts. The leader must decide whether to use certain images or messages that may be culturally sensitive to certain groups (e.g., an image that is considered sacred in one culture but may be perceived as disrespectful or inappropriate in another). The leader faces a dilemma: on one hand, they want to create a compelling campaign that resonates with the target audience; on the other hand, they must ensure that the campaign is respectful and inclusive of all cultural groups.

In this situation, the young leader must apply ethical leadership principles to solve the dilemma. They need to consider the potential impact of their decisions on diverse stakeholders and uphold principles of fairness, respect, and integrity. To address this challenge, the leader could engage in critical thinking by researching cultural norms and values relevant to the target audience. They could also consult with colleagues or external experts from different cultural backgrounds to gain diverse perspectives on the proposed campaign. Ultimately, the leader must make a principled decision that prioritizes cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, even if it means sacrificing

certain elements of the campaign for the greater good. By demonstrating ethical leadership in this scenario, the leader can foster trust and respect among team members and stakeholders and contribute to the company's reputation as a socially responsible and culturally aware organization.

We must also consider that within a multicultural workplace, another challenge is represented by episodes marked by racism, exclusion, or negative biases. These moments can erode trust and unity among team members, hindering progress and stifling collective potential. Thus, it falls upon the leader to remain vigilant, keeping a close eye on the situation through discreet checks and anonymous surveys. These surveys act as silent observers, allowing employees to share their experiences without fear. They shed light on areas where discrimination or bias may lurk, helping the leader to spot patterns and take action where needed. Additionally, the leader should organize workshops or seminars focused on promoting inclusivity and respecting other cultures. In these workshops, employees could also engage in open discussions about the importance of diversity and acceptance. Led by the leader, these conversations could encourage participants to reflect on their own biases and perspectives.

Moreover, in his work published in 2023, Nnaemeka Nnaji unveiled another challenge that leaders grapple with: the perception of time. In fact, the study illuminated the discordant perceptions of time among participants, a discordance that can cause issues in coordination required to execute projects within deadlines. For instance, a participant in Nnaemeka Nnaji's study underscored the meticulous approach of team members from India, who prioritized perfecting tasks over adhering to deadlines. Conversely, another participant claimed:

"So, from different diversity, you find people who don't believe there is a need for you to be in a hurry. Some believe that it is not healthy to be in a hurry."

Finally, language barriers can present significant challenges in multicultural workplaces. So, the leader themselves should lead by example and possess proficiency in English, especially in multicultural work environments where English serves as the primary language of communication. This ensures that instructions, feedback, and organizational goals are communicated accurately and understood by everyone. Furthermore, by demonstrating proficiency in English, the leader sets a positive example for employees, emphasizing the importance of language skills and promoting a culture of continuous learning and development within the organization. By directly encouraging employees to learn English, they will enhance their individual skills and foster a more inclusive and cohesive work environment. When employees are proficient in English, they can fully participate in team meetings, discussions, and projects, communicating their ideas and perspectives with confidence.

In cases where employees are still in the process of learning English, leaders can take proactive steps to ensure their inclusion in workplace communication and activities. For example, leaders can provide written communication in multiple languages or offer translation services to help non-English-speaking employees understand important information. Moreover, leaders can gradually introduce English-language communication in a supportive manner, allowing employees to practice and improve their language skills over time.

Addressing all these challenges and meeting the needs of future ethical and inclusive leaders requires a concerted effort from educational institutions, professional organizations, and community leaders. They should provide comprehensive training, support, and opportunities for young individuals to develop the skills, knowledge, and necessary attitudes for effective leadership in multicultural and socially just contexts. Naturally, within this research, we cannot provide a fully comprehensive solution that addresses all these areas, but we will try to offer ideas and insights that combine the positive aspects of transformative and ethical leadership with the needs of a multicultural world.

This subchapter discusses the challenges young ethical and inclusive leaders face in multicultural contexts. It highlights the need for better education and training in multicultural awareness, conflict resolution, and ethical leadership. It also addresses issues such as biases, microaggressions, and cultural ignorance, as well as the importance of culturally sensitive communication, negotiation, and decision-making. Additionally, it stresses the role of ethical leadership in navigating complex dilemmas and emphasizes the importance of language proficiency and inclusivity in diverse workplaces. Solutions include training, open discussions, and the need for continuous learning to foster a socially just and inclusive environment.

III.3. Addressing the Needs of the Future Young Ethical and Inclusive Leaders

To effectively manage multicultural teams, leaders must first seek to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse cultures represented within their team. In fact, one of the most common challenges faced by multicultural teams is the occurrence of misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences (Center for Creative Leadership, 2023).

These differences can manifest in various aspects of work, including communication styles, attitudes toward time, and approaches to problem-solving methods. For example, while some cultures may prioritize direct and assertive communication, others may value harmony and indirect communication. Recognizing and addressing these differences is crucial for fostering effective collaboration and preventing conflicts within the team.

Additionally, ethical leadership in a multicultural context involves being open-minded and knowledgeable about different cultural norms, values, and communication styles. By investing time and effort in learning about the backgrounds and perspectives of their team members, leaders can cultivate empathy and build stronger relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

One of the most important things is that leaders must be proactive in breaking down cultural barriers and promoting cultural understanding among team members. This may involve facilitating open discussions about cultural differences, providing training on cultural competency and intercultural

communication, and creating opportunities for team members to learn from each other's experiences.

Nevertheless, before leaders can transmit knowledge and skills to those they lead, it's essential for them to educate themselves. Effective leaders are continuously engaged in their own personal and professional development, and this includes acquiring knowledge on topics relevant to their role, such as understanding cultural differences. Therefore, before they can guide and support team members in understanding and addressing the challenges of multiculturalism, leaders must invest time and energy in their own training and personal learning. This can occur through a variety of learning methods, including independent research, participation in workshops and seminars, training courses, and consultations with experts in the field of cultural diversity.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that leaders' formation is never a finished process. The world is constantly evolving, and understanding multicultural challenges requires a commitment to staying informed, up-to-date, and open to new perspectives. Leaders must be willing to question themselves, explore new ideas, and adapt their practices based on the needs and developments of the context in which they operate. Only then will they be able to authentically and effectively transmit such knowledge to their team, thereby contributing to the creation of an inclusive and respectful work environment.

Let us undertake a more in-depth examination of the strategies that leaders can implement after their learning process:

- ***Facilitating open discussions:*** Leaders can initiate and facilitate open discussions about cultural differences within the team.

Providing a safe and respectful space for team members to share their cultural backgrounds, values, and perspectives can promote mutual understanding and appreciation. These discussions help team members recognize the richness of diversity and foster empathy toward one another;

- ***Providing training on cultural competency:*** Leaders can organize training sessions or workshops focused on cultural competency and intercultural communication. These sessions can cover topics such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and strategies for effectively navigating cultural differences in the workplace;
- ***Creating opportunities for learning:*** Leaders can create opportunities for team members to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. This can include organizing cultural exchange events, where team members share stories, traditions, and customs from their respective cultures. Additionally, leaders can encourage cross-cultural collaboration on projects and assignments, allowing team members to leverage their diverse perspectives and insights to achieve common goals;
- ***Promoting a culture of curiosity and respect:*** Leaders play a crucial role in shaping the culture of their teams. Encouraging curiosity about different cultures, promoting active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints can contribute to creating an environment where everyone feels valued and included;
- ***Administering anonymous questionnaires:*** Another crucial strategy is to administer anonymous questionnaires to employees every three

months to identify episodes of racism, biases, negative prejudices, and other forms of discrimination. These anonymous surveys serve as a tool for creating a safe space for employees to share their experiences without fear of retaliation or judgment. Upon identifying instances of racism, bias, or prejudice, it is essential for leaders to take decisive action to address these issues. This may involve implementing diversity training programs, promoting awareness campaigns, or providing resources and support for affected employees. Additionally, leaders should foster a culture where discriminatory behavior is not tolerated, and all employees feel valued and respected;

- ***Applying the principles of transformational leadership:*** This approach to leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating team members to achieve shared goals by creating a shared vision, developing individual capabilities, and promoting innovation and positive change. The transformational leader should encourage creativity and innovation within the team, offering an environment where new and unconventional ideas are encouraged and valued. For example, they might organize brainstorming sessions to generate new solutions to diversity- and inclusion-related challenges in the workplace.

Addressing the needs of future ethical and inclusive leaders among the youth requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, training, support, and opportunities for growth. In the next chapter, we will have the

opportunity to observe how both efficient and deficient leadership practices influence the work environment. We will, therefore, conduct an in-depth analysis of specific case studies to gather insights and identify additional strategies.

This subchapter focuses on strategies for managing multicultural teams, emphasizing the importance of leaders understanding cultural differences and promoting inclusivity. It discusses challenges such as communication barriers, biases, and cultural misunderstandings, while highlighting the need for proactive leadership through training, open discussions, and fostering respect. It also covers the role of transformational leadership in inspiring team members and suggests using anonymous surveys to identify discrimination. Overall, it advocates for continuous learning and development to address the cultural and social needs of future ethical and inclusive leaders.

III.4. Case Studies: Highlighting the Profound Impact of Ethical Leadership

As previously presented, in today's increasingly interconnected global landscape, marked by unparalleled cultural integration, ethical leadership has become a crucial element in promoting multiculturalism and equity within organizational practices.

In this regard, we would like to present a study, *"Ethical Leadership in a Complex Environment: A Case Study on Nunavik Health Organizations,"* by Geneviève Morin and David Talbot (2023), to provide a concrete demonstration of how ethical leadership serves as a cornerstone for promoting inclusive and equitable environments in multicultural settings. This study highlights that when there is no opportunity to respect diverse cultures, everyone suffers in the workplace.

Thanks to this case study, we can better explore the relationship between ethical leadership, multiculturalism, and equity within the context of healthcare delivery in Nunavik, the homeland of Quebec's Inuit people. More specifically, this study sheds light on how ethical leadership principles are manifested within healthcare organizations, showing the role that ethical leaders play in promoting inclusivity and fairness for all individuals, regardless of their cultural background.

In general, the situation in Nunavik reveals significant disparities in healthcare provision and representation for the Inuit population. Despite being the homeland of Quebec's Inuit people, the healthcare system is predominantly

managed and staffed by non-Inuit individuals from outside the region (Paquin et al., 2019). This lack of Inuit representation extends to professional roles, with non-Inuit employees occupying most front-line positions requiring professional certification.

Moreover, the training received by healthcare workers is primarily designed for the dominant white population in southern Quebec, leaving them ill-prepared for the specific challenges faced in Nunavik communities (Paquin et al., 2019). The underrepresentation of Inuit individuals in healthcare leadership and professional roles exacerbates these challenges. Inuit employees are often relegated to non-professional roles, limiting their influence and decision-making power within the healthcare system. Additionally, provincial legislation enacted in 2012 further reduced opportunities for Inuit individuals to work as front-line professionals, worsening the situation (Fraser et al., 2021).

In this context, ethical leadership is crucial for addressing these systemic issues and fostering racially and ethnically connected communities that are respectful, equitable, and ethical (Lord et al., 2017). For this reason, the study by Morin and Talbot (2023) investigated the role of leadership in promoting multiculturalism and equity within Nunavik's healthcare organizations. The study used participant observation conducted between 2010 and 2017 in Nunavik's three healthcare institutions, allowing the researchers to gain insights into the functions and dysfunctions of the organizations, as well as the challenges faced by healthcare leaders in the region. The findings of the study, rooted in data collected from 17 interviews and analysis, shed light on the challenges faced by healthcare managers and leaders in Nunavik,

particularly in their efforts to provide culturally sensitive care and services adapted to the needs of the local Inuit population.

Unfortunately, despite managers' and leaders' desire to implement changes toward a more inclusive environment, they often feel constrained by institutional barriers, political influences, and a lack of support from senior management. For example, interviews reveal how managers express frustration over their limited decision-making power and the toxic organizational climate, where dissenting voices are marginalized or labeled as undesirable. They highlight the challenges of navigating bureaucratic constraints and political pressures while striving to uphold ethical principles and provide quality care. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of leaders adjusting their behavior to maintain healthy social relationships and inspire trust among colleagues and staff, essential elements for effective healthcare delivery. For instance, one interviewee noted:

"You need to be strong of character and care about the well-being of the people who stay there for a long time. The climate is toxic. You're always sitting in an ejection seat. If you don't go along with the politics, you're considered an undesirable person."

Essentially, despite leaders' desire to be more inclusive towards the Inuit population, they feel constrained by political dynamics and linguistic barriers, which prevent them from finding effective ways to include them. This case study serves as a perfect example of how a lack of acceptance and inclusion of others can create a harmful and toxic environment for everyone involved.

Nevertheless, while political and linguistic barriers may indeed pose challenges, there are other strategies that can be explored to effectively include diverse cultures. It is crucial for leaders and organizations to proactively seek out and implement such approaches to foster a respectful environment for all.

Let us now examine a positive example of ethical leadership along with a representative case study. A study from Lahti University of Applied Sciences (2016) showcases effective leadership in a multicultural team within the hospitality industry. The team comprises approximately 30 individuals working in various roles, such as receptionists, porters, telephone operators, and reservations staff, with a diverse range of nationalities represented, including both full-time and part-time employees, as well as interns.

During the interview, the managers emphasized the importance of being motivated and passionate about their role, as this inspires confidence and admiration among team members. They also highlighted the importance of being friendly, helpful, and supportive at all times, fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Regarding their experience working in a multicultural team, both managers expressed appreciation for the diversity within their team. One manager acknowledged the challenges posed by multiculturalism but highlighted the benefits of having individuals from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, particularly in dealing with hotel guests from diverse cultures.

In discussing negative situations influenced by multiculturalism, one manager described the difficulty of resolving conflicts between team members from different foreign cultures, highlighting the challenge of remaining rational and non-judgmental. In contrast, the other manager described a situation where

foreign team members communicated in their own language, excluding others from the conversation. While understandable, this issue underscores the common challenge of language barriers in multicultural work environments. When situations like this happen, both managers emphasized the significance of direct verbal communication, such as daily handovers, briefings, and one-on-one meetings, as the most effective means of communication.

Additionally, they utilize non-verbal communication methods like email, written memos, and handovers because they recognize the importance of receiving information in various forms to prevent misunderstandings within a multicultural team:

"I believe that when one communicates effectively, in whatever form, it eliminates confusion and can foster a happy workplace."

In summary, this case study exemplifies ethical leadership in a multicultural team, emphasizing the importance of leading by example, fairness, rationality, and adaptability in decision-making processes. It also underscores the value of embracing diversity and cultural differences to enrich the team's knowledge and enhance customer experiences. However, it also highlights the necessity for leaders to acknowledge and address potential challenges associated with multiculturalism to effectively navigate and manage diverse teams.

These two examples show us the strong impact that ethical leadership can have when applied correctly in a multicultural environment and how people can deeply benefit from inclusive leadership.

This subchapter examines the role of ethical leadership in fostering inclusivity and equity in multicultural environments. It presents two case studies: one on healthcare organizations in Nunavik, highlighting the challenges of underrepresentation and cultural sensitivity in providing care to the Inuit population, and another in the hospitality industry, showcasing how effective leadership in a multicultural team can enhance collaboration and communication. It emphasizes the importance of addressing cultural differences, promoting inclusivity, and adapting leadership practices to create a respectful and equitable workplace.

III.5. Cultural Differences and Needs in Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania

To effectively apply the principles of ethical leadership in multicultural contexts, it is crucial to explore the cultural differences and needs in Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania. In this chapter, we will examine the multicultural landscape of these countries, along with the specific needs and circumstances faced by young leaders.

III.5.1. Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Malta

Malta, an island nation situated in the central Mediterranean Sea, holds significant strategic importance due to its location. Despite its small size, the archipelago has played a crucial role throughout history in the power struggles of various civilizations competing for control of the Mediterranean region. Over the centuries, Malta has been ruled by numerous foreign powers, including the Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Normans, Sicilians, Swabians, Aragonese, Hospitallers, French, and British. As a result, Maltese society has been shaped by the influence of these diverse cultures and civilizations (Britannica, n.d.).

According to data from the National Statistics Office (2023), Malta has seen a substantial increase in its foreign population, with over one in five residents now being non-Maltese. On Census Day, the number of foreigners residing in Malta reached 115,449, representing a fivefold increase since 2011. The majority of residents were Caucasian, making up nearly 90 percent of the

population, while approximately 5.2 percent identified as Asian. Additionally, a small proportion of individuals reported having more than one racial origin.

Immigration to Malta has also surged, with 14,822 individuals immigrating to the country in the year leading up to the Census, reflecting a notable increase compared to previous years. More than half of these immigrants were non-EU citizens, including British nationals, with a significant portion originating from countries outside of Europe.

Regarding religious affiliation, the majority of residents aged 15 and over identified as Roman Catholic, representing 82.6 percent of the population. There was also a diverse representation of other religious affiliations, with 17,454 individuals adhering to Islam and 16,457 identifying with the Orthodox religion. Additionally, a substantial number of individuals, totaling 23,243, reported having no religious affiliation.

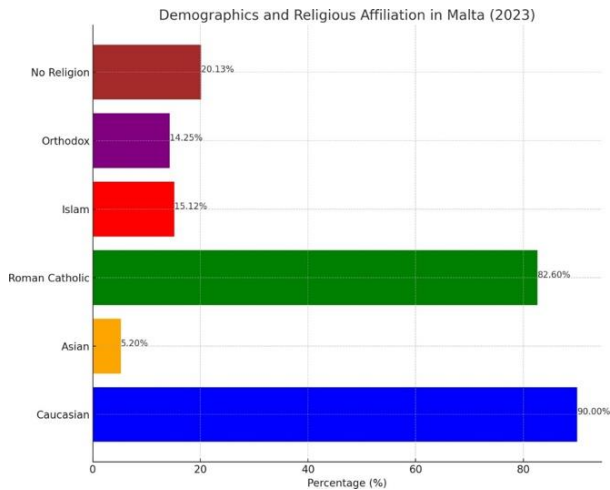


Figure 1. *This histogram visualizes demographic and religious affiliation data for Malta in 2023. It displays the percentages of the population identified as Caucasian, Asian, and those affiliated with Roman Catholicism, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, as well as individuals with no religious affiliation. Note: the categories "Multiple Origins" and "Non-EU Immigrants" were described qualitatively in the data and are therefore not directly represented in the histogram for clarity.*

Overall, Malta's demographic landscape reflects its rich history of cultural diversity and the continuous influx of foreign residents, contributing to its vibrant and cosmopolitan society. Consequently, young leaders in Malta must navigate this multicultural environment by considering not only the ethnic backgrounds of potential employees but also their religious affiliations, values, and cultural norms. Understanding and respecting this diversity is crucial for promoting inclusivity and fostering a harmonious work environment where all individuals feel valued and respected.

To gain a deeper understanding of the situation of young leaders in Malta, it is essential to examine various aspects, including education, employment opportunities, political participation, and the social challenges they may encounter. Furthermore, exploring initiatives and strategies designed to empower and support young leaders can offer valuable insights into addressing their needs and promoting their development. Malta's youth policy landscape has evolved significantly over the years, demonstrating a commitment to addressing the needs and aspirations of young people. Responsibility for youth policy primarily lies with central authorities, particularly the Ministry of Education and Employment and the Parliamentary

Secretariat for Youth, Sport, and Voluntary Organizations. However, given its cross-cutting nature, various ministries also play a role in shaping policies that impact young people (European Commission, 2020).

Since the early 1990s, Malta has made considerable progress in developing a coherent youth policy framework. The establishment of the National Youth Council (Kunsill Nazzjonali Żgħażaġh), the Institute for Youth Studies at the University of Malta, and subsequent revisions to the youth policy document have played pivotal roles in shaping the country's approach to youth development (European Commission, 2020).

The latest version of the National Youth Policy, titled *"Towards 2020: A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People,"* emphasizes the importance of supporting young people in fulfilling their potential, addressing their needs, and fostering their active participation in social, economic, and cultural life. The policy defines youth as individuals between 13 and 30 years old, acknowledging the diverse needs and experiences within this age group. This policy, developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders, aims to promote democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress, and inclusive change. Social inclusion is central to the policy, with various action plans aimed at addressing social inclusion issues and improving the quality of life for all young people, including those from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Additionally, the youth policy landscape in Malta is characterized by a comprehensive approach to inclusion, aiming to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by young people. The National Inclusive Education Framework, launched in 2019, emphasizes the importance of creating clarity

and synergy around inclusive education concepts, ensuring equity in all college and school development plans. This framework covers a wide range of aspects, including learners with special needs, different sexual orientations, ethnic minorities, different religions, and high-ability learners.

Malta's labor market has demonstrated a consistently positive trend, characterized by low unemployment rates and a steadily increasing employment rate. In comparison to the EU average, Malta has maintained a significantly lower unemployment rate, at less than five percent in 2015, while the EU average exceeded nine percent (European Commission, 2020). Furthermore, Malta's employment rate has shown continuous growth over the past decade, increasing from 61.6% in 2011 to nearly 68% by the end of 2015. This upward trajectory can be attributed to the country's robust economic growth, which has driven the expansion of the local labor market. Moreover, youth work in Malta is officially recognized as a profession, offering promising opportunities for young leaders interested in engaging with and supporting their communities.

Despite Malta's efforts to create opportunities for young people, the country faces challenges that may discourage them from staying or returning after seeking opportunities abroad. According to Claudia Calleja's report (2021), almost 60% of young people in Malta expressed a preference to live in another European country. This sentiment is particularly notable among Generation-Z and millennials, with only a minority expressing a desire to remain in Malta. This report indicates that while approximately one-third of respondents are optimistic about living better lives within the next five years, the proportion of those who believe their living conditions will not improve has

increased by 8% among Generation Z and 10% among millennials, reaching 29% and 31%, respectively. Furthermore, nearly 40% express uncertainty about whether their future living conditions will improve.

Regarding work and the economy, the report also revealed that approximately 60% of respondents aspire to be entrepreneurs. This aspiration reflects a strong drive toward leadership and innovation. The entrepreneurial spirit, as indicated by this percentage, is often associated with a desire to forge one's own path, create new opportunities, and potentially bring about positive change. The fact that a significant portion of both Generation Z and millennials aim for entrepreneurship suggests they are not merely seeking employment but are eager to establish ventures that contribute to their communities and the economy. Their ambitions represent a hopeful outlook toward becoming leaders capable of addressing challenges and working toward a better future.

Overall, Malta's youth policies demonstrate a commitment to fostering an inclusive society where all young people have the opportunity to realize their potential and contribute to the country's social, economic, and cultural life. However, Calleja's report suggests that, despite Malta's provision of opportunities for youth development, there are underlying issues that need to be addressed in order to retain talent and foster a sense of belonging among young people. Enhancing economic stability could help alleviate some of these challenges and create a more attractive environment for young leaders to thrive.

This section explores Malta's multicultural landscape and its impact on young leaders. It highlights the country's diverse population, shaped by a history of foreign influence and a recent rise in immigration. The text discusses Malta's evolving youth policy framework, which aims to promote inclusivity, social progress, and equal opportunities for young people. Despite Malta's economic growth and low unemployment rates, many young people express a desire to leave the country, citing concerns about future living conditions. The need for continued efforts to support young leaders and address challenges related to talent retention is emphasized.

III.5.2. Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Italy

Italy, a country in south-central Europe, is renowned for its distinct boot-like shape, jutting deep into the Mediterranean Sea. Its landscape is one of the most varied and scenic on Earth, bordered by the rugged Alps at its northern end, including the highest points along Monte Rosa, peaking in Switzerland, and Mont Blanc, peaking in France.

Historically, the territory of modern-day Italy was divided among various provinces controlled by different ethnic groups, including Greeks in the south, Celts, Romans in northern Italy, and ancient Italian tribes in the north and central parts of the peninsula. This diversity led to a rich cultural tapestry, with the Romans exerting significant influence, reflected in Italy's robust cultural heritage. The division of Italy into separate provinces resulted in distinct regional dialects and cultural identities that persist to this day, with many Italians strongly identifying with their province or native region.

The history of African presence in Italy has deep roots, particularly in Sicily, where African Arabs ruled for nearly two centuries around 1,000 years

ago. Although they were eventually defeated by the Normans, the legacy of African Arabs in Italy persists, with approximately half a million African Arabs residing in the country today. In recent years, Italy has also experienced an influx of approximately 100,000 Africans from various regions, further diversifying the country's demographic landscape. This ongoing flow of African immigrants contributes to the multicultural fabric of Italy, reflecting a long history of intercontinental connections and cultural exchange.

According to a 2022 report by *Translation Company* (2022), Italy's demographic composition is predominantly Italian, with 95% (over 60 million people) of the population identifying as Italian. The remaining 5% consists of various ethnic groups, including 2.5% from other European countries such as Albania, Romania, and Ukraine; 1.5% are Africans, and 1% belong to other minority groups. The predominant religion among Italians is Roman Catholicism, with minorities practicing Protestantism and Judaism.

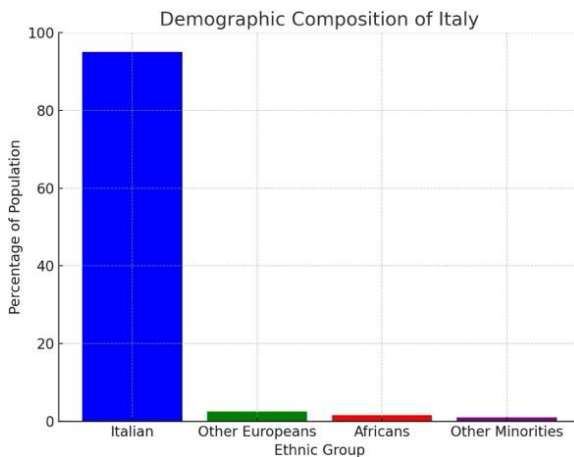


Figure 2. This histogram depicts the demographic composition of Italy.

Leaders in Italy, as in any diverse society, must prioritize understanding and respecting the various cultures within their nation. This requirement goes beyond mere acknowledgment; it entails active engagement and a commitment to learning about the different cultural backgrounds, histories, and contributions of the various ethnic groups that make up the Italian population. Cultivating such cultural competence is essential for fostering an inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued and understood.

The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) phenomenon is a significant issue in Italy, which has the highest NEET rate among European Union countries. In 2020, 25.1% of young Italians aged 15 to 34 were classified as NEET, according to Ellena et al. (2021), exceeding the EU average of 17.6% (Eurostat, 2021). This concerning trend was highlighted by Mario Draghi, the then-president of the European Central Bank, in 2016, who warned of a potential 'lost generation' due to this socio-economic issue (Italian Ministry for Youth, 2021). Although there was a slight decrease in NEET rates over the past five years, the onset of the pandemic reversed this trend across Europe, with Italy experiencing a significant increase in NEET rates (Statista, 2021; Eurostat, 2021). In response, the Italian government launched a 'NEET plan' on January 20, 2022, aimed at addressing this challenge for over 3 million young people aged 15 to 34 (Carli, 2022).

This policy brief examines the characteristics of NEET individuals in Italy and evaluates the measures introduced to address this issue. Alessandro Rosini and Francesco Pastore have suggested that the high number of NEETs in Italy is attributable to inefficiencies in the transition from school to work, as

well as a lack of necessary skills and work experience among recent graduates (La Rocca, 2017; Pastore, 2018).

The distribution of NEET rates varies significantly across the country, with the highest rates found in Southern Italy, particularly in Sicily, Calabria, and Campania, and the lowest rates in the Northern regions of Trentino-South Tyrol, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Veneto (Statista, 2021). Additionally, a notable gender imbalance exists, with women increasingly represented in the NEET category as they age, underscoring the impact of socio-economic and other factors on this condition (Carli, 2022).

The work of Andrea Bonanomi and Alessandro Rosina in 2020 highlights the significant challenges faced by young Italians due to job insecurity and precarious employment conditions. Their research, based on data from the *Rapporto Giovani* longitudinal survey, reveals how such instability drives young individuals into the NEET condition, characterized by marginality and demotivation, leading to a severe decline in their quality of life. This study elucidates the dynamic relationship between the occupational status of young Italians and their overall well-being. The findings underscore the substantial economic and psychological costs of remaining in the NEET condition, not only for the individuals affected but also for the national economy, with estimates indicating it accounts for approximately 2% of Italy's GDP. The pervasive effects of this condition extend beyond the absence of employment or education; it also impacts young people's autonomy, family formation, civic involvement, and overall citizenship, underscoring the multifaceted impact of job insecurity.

This research underscores the necessity for targeted policies and interventions to address the challenges faced by young Italians. It emphasizes the critical importance of creating opportunities for meaningful employment and engagement, not only to enhance individual lives but also to leverage the potential of young people in contributing to the country's growth and prosperity. The findings highlight a missed opportunity for the national system to enable its most dynamic and valuable demographic to fully participate in shaping Italy's present and future.

To address this issue, the Italian government has proposed strengthening existing initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee program and increasing support through the GIOVANI2030 campaign, as well as the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs (Italian Ministry for Youth, 2022). Nevertheless, additional measures are required to comprehensively address the NEET phenomenon. These include large-scale promotional campaigns and enhanced support for childcare and care facilities to assist young people with family responsibilities.

Consequently, it can be asserted that young individuals in Italy with leadership aspirations encounter a complex array of challenges. Nonetheless, Italy is actively working to mitigate these obstacles through targeted initiatives designed to enhance opportunities for youth. Despite these efforts, it is evident that the path toward creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for emerging leaders remains a work in progress, with substantial advancements still required.

This section explores Italy's multicultural landscape, historical influences, and the challenges faced by young leaders, particularly those classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). It highlights Italy's high NEET rate, the regional disparities in youth employment, and the socio-economic impacts of job insecurity on young people. The Italian government has introduced various initiatives, including the Youth Guarantee program and GIOVANI2030 campaign, to address these issues, but more targeted efforts are needed to support youth leadership and improve opportunities for young people.

III.5.3. Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in the Maldives

The Maldives, nestled in the Indian Ocean approximately 620 miles from mainland Asia, holds the distinction of being the smallest country in Asia both in terms of land area and population. Comprising 22 atolls stretching from Addu Atoll in the south to Ihavandhippolhu Atoll in the north, its population was estimated at 530,000 as of 2019 (World Atlas, 2023). The predominant ethnic group, the Dhivehi people, trace their origins to South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, and they form the largest segment of the population. Although social stratification exists, it remains flexible, with factors such as wealth, occupation, family ties, and adherence to Islamic virtues influencing social rank.

Among the various immigrant groups in the Maldives, Bangladeshis constitute a significant portion, numbering around 55,000. Initially migrating to escape poverty and seek employment opportunities, they have since become an integral part of the country's social fabric. Similarly, Filipinos, numbering

approximately 500, have also migrated to the Maldives, primarily as casual laborers, although many have opted to return home due to subpar working conditions and unequal pay.

As a result, the Maldives, like many other nations, is characterized by multiculturalism, which young leaders must consider when navigating their roles. They need to be mindful of the diverse cultures present, especially that of Bangladesh and other minority groups, ensuring they are included in decision-making processes.

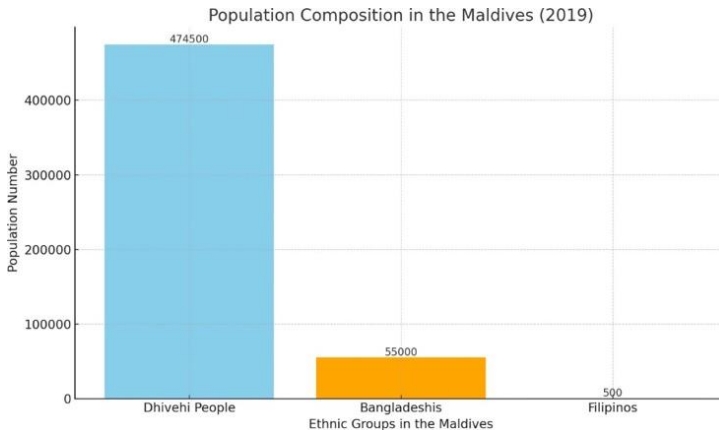


Figure 3. The histogram above depicts the population composition of the Maldives in 2019, emphasizing the predominant Dhivehi population, along with a considerable number of Bangladeshis and a smaller Filipino community. This visualization underscores the diversity within the country's population, with the Dhivehi people forming the core of the demographic landscape, complemented by important contributions from immigrant communities.

In addition to the general challenges leaders must address in multicultural contexts, as discussed in previous chapters, specific issues arise from the current conditions experienced by young leaders in the Maldives. Therefore, we will examine the current situation in greater detail.

According to the United Nations Maldives (2023), young Maldivians constitute nearly 40% of the population, yet they harbor limited optimism about their future. A recent survey supported by USAID revealed that 94% of them believe that young people should have greater involvement in political decision-making, but only 47% feel that their local councils effectively engage with the community. Despite governmental, donor, and civil society efforts to strengthen academic and employment opportunities and include young people in decision-making processes, the tangible impacts of these policies are slow to materialize, with 28% of youths aged 15 to 35 being out of employment, education, or training. In this regard, Ms. Haswell, the Resident Coordinator in the Maldives, reflecting on her experiences, remarked:

“We need young voices to be heard – and policies and decisions that provide practical opportunities for meaningful work and education. The UN has a unique role to play here to help get sensitive issues on the table of decision-makers, with the unique policy advice that UN agencies provide to the Government.”

Ms. Haswell's leadership has laid the groundwork for the UN Maldives team to collaborate with young people in leadership, public engagement, and decision-making efforts, highlighting the importance of listening to the voices of future leaders. She aptly summarized:

“Young Maldivians are burning with creative ideas on how to do things better. We don’t need to teach them or empower them. We just need to give them the spotlight and listen to the leaders of the future.”

This highlights the first challenge for young leaders in the Maldives: the disparity between their aspirations and their actual influence in political decision-making. Despite their strong desire to contribute and enact positive change, young people often find themselves marginalized in decision-making processes, lacking significant authority or representation. This disconnect between their ambitions and the reality of limited political power can be disheartening and demotivating for young leaders, hindering their ability to effect meaningful change in their communities.

First Lady Fazna Ahmed (2023) also underscores the vital role that young leaders play in shaping the present and future of their nation. She highlighted the importance of investing in the growth and development of youth-led initiatives globally, particularly in response to challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic. First Lady Fazna commended the dedication of young leaders who have served as frontline responders during the pandemic and advocated for the inclusion and well-being of individuals with special needs. Their actions exemplify their growth as compassionate individuals and effective agents of change.

However, the challenges faced by young people in the Maldives go beyond surface-level issues and deeply impact crucial areas such as education, which is a fundamental step toward competence in their respective fields. According to the United Nations Maldives (2022), despite the significant proportion of young people in the population, their concerns are not

systematically addressed. While a considerable percentage of young individuals have attained secondary and higher secondary education (77%), the attainment of tertiary education remains relatively low (12%). Additionally, youth labor force participation is substantial, yet youth unemployment rates persist, particularly among females.

Moreover, internal migration driven by the uneven distribution of resources and essential services presents a core challenge for youth. Many young people are compelled to migrate to urban areas, particularly the capital, in search of better opportunities.

Recognizing these unique challenges, the UN Maldives conducted consultations with young people in 2021. Key highlights and concerns identified during these consultations include limited employment opportunities post-secondary education, insufficient support for substance abuse and risky behavior, the importance of skill-building and career guidance, inadequate mental health support, limited avenues for youth participation and innovation, housing issues coupled with high living expenses, accessibility of education in remote islands, and the need for initiatives promoting social cohesion. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires comprehensive strategies and concerted efforts from stakeholders to create an enabling environment for the holistic development and well-being of young people in the Maldives.

To empower the future generation as catalysts for change, the UN in the Maldives is now dedicated to addressing systemic challenges through integrated and targeted interventions. This approach aims to ensure that no one is left behind and that the rights of Maldivian youth are realized as part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the UN

Maldives Youth Strategy (2022-2026), the primary focus is on investing in young people to facilitate their meaningful participation and engagement.

Aligned with the United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth2030), which serves as the UN's system-wide framework for youth, the UN Maldives Youth Strategy seeks to strengthen youth engagement across the UN's three pillars: peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2018, Youth2030 aims to enhance the UN's capacity to involve young people and leverage their perspectives, insights, and ideas. It emphasizes coordinated, coherent, and holistic approaches to addressing youth issues and advancing their rights.

The objectives of the UN Maldives Youth Strategy are in line with Youth2030, aiming to position young people as equal partners in building a better world. The strategy aligns with the global scorecard on Youth2030, serving as a measure of progress toward achieving the national-level UN Youth Strategy. Progress is assessed against a set of 20 indicators, covering both "working for youth" and "working with youth."

Specifically, **the UN Maldives Youth Strategy prioritizes five pillars for intervention**, which are also incorporated into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for the Maldives (2022-2026). These pillars include:

- ***Engagement, participation and advocacy:*** Amplifying youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just, and sustainable world;
- ***Informed and healthy foundations:*** Supporting young people's access to quality education and health services;

- ***Economic empowerment through decent work:*** Facilitating young people's access to decent work and productive employment;
- ***Youth and human rights:*** Protecting and promoting the rights of young people and supporting their civic and political engagement;
- ***Peace and resilience building:*** Empowering young people as catalysts for peace, security, and humanitarian action.

The UN Maldives is also prioritizing strategic initiatives specifically related to young leadership. These include:

- ***Ensuring youth focus in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework:*** This initiative aims to integrate a youth-focused approach into the central planning instrument at the country level, addressing the needs and aspirations of youth in the Maldives;
- ***Strengthening leadership, culture, and capacities for youth:*** This initiative emphasizes enhancing structures and support mechanisms for youth participation, with increased coordination among UN entities and greater involvement of young people in the design and implementation of UN initiatives;
- ***UNCT support to Governments on Youth and SDGs:*** This initiative focuses on supporting governmental partners in integrating meaningful youth participation into UN-related activities, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized young people in decision-making processes.

These proposed initiatives reflect a comprehensive approach to promoting youth empowerment and meaningful participation in governance and development processes in the Maldives. By prioritizing youth-focused

interventions and partnerships, the UN aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society where young people can contribute effectively to sustainable development and social progress.

Despite the numerous challenges faced by young leaders in the Maldives, active efforts are underway to improve the situation and empower youth to become effective agents of change. By supporting initiatives that promote education, employment, and health, and working towards creating a more equitable and supportive environment, leaders can contribute to empowering the youth in the Maldives.

Ultimately, creating an environment where young leaders can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the Maldives' development requires collaboration involving the government, civil society, international organizations, and individuals. Through collective action and commitment to youth empowerment, progress can be made toward building a brighter future for the country and its youth.

This section presents the challenges and opportunities faced by young leaders in the Maldives. It highlights the country's multicultural landscape, with a focus on the role of youth in political decision-making and their limited influence despite strong aspirations for change. The UN Maldives Youth Strategy (2022-2026) aims to empower young people through education, employment, and leadership initiatives, while addressing key issues such as youth unemployment, education, and internal migration. The UN emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies to support youth engagement and create a more inclusive and sustainable future.

III.5.4. Multiculturalism and Youth Leadership in Romania

Romania, located at the intersection of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, borders Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Moldova, with a coastline along the Black Sea. Spanning 238,397 square kilometers (92,046 square miles), Romania has a population of approximately 19 million people as of 2023. The country predominantly experiences a continental climate. Despite its diversity, Romania's multicultural landscape is considered partial, according to *World Atlas* in 2023.

The dominant ethnic group in Romania is the Romanians, who comprise 88.9% of the population. This group shares a common culture, ancestry, and language. The origins of Romanians are explained by two main theories: one suggests they are descendants of Romans and the Romanized inhabitants of Dacia, an ancient Roman province, while the other posits they descend from Romans and Romanized indigenous populations of former Roman provinces, whose ancestors eventually settled in present-day Romania. The unification of Moldavia and Wallachia under a single ruler in 1859 led to the formation of the Kingdom of Romania, which subsequently waged and won its war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. Approximately 90% of Romanians identify as religious.

The largest minority ethnic group in Romania is the Hungarians, or Magyars, who constitute 6.5% of the population. They are predominantly located in the Szeklerland within the Transylvania region. The Hungarians trace their origins back to Asia, with their arrival in Romania occurring in the 9th century. The Treaty of Trianon, signed after World War I, recognized

Romanian sovereignty over Transylvania, thereby defining the borders between Romania and Hungary and resulting in a significant Hungarian presence within Romanian territory.

The Roma, or Romani people, represent 3.3% of Romania's population. Their origins are traced to northern India, as indicated by linguistic similarities. The Prime Minister of India has recommended that the Roma be recognized by the Government of India as part of the Indian diaspora. In Romania, the Roma are predominantly Orthodox Christians, with significant minorities practicing Pentecostalism, Roman Catholicism, and Seventh-Day Adventism.

Other ethnic groups collectively constitute 1.3% of Romania's population, a significant decrease from 28% before World War II, primarily due to territorial losses after the war. These groups include Ukrainians, Russians, Turks, Serbs, Slovaks, Greeks, and others. In a gesture of inclusivity, the Romanian government and electoral laws allocate a seat in the Chamber of Deputies to each recognized ethnic group, demonstrating a commitment to representing the country's diverse, albeit partially multicultural, fabric.

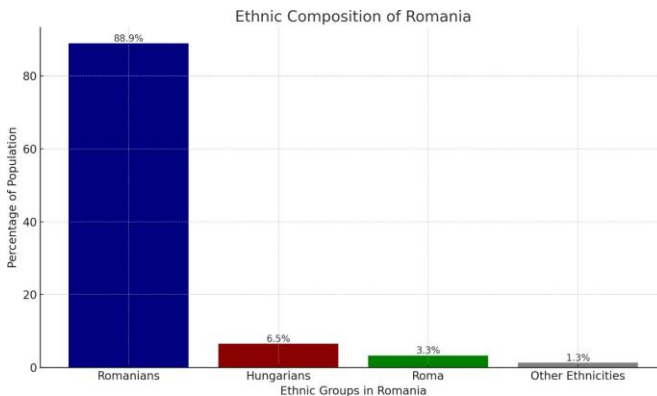


***Figure 4.** The histogram visualizes the ethnic composition of Romania, illustrating the percentages of the population comprised of Romanians, Hungarians (Magyars), Roma, and other ethnic groups. This representation offers a clear overview of the demographic distribution within the country.*

Even in contexts where multiculturalism is not widely prevalent, it remains essential for young leaders to be equipped to navigate multicultural environments in the workplace. We will now examine the needs and strengths of young people in Romania.

In Romania, the approach to youth policy is marked by a division of responsibility between central and local authorities (European Commission, 2019). According to the Youth Law, local entities are granted significant autonomy to initiate projects, although this often leads to a lack of coordinated efforts at the national level. A primary mechanism for implementing youth policy involves grants allocated to youth NGOs for small-scale projects, distributed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Culture. Furthermore, county offices for youth and sports, student cultural centers, county offices for culture, universities, and, to some extent, schools possess considerable independence in planning their activities and schedules for engaging with young people.

This decentralized approach facilitates a wide reach of youth work and activities across various regions and communities. However, it also results in uneven accessibility of youth services and activities nationwide, leading to inconsistent national coverage (European Commission, 2019). The challenge of national coordination is further exacerbated by the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the field of youth policies. Although a

dedicated institution for youth policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, was established in 1990, youth policy measures remain fragmented across different policy areas, including education, social affairs, and culture.

Since 2001, strategic documents in the youth sector, including the National Strategy in the Field of Youth Policy 2015-2020, have sought to consolidate general and operational objectives for youth policy. However, the strategy lacks a comprehensive action plan, clearly defined budget allocations, and a monitoring framework, resulting in sporadic coordination among top-level authorities and insufficient oversight of the implementation of actions aimed at achieving the set objectives (European Commission, 2019).

The Romanian Youth Law (Law no. 350/2006) defines youth as individuals aged 14 to 35, although specific strategies related to social inclusion, poverty reduction, and employment are targeted at the 15 to 24 age group, in accordance with labor laws and available statistical data. The Youth Law establishes the framework for youth policy, outlining the responsibilities of central and local authorities, defining youth NGOs, and specifying the rights and facilities available to young people across various domains, including education, culture, health, the economy, housing, employment, and volunteering. It underscores the importance of young people's participation in decision-making processes, particularly in matters that directly affect them, and advocates for their involvement in public life, education, and access to information technology. The law also promotes youth entrepreneurship, particularly among rural and geographically isolated youth, by providing financial support and consultancy services for start-up businesses.

Furthermore, it ensures access to public library resources for young people and prioritizes support for vulnerable youth and talented young researchers.

In 2019, Romanian state authorities were tasked with developing programs to promote the social inclusion of young people. The Youth Law also establishes rights and facilities for young people across various domains, including education, culture, research, health, the economy (with a particular emphasis on young entrepreneurs), housing, employment, and volunteering. A notable aspect of the Youth Law is its provision for financing youth activities, mandating local and county authorities to establish special funds and support youth groups and NGOs by providing space for youth projects, contingent upon the availability of local infrastructure.

The rights and obligations outlined in the Youth Law include young people's participation in decision-making processes, particularly in matters that directly affect them, as well as active participation in public life with individual responsibility. The law ensures access to support and counseling in education, economic, and cultural spheres. It encourages engagement in education and training, access to information technology, volunteering, and participation in programs that promote intercultural dialogue and combat racism, xenophobia, and intolerance. Additionally, the law supports youth entrepreneurship, particularly among rural youth and those from isolated areas, by providing financial assistance and consultancy services for starting businesses.

Young people have the right to access public library resources, and vulnerable youth are granted free access to university education. The state is also obligated to provide opportunities for talented young researchers and to ensure that young people in formal education receive free medical services,

family planning services, preferential bank loans, and priority in social housing. The Youth Law also emphasizes programs aimed at reducing alcohol and drug consumption among young people and supporting the social and professional reintegration of young offenders.

Addressing the challenges and needs of young people in Romania, one significant issue is the high number of individuals not engaged in education, employment, or training, commonly referred to as the NEET category. In 2020, Romania recorded one of the highest NEET rates among European Union member states, according to Eurostat data reported by *Ziarul Financiar*. Specifically, 16.6% of Romanian youths aged 15 to 29 fell into this category, placing Romania as the country with the fifth-highest NEET rate within the EU, where the average was 13.5% (Romania-Insider.com, 2021).

The high NEET rate represents a critical area of concern for Romania's labor market and youth policies, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and programs to re-engage these young individuals in productive activities, whether through formal education, vocational training, or employment opportunities. Addressing this issue is essential for mitigating the long-term socio-economic consequences associated with youth disengagement, such as increased vulnerability to poverty, social exclusion, and health issues. It also underscores the importance of creating more inclusive, accessible, and diverse opportunities for young people to facilitate their successful transition into the workforce and active participation in society.

In conclusion, young people in Romania face challenges in securing employment, and those aspiring to become leaders will inevitably encounter difficulties. However, as observed, Romania's youth policies are actively

working to address these challenges. Government initiatives supporting young entrepreneurs, providing education and training opportunities, and enhancing social inclusion represent significant steps toward empowering the youth. Despite the high NEET rates, which underscore the urgency of these interventions, the comprehensive approach of Romania's youth policies reflects a commitment to fostering a supportive environment for young people.

By continuing to refine and implement these strategies, there is potential to create a more favorable landscape for the development of future leaders among the Romanian youth.

This section discusses Romania's demographic landscape, focusing on the country's dominant Romanian population and its minority groups, including Hungarians and Roma. It highlights challenges faced by young people, particularly the high NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate, which is one of the highest in the EU. The Romanian Youth Law provides a framework for youth policy, promoting education, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion. Despite challenges, government initiatives are working to empower youth and foster a more supportive environment for their development as future leaders.

III.6. Conclusions

In the contemporary era of globalization, it is clear that countries worldwide display varying degrees of multiculturalism. As globalization increasingly interconnects nations, the presence of diverse cultural backgrounds within countries highlights the need for young leaders to understand and embrace this diversity.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of leaders adopting ethical and transformative leadership practices that foster environments where equity and respect for diverse cultures and religions are paramount. Consequently, our findings affirm that effective leadership in today's global context depends on the ability to inclusively bridge cultural divides, promoting unity and leveraging diversity as a strength.

Part IV:

ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS OF FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS



ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS OF FUTURE YOUNG ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERS

IV.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the economic and administrative needs essential for cultivating future young ethical and inclusive leaders, focusing on Malta, Italy, the Maldives and Romania. As the global landscape becomes increasingly complex, there is an urgent need for leaders who can navigate economic challenges while upholding ethical standards and promoting inclusivity. This study provides an overview of the four countries' current economic and administrative environments, highlighting specific challenges and opportunities. The chapter concludes with recommendations for developing leadership programs that address these needs, ensuring that future leaders are well-equipped to manage the evolving demands of their roles.

The economic and administrative landscapes of Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives offer unique challenges and opportunities for future leaders. Understanding these contexts is crucial for tailoring leadership development programs that address the specific needs of each country.

- **Malta:** As a small island state within the European Union, Malta has a unique economic environment characterised by a strong financial services sector, tourism, and a growing digital economy. However, it also faces economic vulnerability due to its size, limited natural

resources, and dependency on external markets. Malta has made significant strides in governance and public administration, but corruption and transparency remain areas of concern.

- **Italy:** Italy's economy is one of the largest in Europe, but it is also marked by significant regional disparities, high public debt, and structural weaknesses in its labour market and industrial sectors. The country has a rich cultural heritage and a strong industrial base, but it struggles with challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiency and political instability. Ethical and inclusive leadership addresses these challenges and drives economic reforms.
- **Romania:** Romania has undergone significant economic transformation since the fall of communism, transitioning to a market economy and joining the European Union. Despite impressive economic growth in recent years, the country faces challenges such as corruption, inequality, and an underdeveloped infrastructure. Administratively, Romania is working to improve governance and public services, but there is a need for strong ethical leadership to tackle these issues and sustain progress.
- **Maldives:** The Maldives is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, heavily dependent on tourism and fishing. The country faces significant challenges related to climate change, such as rising sea levels, which threaten its very existence. Economically, the Maldives must diversify its economy and build resilience to external shocks. Administratively, the country is working to strengthen

governance and address issues such as political instability and corruption. Ethical and inclusive leadership is essential for navigating these challenges and ensuring a sustainable future for the Maldives.

In summary, this chapter explores future leaders' economic and administrative needs in these four countries, focusing on fostering ethical and inclusive leadership. By understanding the unique contexts of Malta, Italy, the Maldives and Romania, we can develop strategies to equip young leaders with the skills and values necessary to drive positive change in their respective countries and the global community.

IV.2. The Role of Young Leaders in Shaping Future Economies

Young leaders are poised to play a crucial role in shaping the future of economies worldwide. As the next generation of decision-makers, they bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a strong commitment to ethical and inclusive practices. The role of young leaders in shaping future economies can be understood in several ways:

- ***Driving innovation and entrepreneurship:*** Young leaders are often at the forefront of innovation and entrepreneurship. With their adaptability to new technologies and openness to new ideas, they are well-positioned to create and lead businesses that drive economic growth and job creation. In countries like Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives, young entrepreneurs are leading the way in technology, tourism, and renewable energy sectors, contributing to the diversification and modernisation of their economies;
- ***Promoting sustainable development:*** The current generation of young leaders is more aware of and committed to sustainability than previous generations. They recognise the importance of balancing economic growth with environmental protection and social responsibility. Young leaders are likely to champion policies and practices that promote sustainable development, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of the environment or social equity. This is particularly important in countries like the Maldives, where the impact of climate change is a pressing concern;

- ***Advancing social and economic equity:*** Young leaders are often more attuned to social and economic equity issues. They are likely to advocate for policies that reduce income inequality, provide access to education and healthcare, and promote social inclusion. In Romania, for example, young leaders play a key role in advancing social equity by addressing the rural-urban divide and improving access to opportunities for all citizens;
- ***Leveraging technology for economic transformation:*** Young leaders are digital natives who deeply understand how technology can be leveraged for economic transformation. They are likely to drive the digitalisation of economies, enhancing productivity, efficiency, and innovation. In Italy, young leaders are playing a significant role in the tech sector's growth, particularly in fintech, artificial intelligence, and digital commerce;
- ***Shaping global economic policy:*** As the world becomes more interconnected, young leaders will play an increasingly important role in shaping global economic policy. Their ability to navigate complex international issues like trade, climate change, and migration will ensure that global economic policies are inclusive and equitable. Young leaders from small countries like Malta can have an outsized impact on global policy by bringing unique perspectives and advocating for the interests of smaller states;
- ***Championing ethical leadership:*** Young leaders are often more committed to ethical leadership than their predecessors. They understand the importance of integrity, transparency, and

accountability in leadership and will likely prioritise these values in their decision-making. This shift toward ethical leadership is essential for rebuilding public trust in institutions and ensuring that economic policies are fair and just;

- ***Building resilient economies:*** In an era of rapid change and uncertainty, young leaders will be instrumental in building resilient economies that can withstand shocks and adapt to new challenges. Their ability to innovate, embrace new technologies, and lead with inclusivity and ethics will be key to ensuring that economies remain strong and vibrant in the face of global disruptions;
- ***Fostering global collaboration:*** Young leaders are more connected globally than any previous generation, thanks to advances in communication technology and the rise of social media. This global connectivity allows them to collaborate across borders, share ideas, and develop solutions to common challenges. In shaping future economies, young leaders will foster global collaboration and ensure economic growth benefits all nations.

This subchapter explores the pivotal role young leaders will play in shaping future economies. Key contributions include driving innovation and entrepreneurship, promoting sustainable development, advancing social and economic equity, and leveraging technology for economic transformation. Young leaders are positioned to influence global economic policy, champion ethical leadership, and build resilient economies. Their global connectivity and commitment to inclusivity and sustainability make them essential in fostering collaboration and ensuring equitable economic growth across nations.

IV.3. Economic Needs of Future Leaders

IV.3.1. Malta: Economic Growth and the Role of Young Leaders in Innovation

Malta, a small island nation in the Mediterranean, has experienced remarkable economic growth over the past few decades, largely due to its strategic location, favourable business environment, and integration into the European Union. The country's economy is primarily driven by financial services, tourism, gaming, technology, and innovation. As Malta continues to evolve, the role of young leaders in driving innovation becomes increasingly vital.

Malta's economy has been resilient, demonstrating consistent growth even during challenging global economic periods. The financial services sector has been a cornerstone of this growth, benefiting from Malta's status as a reputable jurisdiction within the EU. Also, Malta's gaming industry, particularly online gambling, has flourished, contributing significantly to the country's GDP.

However, Malta's small size and limited natural resources mean that continued economic growth depends heavily on innovation and the ability to diversify the economy. This is where young leaders come into play. The next generation of Maltese leaders must focus on leveraging technology, fostering entrepreneurship, and expanding into new sectors to sustain and enhance economic growth.

Young leaders in Malta are uniquely positioned to drive the country's innovation agenda. As digital natives, they are comfortable with new technologies and have a natural inclination towards entrepreneurship. These qualities are essential for developing Malta's startup ecosystem and fostering a culture of innovation.

Malta has implemented several initiatives to support young innovators, such as startup tax incentives, investment in digital infrastructure, and educational programs encouraging entrepreneurship. Additionally, the Maltese government has launched initiatives like the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) and the Blockchain Strategy to promote the adoption of emerging technologies.

Case Study: The Startup Ecosystem in Malta

Malta's startup ecosystem is still in its early stages but has shown significant potential. The ecosystem is supported by a network of incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces that provide resources and mentorship to young entrepreneurs. One of the key success stories is the rise of blockchain and fintech startups, spurred by Malta's proactive regulatory approach to these industries.

For example, companies like Chiliz, a blockchain-based fan engagement platform, have chosen Malta as their base of operations due to the favourable regulatory environment and access to talent. Similarly, the "Malta AI and Blockchain Summit" launch has put Malta on the map as a hub for innovation in these cutting-edge fields.

Young leaders in Malta's startup ecosystem are creating new businesses and driving economic diversification, which is crucial for the country's long-term economic resilience. By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, these young leaders are positioning Malta to compete in the global economy, particularly in high-growth sectors such as technology and digital finance.

This section highlights Malta's economic growth, driven by sectors like financial services, tourism, gaming, and technology. Despite its small size and limited resources, Malta's future economic success depends on innovation and diversification, where young leaders play a crucial role. These leaders are driving the development of Malta's startup ecosystem, especially in blockchain and fintech, supported by government initiatives and a favorable business environment. By embracing technology and fostering entrepreneurship, young leaders are helping to ensure Malta's continued economic resilience and competitiveness in the global economy.

IV.3.2. Italy: Challenges in the Italian Economy and the Need for Fresh Leadership

With its rich cultural heritage and diverse economy, Italy faces several economic challenges that require fresh and dynamic leadership. The country grapples with high public debt, slow economic growth, and significant regional disparities. Young leaders are critical in addressing these challenges, particularly youth unemployment and entrepreneurship.

Italy's third-largest Eurozone economy has struggled with slow growth and high public debt levels for many years. Once a powerhouse, the country's industrial sector has been affected by global competition, technological change,

and an ageing workforce. Additionally, Italy faces stark regional disparities, with the northern regions being more developed and industrialised while the southern regions lag in economic development.

Youth unemployment is a particularly pressing issue in Italy. The youth unemployment rate has been consistently high, often exceeding 30%. This has led to a phenomenon known as the "brain drain," where young Italians leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad.

Italy needs a new generation of leaders who bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to overcome these challenges. Young leaders must focus on fostering entrepreneurship, creating jobs, and revitalising the Italian economy through digital transformation and innovation.

The Italian government has recognised the need to support young entrepreneurs and has introduced several initiatives to promote startups and small businesses. Programs like "Italia Startup Visa" and "Smart&Start Italia" provide financial support, mentorship, and incentives for young entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses in Italy.

Example: Youth Unemployment and Initiatives to Foster Entrepreneurship

One of the key initiatives to combat youth unemployment in Italy is the "Garanzia Giovani" (Youth Guarantee) program, which provides young people training, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities. The program aims to bridge the gap between education and employment, helping young Italians acquire the skills needed for the job market.

In addition to government programs, there is a growing movement among young Italians to create opportunities through entrepreneurship. For example, in the tech and creative industries, many young Italians are launching startups that create jobs and drive innovation. Milan, in particular, has become a startup hub in fintech, fashion tech, and digital marketing.

Young leaders are also taking advantage of Italy's rich cultural heritage to develop new business models in tourism, food, and design. By leveraging Italy's global brand and combining it with innovative business practices, these young entrepreneurs are contributing to revitalising the Italian economy.

This section highlights Italy's economic challenges, including high public debt, slow growth, regional disparities, and youth unemployment. Young leaders are seen as crucial to addressing these issues through entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital transformation. Government programs like "Garanzia Giovani" and startup initiatives like "Italia Startup Visa" aim to support youth employment and entrepreneurial ventures. Young Italians are driving innovation in sectors such as fintech, tourism, and creative industries, particularly in cities like Milan, helping to revitalise the economy and create job opportunities.

IV.3.3. Maldives: Economic Reliance on Tourism and the Need for Sustainable Practices

The Maldives, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, has an economy heavily reliant on tourism and fishing. While tourism has brought significant economic benefits, it has also made the country vulnerable to external shocks and environmental degradation. The need for sustainable

practices is crucial, and young leaders in the Maldives are taking the lead in promoting environmental conservation and sustainable tourism.

Tourism is the backbone of the Maldivian economy, accounting for over 60% of the country's GDP and providing employment to a large portion of the population. The Maldives' natural beauty attracts millions of tourists yearly with its pristine beaches and coral reefs. However, this reliance on tourism also poses significant risks, particularly in the context of climate change and global economic fluctuations.

The Maldivian economy is highly vulnerable to external factors such as changes in global travel patterns, economic downturns in key tourist markets, and environmental degradation. The impact of climate change, including rising sea levels and coral bleaching, poses an existential threat to the Maldives, making sustainability a critical issue.

Given the environmental challenges facing the Maldives, there is an urgent need to adopt sustainable practices in tourism and other sectors. Young leaders in the Maldives are at the forefront of this effort, advocating for policies and initiatives that protect the environment while supporting economic development.

Sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly resorts, marine conservation programs, and community-based tourism, are gaining traction in the Maldives. These practices help preserve the natural environment and provide economic opportunities for local communities.

Example: Youth-Led Initiatives in Environmental Conservation

Young Maldivians are leading several initiatives aimed at environmental conservation and sustainability. One such initiative is "Eco Youth," a youth-led organisation that educates and empowers young people to take action on environmental issues. Through beach clean-ups, coral reef restoration, and awareness campaigns, Eco Youth significantly impacts environmental conservation in the Maldives.

Another example is the "Zero Plastic Maldives" campaign, driven by young activists, which aims to reduce plastic waste in the Maldives. The campaign promotes alternatives to single-use plastics and encourages tourists and locals to adopt more sustainable practices.

In addition to grassroots initiatives, young Maldivians are also involved in policy advocacy, pushing for stronger environmental regulations and sustainable development policies. Their efforts are crucial for ensuring that the Maldives can continue to thrive economically while protecting its fragile environment for future generations.

This section highlights the Maldives' economy, heavily reliant on tourism and fishing, and the environmental challenges it faces due to climate change and external shocks. Young leaders in the Maldives are taking a leading role in promoting sustainable tourism and environmental conservation to address these challenges. Initiatives like "Eco Youth" and "Zero Plastic Maldives" focus on reducing environmental degradation and advocating for sustainable practices. These efforts are critical for protecting the Maldives' natural beauty and ensuring long-term economic resilience.

IV.3.4. Romania: Economic Transition and the Role of Young Leaders in Sustainable Development

Romania has undergone a significant economic transformation since the fall of communism, transitioning to a market economy and becoming a member of the European Union. While the country has seen impressive economic growth in recent years, it faces challenges in sustainability, infrastructure, and social inequality. Young leaders in Romania are crucial in addressing these challenges, particularly through their involvement in the tech industry and sustainable development initiatives.

Since joining the European Union in 2007, Romania has experienced rapid economic growth driven by foreign investment, export growth, and structural reforms. The country has become a hub for technology and outsourcing, attracting major global companies to cities like Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca.

Despite this growth, Romania faces regional disparities, corruption, and an underdeveloped infrastructure. The rural-urban divide remains significant, with many rural areas lacking basic services and economic opportunities. Additionally, the country must address environmental sustainability as it continues to industrialise and urbanise.

Young leaders in Romania increasingly focus on sustainable development as a key priority. They recognise the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. This new generation of leaders is pushing for policies and practices that promote renewable energy, green technology, and sustainable urban development.

Romania's tech industry has become a significant driver of economic growth, and young leaders are at the forefront of this sector. By leveraging technology, they create solutions addressing economic and environmental challenges, contributing to Romania's sustainable development.

Example: Tech Industry Growth and Youth Involvement

The growth of Romania's tech industry is a testament to the potential of young leaders in driving economic transformation. Cities like Cluj-Napoca have become known as the "Silicon Valley of Eastern Europe," attracting startups and tech companies innovating in software development, AI, and fintech.

One notable example is UiPath, a Romanian startup that has become a global leader in robotic process automation (RPA). Founded by young Romanian entrepreneurs, UiPath has grown rapidly and is now one of Europe's most valuable tech companies. The success of UiPath highlights the potential of Romania's tech sector to drive economic growth and create high-quality jobs.

Young leaders in Romania are also involved in environmental initiatives, such as promoting renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. Projects like "GreenTech," which focuses on developing green technology solutions, are led by young innovators committed to making Romania a leader in sustainable development.

This section highlights Romania's economic transformation since the fall of communism, driven by EU membership, foreign investment, and a growing tech industry. Despite impressive growth, Romania faces challenges such as regional disparities, underdeveloped infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. Young leaders are crucial in addressing these issues, particularly through their involvement in the tech industry and sustainable development. They are pushing for renewable energy, green technology, and sustainable urban development while driving innovation in Romania's thriving tech sector.

IV.4. Administrative Needs of Future Leaders

IV.4.1. Importance of Effective Governance and Administration

Effective governance and administration are crucial for the success and sustainability of any society. Good governance ensures that resources are managed efficiently, public services are delivered effectively, and the rights and needs of citizens are met equitably. In a rapidly changing world, the administrative needs of future leaders are evolving, requiring them to be adaptive, innovative, and inclusive in their approaches to governance.

Effective governance is characterised by transparency, accountability, responsiveness, inclusivity, and the rule of law. These principles are the foundation upon which public trust is built, and they are essential for fostering social cohesion, economic development, and environmental sustainability. For young leaders, understanding the importance of these principles is critical as they prepare to take on leadership roles in their respective countries.

Administrative efficiency is also key to addressing modern societies' complex challenges, from economic inequality to environmental degradation. Future leaders must have the knowledge and skills to navigate bureaucratic systems, implement policy reforms, and manage public resources effectively. This chapter explores the administrative needs of future leaders in Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives, highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities in each context.

IV.4.2.Malta:Administrative Reforms and the Role of Young Leaders in Policy-Making

Malta, a small but dynamic nation, has made significant strides in modernising its administrative systems in recent years. As the country continues to develop, the role of young leaders in driving administrative reforms and participating in policy-making processes becomes increasingly important.

Malta's public administration has undergone a series of reforms to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability. These reforms have focused on digitalisation, public sector management, and regulatory frameworks. For example, e-government services have streamlined many administrative processes, making it easier for citizens to access services and for the government to deliver them.

The Maltese government has also emphasised the importance of good governance, particularly in combating corruption and enhancing the rule of law. This is evident in establishing institutions such as the National Audit Office and the Office of the Ombudsman, which play key roles in ensuring accountability and transparency in public administration.

Young leaders in Malta can potentially play a transformative role in shaping the country's administrative landscape. Their involvement in policy-making is crucial for ensuring that the needs and perspectives of younger generations are considered in governance decisions.

Youth participation in policy-making can take various forms, including involvement in political parties, civil society organisations, and public

consultations. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on engaging young people in decision-making, recognising that their insights and innovative ideas can contribute to more effective and forward-looking policies.

Case Study: Youth Engagement in Digital Policy-Making

Developing digital policies is a notable area in which young Maltese leaders have significantly contributed. As digital natives, young leaders have been instrumental in shaping Malta's approach to digital governance, including regulating emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence.

For instance, the "Blockchain Island" initiative, which positions Malta as a leader in blockchain technology, was driven by government support and the active involvement of young innovators and entrepreneurs. Their contributions have helped Malta establish a regulatory framework supporting innovation and protecting consumer rights.

By continuing to involve young leaders in policy-making, Malta can ensure that its administrative reforms are aligned with the needs of future generations and that the country remains at the forefront of innovation and good governance.

Malta has made substantial progress in modernizing its administrative systems, focusing on digitalization, public sector management, and good governance. Reforms, such as e-government services, have enhanced efficiency, transparency, and accountability, while institutions like the National Audit Office promote integrity in public administration. Young leaders play a pivotal role in shaping policies, particularly in digital governance, where their involvement in initiatives like the "Blockchain Island" has been key. Engaging youth in policy-making ensures that Malta's reforms reflect the needs of future generations.

IV.4.3. Italy: Bureaucratic Challenges and the Need for Innovative Administrative Solutions

Italy, a country with a rich history and complex political landscape, faces significant bureaucratic challenges hindering administrative efficiency and governance. Addressing these challenges requires innovative solutions and the active involvement of young leaders who can bring fresh perspectives.

Italy's bureaucracy is often characterised by inefficiency, complexity, and a lack of responsiveness. These challenges are compounded by the country's regional disparities, with different regions facing varying levels of administrative effectiveness. The bureaucratic system is frequently criticised for being slow, overly complicated, and resistant to change.

One of the major issues is the overlap of responsibilities between different levels of government—national, regional, and local—which often leads to confusion, delays, and a lack of accountability. Additionally, Italy's public sector has been plagued by corruption, which undermines public trust and hampers the implementation of effective policies.

To overcome these challenges, Italy needs innovative administrative solutions to streamline processes, reduce red tape, and improve service delivery. This is where young leaders can make a significant impact.

With their adaptability and familiarity with digital tools, young leaders are well-positioned to drive the digital transformation of Italy's public administration. Digitalisation offers a way to simplify bureaucratic procedures, improve transparency, and enhance the accessibility of public services. For example, implementing e-government platforms can reduce the time and cost

associated with administrative tasks, making the system more efficient and user-friendly.

Example: Addressing Bureaucracy Through Digital Innovation

Several initiatives have been launched in Italy to address bureaucratic inefficiencies through digital innovation. One such initiative is the "Digital Italy" strategy, which aims to modernise the country's public administration by promoting digital technologies in government services.

Young leaders have been at the forefront of this digital transformation, advocating for adopting technologies such as blockchain for secure and transparent record-keeping and artificial intelligence for automating routine administrative tasks. These innovations have the potential to significantly reduce bureaucratic delays and improve the quality of public services.

Moreover, initiatives like the "IO App," a mobile application that allows citizens to access various public services from their smartphones, represent a step towards a more streamlined and citizen-centric administration. The success of such initiatives depends on the continued involvement of young leaders who can push for further digital innovation and administrative reform.

Italy faces significant bureaucratic challenges marked by inefficiency, complexity, and corruption, exacerbated by regional disparities and overlapping government responsibilities. Young leaders, with their adaptability and digital skills, are key to driving reforms, particularly through digitalisation initiatives like the "Digital Italy" strategy and the "IO App." These innovations aim to streamline processes, reduce red tape, and improve public service delivery, positioning young leaders to play a crucial role in Italy's administrative transformation.

IV.4.4. Maldives: Governance Challenges in a Small Island Nation and the Role of Youth in Administration

The Maldives, a small island nation with unique governance challenges, relies heavily on effective administration to manage its limited resources and address its vulnerability to environmental and economic risks. Given the country's reliance on tourism and its exposure to climate change, the role of youth in administration is increasingly important for ensuring sustainable development and resilient governance.

The Maldives faces several governance challenges, including limited administrative capacity, geographic dispersion, and vulnerability to climate change. As a small island nation, the Maldives has a relatively small population and a limited pool of skilled professionals, making it difficult to manage public administration effectively.

The country's geographic dispersion across multiple islands presents additional challenges, as it complicates the delivery of public services and the implementation of policies. Furthermore, the Maldives' reliance on tourism makes its economy vulnerable to external shocks, such as global economic downturns and natural disasters.

Climate change poses an existential threat to the Maldives, with rising sea levels and extreme weather events putting the country's existence at risk. This makes effective governance and forward-looking administration critical for the country's survival.

Youth play a vital role in addressing the governance challenges facing the Maldives. Young leaders are increasingly involved in public administration

and policy-making as the country looks to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

Youth engagement in administration is particularly important in environmental governance, disaster management, and sustainable development. Young Maldivians are bringing fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to these areas, helping to shape policies that are responsive to the challenges of the 21st century.

Example: Youth-Led Initiatives in Environmental Governance

One notable example of youth involvement in administration is the role of young leaders in environmental governance. In response to the urgent threat of climate change, young Maldivians have been actively involved in advocacy, policy-making, and community initiatives to protect the environment.

For instance, the "Maldives Youth Climate Network" is a youth-led organisation that works to raise awareness about climate change and advocate for stronger environmental policies. The network engages with government officials, participates in international climate negotiations, and organises local initiatives to promote sustainability.

Young leaders in the Maldives are also involved in disaster management, working to develop strategies and policies that enhance the country's resilience to natural disasters. Their involvement in these areas ensures that the Maldives can effectively address its unique governance challenges and build a sustainable future.

The Maldives faces governance challenges due to limited administrative capacity, geographic dispersion, and vulnerability to climate change and economic risks. Youth play a crucial role in addressing these challenges, particularly in areas like environmental governance and disaster management. Young Maldivians bring innovative ideas to shape policies for sustainable development, such as their involvement in initiatives like the "Maldives Youth Climate Network," which advocates for stronger environmental policies and resilience strategies to safeguard the nation's future.

IV.4.5. Romania: Decentralisation and the Empowerment of Local Leaders

Romania has made significant progress in its post-communist transition, but challenges related to centralisation and governance persist. Decentralisation, which involves transferring authority and resources from central to local governments, is a key strategy for improving governance and empowering local leaders. Young leaders in Romania play a crucial role in this process, particularly in driving local development and ensuring economic growth benefits are distributed more equitably.

Romania's centralisation has historically concentrated power and resources in the capital, Bucharest, leading to significant regional disparities. While urban areas have seen considerable development, rural areas often lag behind, lacking access to quality public services and economic opportunities.

Decentralisation is critical for addressing these disparities by empowering local governments to make decisions that reflect their communities' needs and priorities. It also allows for more efficient allocation

of resources and better service delivery, as local authorities are typically more attuned to the needs of their constituents.

The empowerment of local leaders is essential for successful decentralisation. Young leaders, in particular, bring energy, innovation, and a commitment to local development that can drive positive change in their communities.

In Romania, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of supporting young leaders at the local level. Initiatives such as the "Young Leaders Program," which provides training and mentorship to aspiring local leaders, aim to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to govern their communities effectively.

Example: Local Development and Youth Leadership in Cluj-Napoca

Cluj-Napoca, often called the "Silicon Valley of Eastern Europe," is a prime example of how young leaders can drive local development. The city's success in attracting tech companies and fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem has been largely due to the proactive leadership of local officials, many of whom are young and forward-thinking.

These young leaders have focused on creating a business-friendly environment, investing in digital infrastructure, and promoting Cluj-Napoca as a hub for innovation. Their efforts have boosted the local economy and set an example for other cities in Romania to follow.

By supporting the empowerment of young local leaders, Romania can ensure that the benefits of decentralisation are realised and that all regions of the country can participate in and benefit from economic growth.

Romania has made strides in its post-communist transition, but centralisation and governance issues remain. Decentralisation, which involves shifting authority from central to local governments, is seen as vital for reducing regional disparities and improving service delivery. Young leaders play a crucial role in this process, particularly in fostering local development and ensuring economic benefits reach all areas, especially rural ones. Initiatives like the "Young Leaders Program" aim to equip aspiring leaders with the skills needed for effective governance, as exemplified by Cluj-Napoca's success under proactive, youthful leadership.

The administrative needs of future leaders in Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives are shaped by each country's unique challenges and opportunities. In Malta, young leaders are crucial for driving administrative reforms and contributing to policy-making processes. In Italy, they are needed to address bureaucratic inefficiencies and promote digital innovation. In Romania, young leaders are essential for successful decentralisation and local development. Their involvement in governance in the Maldives is vital for addressing the country's unique challenges, particularly in environmental governance and disaster management.

As these young leaders take on greater administrative responsibilities, their commitment to effective, transparent, and inclusive governance will be key to overcoming future challenges and ensuring their societies' well-being and prosperity.

IV.5. Training and Development for Young Leaders

IV.5.1. Importance of Education and Training Programs

Developing future young ethical and inclusive leaders is fundamentally tied to the quality and accessibility of education and training programs. These programs are critical in equipping young people with the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to navigate the complexities of modern governance and economic systems. In an increasingly interconnected world, young leaders must be prepared to address global challenges, such as climate change, economic inequality, and social justice, while also being capable of managing local and national issues effectively.

Education and training programs provide young leaders with the tools to develop essential leadership qualities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and ethical decision-making. These programs also foster an understanding of inclusivity and diversity, enabling young leaders to create environments where all voices are heard and respected.

Moreover, in a rapidly changing world where technological advancements continually reshape industries and societies, education and professional development are crucial for young leaders to stay informed and adaptive. This chapter will explore the importance of education and training for young leaders and highlight successful leadership programs in Malta, Italy, the Maldives and Romania.

IV.5.2. Malta: Leadership Programs and Educational Initiatives

Malta has recognised the importance of nurturing future leaders through education and training, particularly in light of the country's ambition to position itself as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Several programs and initiatives in Malta are designed to develop leadership skills among young people, preparing them to take on significant roles in both the public and private sectors.

One of the most notable programs in Malta is the "Malta Leadership Institute," which offers a range of courses and workshops focused on leadership development, strategic thinking, and ethical governance. The institute provides training for young professionals in both the public and private sectors, emphasising the importance of ethical leadership and decision-making.

Another key initiative is the "Youth Leadership Programme," which empowers young people to take active community roles. This program focuses on developing leadership skills, promoting civic engagement, and encouraging young people to participate in policy-making processes. It also offers mentorship opportunities, connecting young leaders with experienced professionals who can guide them in their leadership journey.

In addition to leadership programs, Malta has invested in educational initiatives to equip young people with the skills needed for the future workforce. For example, the "Malta Digital Innovation Hub" provides training in digital skills, entrepreneurship, and innovation, preparing young leaders to excel in the rapidly evolving tech industry.

The University of Malta also offers various leadership and management courses, including specialised public administration, business management, and environmental governance programs. These courses give young leaders a strong foundation in leadership principles and practices, enabling them to make informed decisions and lead effectively.

Malta is committed to developing future leaders through education and training programs aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Key initiatives like the "Malta Leadership Institute" and the "Youth Leadership Programme" focus on leadership development, ethical governance, and civic engagement. Additionally, programs like the "Malta Digital Innovation Hub" and leadership courses at the University of Malta equip young people with digital, entrepreneurial, and management skills, preparing them to take on significant roles in both public and private sectors.

IV.5.3. Italy: Developing Leadership Through Education and Mentorship

Italy, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse economy, strongly emphasises developing young leaders through education and mentorship. Given the country's ongoing bureaucracy and economic revitalisation challenges, leadership training is essential for preparing the next generation of leaders to navigate these complexities.

Italy offers several leadership development programs, both at the national and regional levels, designed to cultivate young leaders' skills and knowledge. One prominent program is the "Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione" (National School of Administration), which provides

specialised training for young public servants and future leaders in government. The program covers many topics, including public management, ethics, and policy analysis, intending to foster a new generation of ethical and competent public administrators.

Another significant initiative is the "Youth4Regions" program, an EU-funded initiative that offers young journalists and aspiring leaders the opportunity to learn about regional policy-making and the role of the EU in regional development. This program includes workshops, field visits, and mentorship, providing young leaders with insights into the complexities of regional governance and the importance of effective communication in leadership.

Mentorship plays a critical role in the development of young leaders in Italy. Programs such as "Mentors for Youth" connect experienced leaders with young professionals, offering guidance, support, and opportunities for professional growth. This mentorship is invaluable in helping young leaders navigate leadership challenges, providing them with the confidence and skills needed to succeed.

Networking is also a key component of leadership development in Italy. Events such as the "Italian Leadership Forum" bring together young leaders from various sectors to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build professional networks. These connections are essential for fostering collaboration and innovation, enabling young leaders to work together to address Italy's challenges.

Italy places a strong emphasis on developing young leaders through education, mentorship, and networking, aiming to address challenges related to bureaucracy and economic revitalization. Programs like the "Scuola Nazionale dell'Amministrazione" train future public servants, focusing on ethics and policy, while initiatives such as "Youth4Regions" provide insights into regional governance and the EU's role. Mentorship programs, like "Mentors for Youth," and networking events, such as the "Italian Leadership Forum," offer young leaders opportunities for professional growth, collaboration, and innovation.

IV.5.4. Maldives: Building Leadership Capacity in a Vulnerable Nation

As a small island nation facing significant environmental and economic challenges, the Maldives strongly emphasises developing leadership capacity among its youth. Leadership programs in the Maldives focus on sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community resilience, recognising the critical role that young leaders will play in the country's future.

One of the key leadership programs in the Maldives is the "Youth Leadership Program," designed to empower young Maldivians to take on leadership roles in their communities. The program offers training in environmental management, disaster preparedness, and sustainable development, equipping young leaders with the skills to address the challenges facing the Maldives.

Another significant initiative is the "Maldives National University Leadership Academy," which provides leadership training for young professionals in both the public and private sectors. The academy focuses on

developing leadership skills, promoting ethical governance, and fostering a commitment to sustainability among future leaders.

Mentorship is a vital component of leadership development in the Maldives. Programs such as the "Young Leaders' Mentorship Network" connect experienced leaders with young professionals, providing guidance, support, and opportunities for professional development. This mentorship is particularly important in the Maldives, where governance and sustainability challenges require strong, well-supported leadership.

Networking opportunities are also essential for young leaders in the Maldives. Events such as the "Maldives Youth Leadership Summit" bring together young leaders nationwide to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build networks. These connections foster collaboration and innovation, enabling young leaders to work together to address the Maldives' challenges.

The Maldives emphasizes youth leadership development, focusing on sustainability and environmental resilience to address the nation's pressing challenges. Programs like the "Youth Leadership Program" and the "Maldives National University Leadership Academy" equip young leaders with skills in environmental management, disaster preparedness, and ethical governance. Mentorship, through initiatives like the "Young Leaders' Mentorship Network," and networking events such as the "Maldives Youth Leadership Summit" provide crucial support, fostering collaboration and innovation among young Maldivians to shape the country's future.

IV.5.5. Romania: Leadership Development in a Transitioning Economy

As a country transitioning from a centralised economy to a more decentralised and market-driven one, Romania has recognised the need for leadership development programs to prepare young people to take on leadership roles in this new context. These programs focus on building the capacity of young leaders to drive economic growth, social development, and good governance.

Romania has several leadership programs aimed at developing young leaders across various sectors. The "Aspen Young Leaders Program" is one of the most prestigious, offering young professionals the opportunity to engage in leadership training, policy discussions, and networking with peers and experts. The program emphasises the importance of ethical leadership, civic responsibility, and the role of young leaders in shaping Romania's future.

Another key initiative is the "Leaders for the Future" program, which focuses on developing leadership skills among young people in both urban and rural areas. This program provides project management, communication, and strategic thinking training, helping young leaders manage local development projects and contribute to their communities.

Romanian universities and educational institutions also play a significant role in leadership development. For example, the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies offers leadership, management, and public administration courses, providing young leaders with the academic foundation for successful public and private careers.

Additionally, the "Romanian-American Foundation" supports educational initiatives that promote leadership and entrepreneurship among young people. The foundation offers scholarships, training programs, and mentorship opportunities, helping build a new generation of leaders equipped to drive Romania's economic and social development.

Romania is focusing on leadership development programs to prepare young leaders for its transition to a more decentralized, market-driven economy. Programs like the prestigious "Aspen Young Leaders Program" and "Leaders for the Future" emphasize ethical leadership, civic responsibility, and skills in project management and strategic thinking. Romanian universities also contribute by offering leadership courses, while initiatives from organizations like the "Romanian-American Foundation" provide mentorship, training, and scholarships to support young leaders in driving economic and social development.

Education, training, mentorship, and networking are critical components of leadership development for future ethical and inclusive leaders. In Malta, leadership programs and educational initiatives prepare young people to take on significant roles in innovation and governance. In Italy, mentorship and networking are helping to develop a new generation of leaders who can address the country's bureaucratic challenges and drive economic revitalisation. In Romania, leadership programs are building the capacity of young leaders to contribute to the country's transition and development. In the Maldives, leadership training is focused on sustainability and resilience, preparing young leaders to address the island nation's unique challenges.

As these young leaders continue to develop their skills and knowledge, their commitment to ethical and inclusive leadership will be essential for

shaping a better future for their countries and the global community. Through ongoing education, training, and mentorship, these leaders will be equipped to navigate the complexities of modern governance and drive positive change in their societies.

IV.6. Case Studies of Young Ethical Leaders

IV.6.1. Introduction to Young Ethical Leaders

Young ethical leaders play a crucial role in shaping the future of their communities and nations. Their commitment to ethical principles, inclusivity, and sustainability profoundly impacts economic development, social cohesion, and governance. This chapter profiles young leaders from Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives, examining their contributions to their respective societies and analysing the broader implications of their leadership.

These leaders exemplify ethical and inclusive leadership qualities, demonstrating a commitment to their communities and a vision for a better future. Their stories provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by young leaders today and highlight the potential for positive change that can be achieved through ethical leadership.

IV.6.2. Malta: Profile of Alexia Galea, Environmental Advocate and Policy Innovator

Alexia Galea is a young environmental advocate from Malta who has emerged as a leading voice in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. Growing up on an island where the effects of climate change are increasingly evident, Alexia developed a deep passion for environmental issues at a young age. She pursued a degree in Environmental

Policy at the University of Malta, where she excelled in her studies and became actively involved in environmental advocacy.

Alexia's leadership journey began when she co-founded "EcoMalta," a youth-led organisation that promotes sustainable practices and environmental education in Malta. Under her leadership, EcoMalta has grown into a significant force in the environmental movement, engaging with policymakers, businesses, and communities to promote sustainable development.

Alexia's work has had a significant impact on both the community and the economy in Malta. Through EcoMalta, she has spearheaded initiatives that have led to tangible environmental improvements, such as beach clean-ups, tree-planting campaigns, and the promotion of renewable energy sources. Her advocacy has also influenced policy, contributing to developing more stringent environmental regulations and adopting sustainable practices by local businesses.

Among her most notable achievements is her role in the "Green Malta Initiative," a collaborative effort between EcoMalta, the government, and the private sector to transition Malta towards a greener economy. This initiative has helped reduce the country's carbon footprint and created new economic opportunities in the green energy and eco-tourism sectors.

Alexia's leadership has been recognised both locally and internationally. She has been invited to speak at global environmental forums, where she has shared Malta's experiences and advocated for stronger international cooperation on climate issues. Her work demonstrates the power of ethical and inclusive leadership in driving sustainable development and creating a more resilient and prosperous society.

Alexia Galea, a young environmental advocate from Malta, has become a prominent voice in the fight against climate change. After studying Environmental Policy at the University of Malta, she co-founded "EcoMalta," a youth-led organization promoting sustainability and environmental education. Through EcoMalta, Alexia has spearheaded impactful initiatives, including the "Green Malta Initiative," which focuses on reducing Malta's carbon footprint and fostering a green economy. Her advocacy has influenced environmental policy and sustainable business practices, earning her local and international recognition as a leader in environmental and climate action.

IV.6.3. Italy: Profile of Luca Rossi, Social Entrepreneur and Anti-Corruption Activist

Luca Rossi is a young social entrepreneur from Italy who has made significant strides in the fight against corruption and promoting social justice. Born and raised in Naples, a city with a complex history of organised crime and corruption, Luca was motivated from a young age to make a difference in his community. He studied law at the University of Naples Federico II, where he developed a keen interest in anti-corruption initiatives and social entrepreneurship.

After completing his studies, Luca founded "Civitas," a non-profit organisation promoting transparency, accountability, and civic engagement in Italy. Civitas empowers citizens to take an active role in governance and hold public officials accountable for their actions. Luca's work has been instrumental in raising awareness about corruption and mobilising communities to demand greater transparency and justice.

Luca's leadership has profoundly impacted his community and the broader Italian society. Through Civitas, he has launched several successful campaigns to expose corruption and advocate for legal and institutional reforms. These efforts have led to increased transparency in local government, the prosecution of corrupt officials, and the implementation of anti-corruption measures in various regions of Italy.

One of Luca's most significant achievements is the "Transparency Index," a tool developed by Civitas to assess and rank the transparency of local governments across Italy. The index has become a valuable resource for citizens, journalists, and policymakers, helping to shine a light on areas where corruption is prevalent and reforms are needed.

Luca's work has also had economic implications, as his anti-corruption efforts have created a more stable and predictable business environment. By reducing the influence of organised crime and corruption, Luca has helped foster a climate more conducive to investment and economic growth, particularly in regions historically struggling with these issues.

Luca's impact extends beyond Italy, as he has become a prominent figure in the global anti-corruption movement. He regularly collaborates with international organisations and participates in global forums, advocating for stronger anti-corruption measures and sharing best practices from Italy's experience.

Luca Rossi, a young social entrepreneur from Naples, Italy, has made significant contributions to the fight against corruption and the promotion of social justice. After studying law, he founded "Civitas," a non-profit organization focused on transparency and civic engagement. Through Civitas, Luca has launched campaigns exposing corruption, advocating for reforms, and developing the "Transparency Index" to rank the transparency of local governments. His work has improved governance, fostered a more stable business environment, and earned him recognition in the global anti-corruption movement, where he collaborates with international organizations.

IV.6.4. Maldives: Profile of Ahmed Zahir, Youth Leader and Environmental Activist

Ahmed Zahir is a young environmental activist and youth leader from the Maldives who has become a prominent advocate for environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Growing up in the Maldives, a country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Ahmed developed a strong commitment to environmental protection and social justice. He studied Environmental Science at the Maldives National University, where he became actively involved in student leadership and environmental activism.

After completing his studies, Ahmed co-founded "Youth for Climate Action Maldives," a youth-led organisation dedicated to raising awareness about climate change, promoting environmental conservation, and advocating for stronger climate policies. Under Ahmed's leadership, the organisation has become a leading voice in the Maldives' environmental movement, mobilising young people to take action on climate issues and engage in policy advocacy.

Ahmed's leadership has had a significant impact on both the community and the economy in the Maldives. Through Youth for Climate Action Maldives, he has led numerous campaigns and initiatives to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. These efforts have included beach clean-ups, mangrove restoration projects, and advocacy for renewable energy.

One of Ahmed's most significant contributions has been his role in the "Maldives Climate Action Plan," a comprehensive strategy developed in collaboration with the government and other stakeholders to address the impacts of climate change and promote sustainable development. Ahmed played a key role in ensuring that the voices of young people were included in the plan's development, and he has continued to advocate for its implementation at both the national and international levels.

Ahmed's work has also had economic implications, as promoting environmental sustainability is critical to the Maldives' long-term economic viability, particularly given the country's reliance on tourism. By advocating for sustainable practices and raising awareness about environmental protection, Ahmed has contributed to preserving the natural resources essential to the Maldives' economy.

Ahmed's impact has been recognised both in the Maldives and internationally. He has received several awards for his environmental activism and has represented the Maldives at global climate conferences, where he advocates for stronger international action on climate change and highlights the challenges facing small island nations.

Ahmed Zahir, a young environmental activist from the Maldives, has emerged as a leading advocate for sustainability and climate resilience in his highly vulnerable island nation. After studying Environmental Science, he co-founded "Youth for Climate Action Maldives," a youth-led organization promoting environmental conservation and stronger climate policies. Ahmed's leadership has driven impactful initiatives like mangrove restoration and renewable energy advocacy, contributing to the Maldives' "Climate Action Plan." His efforts have not only protected natural resources vital to the nation's economy but also gained recognition both locally and internationally, where he advocates for global climate action.

IV.6.5. Romania: Profile of Andreea Popescu, Tech Innovator and Advocate for Digital Inclusion

Andreea Popescu is a young tech innovator from Romania who has made significant contributions to the country's burgeoning tech industry and the promotion of digital inclusion. Hailing from Cluj-Napoca, a city known for its vibrant startup scene, Andreea was drawn to technology from an early age. She pursued a degree in Computer Science at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, where she excelled academically and began to explore the intersection of technology and social impact.

After completing her studies, Andreea co-founded "Tech4Good," a social enterprise that develops technology solutions to address social challenges and promote digital inclusion. Tech4Good's mission is to use technology to bridge the digital divide, particularly in underserved rural areas of Romania, and to empower marginalised communities through access to digital tools and education.

Andreea's work has had a transformative impact on communities across Romania, particularly in rural areas that have traditionally been excluded from the benefits of the digital economy. Through Tech4Good, she has launched several initiatives to increase digital literacy, provide access to technology, and foster entrepreneurship in underserved communities.

One of the flagship projects of Tech4Good is the "Digital Village" initiative, which provides rural communities with the infrastructure, training, and support needed to participate in the digital economy. This initiative has improved access to technology and digital education in these areas and created new economic opportunities by enabling local businesses to reach new markets and customers online.

Andreea's leadership has also contributed to the growth of Romania's tech industry. By promoting digital inclusion and supporting the development of tech skills in rural areas, she has helped to expand the talent pool available to tech companies and startups in Romania. This has contributed to the country's reputation as a hub for innovation and attracted investment from domestic and international tech firms.

Andreea's impact has been recognised both in Romania and internationally. She has received several awards for her work in tech innovation and social impact and has been invited to speak at global tech conferences, where she advocates for using technology as a tool for social good.

Andreea Popescu, a young tech innovator from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, has made significant strides in promoting digital inclusion and addressing social challenges through technology. After studying Computer Science, she co-founded "Tech4Good," a social enterprise focused on bridging the digital divide in underserved rural areas. Through initiatives like "Digital Village," Andreea has increased access to technology and digital education, fostering entrepreneurship and creating new economic opportunities. Her efforts have strengthened Romania's tech industry, expanding its talent pool and attracting investment, earning her both local and international recognition for tech innovation and social impact.

The profiles of Alexia Galea, Luca Rossi, Andreea Popescu, and Ahmed Zahir illustrate young ethical and inclusive leaders' profound impact on their communities, economies, and the world. These leaders have demonstrated a commitment to ethical principles, inclusivity, and sustainability, and their work has contributed to positive change in their respective countries.

These case studies highlight the importance of supporting and nurturing young leaders.

IV.7. Challenges Faced by Young Leaders

IV.7.1. Introduction to Challenges

Young leaders across the globe face a range of challenges that can impact their effectiveness and influence. While these challenges can vary depending on local contexts, there are common obstacles that young leaders in Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives encounter. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that the next generation of leaders can fully realise their potential and drive positive change in their communities.

This chapter explores young leaders' common challenges in these four countries and discusses strategies to overcome these obstacles. By understanding these challenges and implementing effective strategies, young leaders can navigate the complexities of their roles and make a meaningful impact.

IV.7.2. Common Challenges Faced by Young Leaders

➤ *Lack of experience and credibility*

Young leaders often struggle with a lack of experience and credibility, which can undermine their ability to influence decision-making and gain the trust of stakeholders. Experience is frequently equated with authority and expertise, and young leaders may struggle to overcome stereotypes and prove their competence.

➤ ***Limited access to resources and networks***

Access to resources and networks is another significant challenge for young leaders. Without adequate funding, mentorship, and professional connections, it can be difficult for young leaders to implement their ideas and achieve their goals. Limited access to these resources can constrain their ability to drive initiatives and make an impact.

➤ ***Resistance to change and traditional structures***

In many cases, young leaders encounter resistance from established institutions and traditional structures that are reluctant to embrace new ideas or approaches. This resistance can manifest as bureaucratic hurdles, institutional inertia, or scepticism about the capabilities of young leaders.

➤ ***Balancing personal and professional responsibilities***

Young leaders often face the challenge of balancing their personal and professional responsibilities. Juggling academic or career commitments with leadership roles can be demanding, and managing these competing priorities can lead to stress and burnout.

➤ ***Navigating political and social tensions***

In politically or socially tense environments, young leaders may face challenges navigating conflicts, addressing divisive issues, and advocating for their causes. This can be particularly challenging when political or social divisions are deep-seated.

Young leaders face several challenges, including a lack of experience and credibility, limiting their influence and trust from stakeholders. They also struggle with limited access to resources and networks, making it difficult to implement ideas. Resistance from traditional institutions and balancing personal and professional responsibilities further complicate their leadership journey. Additionally, navigating political and social tensions adds another layer of complexity to their efforts to make an impact.

IV.7.3. Strategies to Overcome Challenges

➤ ***Building experience and credibility***

To overcome the challenge of limited experience and credibility, young leaders can focus on several strategies:

- ***Continuous learning and professional development:*** Ongoing education and training help young leaders build their expertise and stay informed about best practices. Participation in leadership workshops, conferences, and relevant courses can enhance their skills and knowledge;
- ***Seeking mentorship:*** Finding experienced mentors who can provide guidance, support, and feedback is crucial. Mentors can help young leaders navigate challenges, build credibility, and gain insights from their experiences;
- ***Showcasing achievements:*** Young leaders should actively showcase their accomplishments and the impact of their initiatives. Documenting and communicating their successes through reports, presentations, and social media can help build credibility and gain recognition.

➤ ***Enhancing access to resources and networks***

To address the challenge of limited access to resources and networks, young leaders can adopt the following strategies:

- ***Leveraging technology and social media:*** Utilising digital platforms to connect with like-minded individuals, organisations, and potential funders can help young leaders expand their networks and access resources. Social media, crowdfunding, and online communities offer opportunities for engagement and support;
- ***Forming partnerships and alliances:*** Collaborating with other organisations, businesses, and institutions can provide young leaders additional resources and support. Strategic partnerships can enhance the reach and impact of their initiatives;
- ***Applying for grants and funding:*** Young leaders should explore opportunities for grants, scholarships, and funding from governmental, non-governmental, and private sector sources. Many organisations offer financial support specifically for youth-led projects and initiatives.

➤ ***Addressing resistance to change and traditional structures***

To navigate resistance to change and traditional structures, young leaders can employ the following strategies:

- ***Building relationships and alliances:*** Strong relationships with key stakeholders and decision-makers can help young leaders gain support for their ideas. Building alliances with influential individuals or organisations can facilitate resource access and reduce resistance;

- ***Demonstrating value and impact:*** Young leaders should focus on demonstrating their initiatives' tangible benefits and positive outcomes. Evidence of their work's value and impact can help overcome scepticism and resistance;
- ***Adopting a collaborative approach:*** Engaging in collaborative problem-solving and seeking input from various stakeholders can help address concerns and build consensus. A collaborative approach can foster a more receptive environment for new ideas.

➤ ***Managing personal and professional responsibilities***

To balance personal and professional responsibilities, young leaders can consider the following strategies:

- ***Time management and prioritisation:*** Developing effective time management skills and prioritising tasks can help young leaders manage their commitments more efficiently. Creating a structured schedule and setting clear goals can facilitate better balance;
- ***Seeking support and delegation:*** Delegating tasks and seeking support from colleagues, peers, or team members can help alleviate the burden of responsibilities. Building a supportive network can provide additional resources and reduce stress;
- ***Practising self-care:*** Prioritising self-care and maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for avoiding burnout. Young leaders should take time for rest, relaxation, and activities that contributing to their well-being.

➤ ***Navigating political and social tensions***

To address political and social tensions, young leaders can employ the following strategies:

- ***Promoting dialogue and understanding:*** Encouraging open dialogue and fostering mutual understanding among diverse groups can help address conflicts and build bridges. Engaging in constructive conversations and seeking common ground can facilitate progress;
- ***Advocating for inclusivity and equity:*** Focusing on inclusivity and equity in their initiatives can help young leaders address social and political divides. Ensuring all voices are heard and considered can contribute to more balanced and effective solutions;
- ***Staying informed and adaptive:*** Staying informed about the political and social context and being adaptable in their approach can help young leaders navigate complex issues. Flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions can enhance their ability to address challenges.

Young leaders can overcome challenges by focusing on strategies like continuous learning, seeking mentorship, and showcasing their achievements to build experience and credibility. They can enhance access to resources by leveraging technology, forming partnerships, and applying for funding. To address resistance to change, building alliances, demonstrating impact, and collaborating are key. Managing personal and professional responsibilities requires effective time management, delegation, and self-care. Finally, young leaders can navigate political and social tensions by promoting dialogue, advocating for inclusivity, and staying informed and adaptable in their approach.

Young leaders in Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives face many common challenges, including a lack of experience, limited access to resources, resistance to change, balancing responsibilities, and navigating political and social tensions. Young leaders can enhance their effectiveness and drive positive change by implementing strategies to overcome these challenges, such as seeking mentorship, leveraging technology, building relationships, managing time effectively, and promoting dialogue.

Addressing these challenges proactively and strategically is crucial for empowering young leaders to fulfil their potential and contribute to developing their communities and countries. Through resilience, innovation, and collaboration, young leaders can overcome obstacles and make a meaningful impact on the world.

IV.8. Conclusions

The economic needs of future young, ethical, and inclusive leaders in Malta, Italy, Romania, and the Maldives vary widely, reflecting each country's unique challenges and opportunities. In Malta, young leaders are driving innovation and entrepreneurship to sustain economic growth, while in Italy, they tackle youth unemployment and economic revitalization. Romania's young leaders are leading the tech industry and fostering sustainable development, and in the Maldives, they champion environmental conservation and sustainable tourism practices. These young leaders' commitment to ethical and inclusive leadership is crucial in shaping resilient and sustainable economies. By embracing innovation, promoting equity, and advocating for sustainable practices, they are laying the foundation for a better future for both their nations and the global community.

In terms of administrative needs, young leaders can significantly impact governance and reform across these countries. In Malta, they can contribute to administrative reforms and policymaking through innovative approaches and technology. In Italy, overcoming bureaucratic challenges requires creative solutions from a new generation of leaders adept at handling governance complexities. Romania's decentralization efforts highlight the importance of empowering local leaders to drive regional development, while in the Maldives, governance challenges demand effective youth involvement to address administrative inefficiencies and build resilience.

Recommendations for fostering ethical and inclusive leadership among youth include:

- ***Enhance educational opportunities:*** Expand access to leadership development programs and educational initiatives focusing on ethical practices, inclusivity, and sustainable development. This includes integrating leadership training into school curricula and offering specialised courses in higher education.
- ***Support entrepreneurship and innovation:*** Create and support programs that encourage entrepreneurial thinking and innovation among young people. Providing funding, mentorship, and resources can help young leaders turn their ideas into impactful ventures.
- ***Facilitate mentorship and networking:*** Establish mentorship programs that connect young leaders with experienced professionals. Additionally, creates networking opportunities that allow young leaders to engage with peers and stakeholders from various sectors.
- ***Promote inclusivity and diversity:*** Ensure leadership programs and opportunities are accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Promote policies and practices that support the inclusion of marginalised groups in leadership roles.
- ***Address resource gaps:*** Develop initiatives to improve access to resources and support for young leaders, such as grants, funding, and infrastructure. Encourage public and private sector investment in youth-led projects and organisations.

- ***Encourage civic engagement:*** Foster a culture of civic engagement among young people by encouraging participation in community service, policy-making, and advocacy. Support initiatives that empower young leaders to address local and global challenges.
- ***Adapt to changing environments:*** Equip young leaders with the skills to adapt to evolving political, economic, and social contexts. Provide training on navigating complex environments and addressing emerging issues effectively.
- ***Recognise and reward achievements:*** Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of young leaders to motivate and inspire others. Awards, recognitions, and public acknowledgements can help validate their efforts and encourage continued leadership.

Part V:

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS, RELATED TO INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS, RELATED TO INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

V.1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, integrating migrants and refugees into the labor market is not only a matter of social responsibility but a strategic imperative for fostering inclusive growth and economic resilience. Migrants, driven by aspirations for a better life, and refugees, seeking refuge from conflict and persecution, bring with them a wealth of untapped potential and entrepreneurial spirit, which can enrich the fabric of their host societies.

For young migrants and refugees, entrepreneurship offers a beacon of hope and opportunity amidst the challenges of resettlement and economic insecurity. By cultivating their entrepreneurial skills, they can carve out their own paths to success, transcending the limitations of traditional employment and creating opportunities for themselves and others.

However, the journey toward entrepreneurial success is fraught with obstacles. Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs face challenges such as bureaucratic red tape, limited access to financial resources, language barriers, and cultural prejudices, all of which can hinder their progress and stifle their potential.

This is where inclusive leadership and management skills become critical enablers of success. Inclusive leaders possess the empathy, cultural

competence, and collaborative mindset needed to create environments where all voices are heard, valued, and empowered to contribute. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and belonging, these leaders inspire trust, creativity, and innovation, allowing migrant and refugee entrepreneurs to leverage their diverse backgrounds and perspectives as strengths rather than obstacles.

Moreover, inclusive leadership equips young migrants and refugees with the resilience and adaptability needed to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. In a rapidly changing business landscape, the ability to embrace diversity, foster collaboration, and navigate cultural nuances can make the difference between success and failure for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.

In essence, inclusive leadership and management skills serve as the foundation upon which the entrepreneurial dreams of young migrants and refugees are built. By fostering environments where diversity is celebrated, collaboration is encouraged, and innovation is nurtured, inclusive leaders empower these individuals to not only succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavors but also drive positive change within their communities and beyond.

This chapter aims to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by migrants and refugees, particularly youth, both internationally and in Europe. Through an analysis of their entrepreneurial aspirations and the barriers they encounter, we seek to identify pathways for their integration into the labor market and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Furthermore, this research proposes concrete policy recommendations to enhance support structures, foster inclusive leadership, and promote entrepreneurship among migrant and refugee populations. By leveraging insights from our analysis, we aim to contribute to

the creation of more inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies, where the entrepreneurial potential of all individuals, regardless of their background, is nurtured and celebrated.

Understanding the distinctions between migrants, including migrant workers, and refugees is crucial for developing appropriate policies and providing adequate support and protection to individuals, regardless of their migration status. Both migrants and refugees contribute to the diversity and richness of societies worldwide, and ensuring their rights and dignity is essential for upholding human rights and humanitarian principles.

Migration is a global phenomenon driven by various factors, leading individuals to leave their country of origin in search of better opportunities or safety elsewhere. Migrants represent a diverse group of people with different motivations and circumstances. They voluntarily leave their country of origin to pursue improved economic prospects, employment opportunities, education, family reunification, or personal choice. Migration can be temporary or permanent, depending on the individual's intentions and circumstances. Migrant workers specifically refer to individuals who migrate in search of employment opportunities in other countries, either temporarily or permanently.

While there is no universally accepted, legally binding definition of migration or migrants, the United Nations (UN) defines long-term international migrants as individuals who change their country of usual residence for at least 12 months, and short-term or temporary migrants as those who do so for a period between 3 and 12 months. These definitions are primarily used for statistical purposes. The International Organization for Migration (IOM),

which became an affiliated organization of the UN in 2016, provides a comprehensive definition of migrants as *"any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from their habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is."* This broad definition covers a wide range of migration circumstances and legal statuses (UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2).

The World Migration Report 2022, conducted by IOM, revealed that in 2020, the global population of international migrants reached 281 million, accounting for approximately 3.6% of the world's population. This figure marks an 84% increase over the past three decades. Among these migrants, 169 million were migrant workers, up from 164 million globally in 2017, contributing valuable skills and resources to the economies of their host nations. Simultaneously, they remitted hundreds of billions of euros back to their home countries, providing crucial support to their families and contributing to the development of their nations of origin.

International conventions and treaties play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of migrants and ensuring their access to work and self-employment opportunities. These legal instruments provide a framework for protecting migrants from exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, while also promoting their integration and well-being in host countries. The most important international conventions and treaties include:

- ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)***, adopted in 1948:

The UDHR prohibits discrimination related to migrants. Article 2

asserts that all individuals, including migrants, are entitled to rights without discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. It also asserts the right to work as a fundamental human right, emphasizing equal protection under the law for everyone (United Nations, n.d.);

- ***International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)***, adopted in 1966: This treaty recognizes the right of everyone to gain a living by work they freely choose and emphasizes equal access to employment opportunities for all individuals, including migrants (OHCR, n.d.);
- ***International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions***: The ILO has several conventions related to migrant workers' rights, including the Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97, 1949) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (No. 143, 1975). These conventions set standards for fair and decent work conditions, ensuring migrant workers are not exploited (ILO, n.d.);
- ***International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)***: This UN convention provides a comprehensive framework for protecting migrant workers' human rights and ensuring equal treatment, regardless of migration status (OHCR, n.d.);
- ***The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016)***: Adopted at the 71st UN General Assembly, this declaration reaffirms the commitment of UN member states to protect the rights of refugees and migrants and underscores the importance of supporting their integration into the labor market (UNHCR, n.d.).

Unlike migrants, refugees have a universally recognized international definition, essential for providing them with appropriate support and protection. Some scholars refer to refugees as “*forced migrants*”, highlighting the involuntary nature of their displacement. Refugees are individuals forced to flee their home countries due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. The internationally recognized definition of a refugee comes from the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. A refugee is someone who, “*owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country*” (UNHCR, n.d.).

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol form the cornerstone of international refugee law, defining refugees' rights and outlining states' obligations toward them. Refugees are entitled to work and be self-employed in host countries, as stated in Article 17 of the Convention, promoting their economic self-sufficiency and integration into the labor market. These treaties also emphasize that states must not discriminate against refugees and ensure their equal treatment in all aspects of life, including employment.

UNHCR's Global Trends report indicates that by the end of 2022, 108.4 million people globally had been displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights abuses, and significant disruptions to public order. This number includes 35.3 million refugees, a sharp increase from 27.1 million in the previous year, largely driven by the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Additionally,

there were 5.4 million asylum seekers and 62.5 million internally displaced persons (UNHCR, n.d.). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals forced to abandon their homes due to armed conflicts, violence, human rights violations, or disasters but remain within their own country (UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2).

V.2. The Importance of Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Leadership and Management

V.2.1. Benefits of Migrant and Refugee Entrepreneurship

According to the definition provided by UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), entrepreneurship is "*the capacity and willingness to undertake the conception, organization, and management of a productive new venture, accepting all attendant risks and seeking profit as a reward.*" This comprehensive definition acknowledges a wide range of entrepreneurial endeavors, including self-employment, microenterprises, small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and high-growth firms (UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the entrepreneurial motivations of migrants and refugees. Across the globe, individuals displaced from their home countries due to economic, political, or humanitarian reasons are increasingly turning to entrepreneurship as a means of survival and socio-economic integration. This phenomenon has sparked considerable scholarly attention, leading to the emergence of various theoretical perspectives aimed at elucidating the motivations behind migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. Two prominent theories in this regard are the **Mixed Embeddedness Theory** and the **Disadvantage Theory**.

The Mixed Embeddedness Theory was developed in the late 1990s by Dutch sociologist Jan Kloosterman. This theory suggests that the decision to become an entrepreneur among migrants and refugees is influenced by both the

social context of their origin and the economic conditions of their destination. According to this theory, migrants and refugees possess unique social networks, cultural capital, and access to resources that shape their entrepreneurial endeavors. These networks not only provide valuable information and support but also serve as a bridge between their home and host societies, enabling them to navigate unfamiliar business environments more effectively. By leveraging their cultural and social capital within the new context, they can create businesses that cater to the needs of their communities or fill gaps in the market that traditional businesses overlook (Högberg & Mitchell, 2023).

The Disadvantage Theory is associated with a broader body of research on migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. While it doesn't have a single originator, scholars such as Jennifer Hochschild, Douglas S. Massey, and Nancy Denton have contributed to understanding the intersection of migration, disadvantage, and entrepreneurship. This theory posits that migrants and refugees are disproportionately disadvantaged in the labor market due to factors such as language barriers, lack of recognized credentials, discrimination, and limited access to social capital. Consequently, entrepreneurship emerges as a viable pathway to economic self-sufficiency and empowerment. By starting their own businesses, migrants and refugees can circumvent these barriers, create employment opportunities for themselves and others within their communities, and assert agency over their economic futures. Moreover, entrepreneurship offers flexibility and autonomy, allowing individuals to adapt their businesses to suit their unique skills, experiences, and cultural backgrounds (Rinaldi, Arrighetti, Lasagni, Canello, 2023).

Both the Mixed Embeddedness Theory and the Disadvantage Theory provide valuable insights into the motivations behind migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. While the former emphasizes the interplay between social and economic factors shaping entrepreneurial decisions, the latter underscores the structural barriers and inequalities that drive individuals towards self-employment as a means of overcoming disadvantage. By recognizing the complex interplay of these factors, policymakers and stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to support migrant and refugee entrepreneurs and harness their potential contributions to economic growth and social cohesion.

Based on these theories, we can better appreciate the significant benefits entrepreneurship offers to migrants and refugees, especially young people, as they navigate their new lives in host societies:

- ***Social benefits:*** Entrepreneurship often serves as a catalyst for migrants and refugees to achieve higher social standing, independence, and autonomy. Amidst structural barriers to traditional employment, entrepreneurial ventures offer avenues for individuals to elevate their social status and assert control over their economic destinies. Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs can leverage not only in-country support networks but also diaspora connections, providing access to mentorship, financial resources, reliable suppliers, and a loyal customer base. Moreover, they can tap into broader networks, including religious, political, national, and regional affiliations, enhancing their support system and fostering community integration (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009);

- ***Economic benefits:*** Entrepreneurship emerges as a beacon of hope for migrants and refugees, offering a pathway to improved economic stability and prosperity. Structural impediments such as racial discrimination, limited work rights, linguistic barriers, and the undervaluation of foreign qualifications often relegate them to unemployment or precarious jobs (the “3D jobs” - dirty, dangerous, and demanding). In response, many turn to entrepreneurship as a means of circumventing these barriers and achieving financial security. Although driven more by necessity than market opportunities, entrepreneurship empowers migrants and refugees to forge their own paths toward economic self-reliance and success (OECD, 2010);
- ***Psychological benefits:*** The pursuit of entrepreneurship not only bolsters economic well-being but also nurtures psychological resilience among migrants and refugees. For refugee entrepreneurs, the preservation of dignity is paramount, with many compelled to start their own businesses to avoid dependency on welfare benefits amidst unemployment. Even for those who secure employment but find themselves overqualified, entrepreneurship offers a source of fulfillment and purpose. Furthermore, entrepreneurship provides a unique space where migrants and refugees can carve out their niche without displacing or competing with local workers, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing the impact of xenophobia (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009).

Supporting migrant and refugee entrepreneurship yields significant advantages, benefiting not only the entrepreneurs themselves but also host societies and countries of origin.

Some of the most important potential contributions of migrant and refugee entrepreneurship to development in host countries include the following (UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2):

- ***Economic development, innovation, and job creation:*** Migrants and refugees play a crucial role as catalysts for economic growth in host countries. Their contributions extend beyond mere motivation and energy, as they bring a wealth of new skills, competencies, and innovative ideas, often termed the "diversity dividend." This diversity enriches host economies by introducing fresh perspectives and problem-solving approaches. The varied experiences, ways of thinking, and social networks of migrants and refugees enable them to contribute novel knowledge and ideas, fostering innovation and market growth. Moreover, their entrepreneurial activity has a ripple effect, stimulating entrepreneurship among others, regardless of their native or foreign-born status;
- ***International trade:*** Migrant and refugee businesses can significantly bolster international trade. Their unique advantage lies in their ability to leverage transnational networks and market insights from their home countries. This access facilitates the development of trade linkages with businesses in their host countries, enabling entrepreneurs to lower transaction costs, evaluate

market opportunities, anticipate risks, and identify reliable partners to support business expansion;

- ***Local economic development:*** Migrant and refugee businesses are instrumental in rejuvenating local economic zones, especially in low-income neighborhoods where migrants and refugees commonly reside. These enterprises offer employment prospects and skill development opportunities for members of their ethnic communities. By generating employment opportunities, these businesses reduce dependence on welfare benefits and facilitate smoother integration and resettlement processes;
- ***Social cohesion and community well-being:*** Migrant and refugee businesses often have significant community-level impacts. For instance, migrant shop owners frequently cater to local needs by providing specialty goods and services at affordable prices, often extending their operating hours to accommodate diverse schedules. These businesses play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion and cohesion by bridging cultural divides, breaking down barriers, and facilitating the exchange of information among different communities.

On the other hand, migrant and refugee entrepreneurship within host countries can also stimulate economic development in their countries of origin. Some of the most important contributions are the following (UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2):

- ***Creation of new businesses:*** Migrants and refugees often possess advantageous positions to initiate or invest in businesses within their countries of origin. Their experience working abroad enables them to amass financial resources, sector-specific knowledge, and familiarity with practices that may not yet be prevalent in their home countries. Additionally, they may have established networks of business contacts spanning multiple countries. Importantly, their ability to contribute to the development of their countries of origin is not contingent on permanent return; temporary and virtual returns can leverage the efforts of individuals with diverse nationalities;
- ***Remittances and diaspora investment:*** Remittances sent by migrants globally now surpass three times the amount of official development assistance. From US\$29 billion in 1990, remittances to low- and middle-income countries have soared to US\$429 billion in 2016. These funds often rise during times of uncertainty and risk, unlike other foreign capital that may leave domestic markets. Migrant remittances aren't just for covering daily expenses—they also help recipients invest in businesses by easing financial constraints. Additionally, diaspora contributions, whether through sharing knowledge or funding specific projects, are increasing worldwide, benefiting communities in countries of origin.

This section discusses the entrepreneurial potential of migrants and refugees, highlighting how entrepreneurship helps them achieve social and economic integration. Two key theories—Mixed Embeddedness and Disadvantage Theory—explain the motivations behind migrant entrepreneurship, focusing on social networks and overcoming labor market disadvantages. Entrepreneurship provides significant social, economic, and psychological benefits for migrants and refugees, enabling them to improve their status, achieve financial independence, and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, migrant and refugee businesses contribute to host countries through innovation, job creation, and international trade, while also supporting economic development in their countries of origin through business creation and remittances.

V.2.2. Challenges Faced by Migrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs

Embarking on the path of entrepreneurship is often filled with challenges, and for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, these obstacles can be particularly daunting. Despite their aspirations and potential, they encounter unique hurdles that can impede their journey toward success. This is especially true for young aspiring entrepreneurs among migrant and refugee communities, who face numerous barriers in realizing their business dreams.

However, amidst these challenges, there are stories of inspiration, such as the remarkable success of immigrant-founded unicorns (privately-held companies valued at over \$1 billion), which serve as beacons of possibility, demonstrating the immense potential of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs to thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape. For instance, nearly 80% of unicorn companies in the United States have either an immigrant founder or an immigrant holding a key leadership position. One notable example is Elon

Musk, a South African-born entrepreneur, who is the CEO of Tesla, the renowned electric vehicle manufacturer, and owns most of its shares. Also, 58% of American unicorns have solely immigrant founders or multiple immigrant founders, with no native-born founders involved (Forbes, 2022). Similarly, 60% of German unicorns have at least one immigrant founder (Startup Verband, 2023).

Despite these success stories, it's essential to acknowledge that many migrants and refugees face significant obstacles to entrepreneurship, including language and cultural differences, limited financial capital (such as restricted access to banks and collateral), and a lack of social capital (such as access to support networks). Refugee entrepreneurs, in particular, face barriers linked to their legal status, including limitations on the right to work and pursue self-employment, difficulties in obtaining recognition for refugee documentation, involuntary displacement, and its associated psychological impact. Additionally, both migrant and refugee entrepreneurs may face discrimination and stigma based on their status within the host country.

According to the *Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees*, developed by UNCTAD in 2018, the most common impediments they face can be classified into five main categories, each with specific problems and difficulties: policy and regulatory environment, education and skill development, technology exchange and the environment for start-ups, access to finance, and networks and awareness.

➤ ***Policy and regulatory environment***

Restrictive immigration policies limit the rights of migrants and refugees to work and start businesses. Legal limitations, based on stay duration or specific professions, hinder their employment or self-employment opportunities. Moreover, obstacles like restricted access to credit and social security benefits pose challenges for aspiring entrepreneurs. Registering a new business in many countries may lead to loss of welfare benefits, and taxes and social security contributions are often required before profitability.

Setting up and running a business involves navigating complex regulatory and administrative procedures, including registering the business, obtaining permits, and meeting social security and tax obligations. These challenges are often difficult for native-born entrepreneurs and even more so for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, who may lack language skills and familiarity with administrative systems in the host country. Registering a business may also require proof of qualifications or experience, which can be particularly challenging for migrants and refugees whose credentials were earned elsewhere.

Sudden forced displacement can have significant consequences for refugees and migrants. Often unprepared for life in a new country, they may lack essential documents, including educational certificates, making it difficult to demonstrate their status or qualifications. Even when documents are available, foreign qualifications may not be recognized, especially in highly regulated sectors.

➤ ***Education and skill development***

Upon arriving in a new country, many migrants and refugees face challenges due to language and cultural differences, leading to a loss of human capital. These barriers often limit the types of businesses they can engage in. Understanding the needs and preferences of mainstream consumers and the business culture of the host society becomes difficult. Stigma and discrimination further hinder their entrepreneurial ambitions.

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs encounter challenges accessing entrepreneurship programs due to language and cultural barriers in host countries. Many integration efforts fail to connect with entrepreneurship support, and vocational education programs frequently overlook essential business skill development. To foster entrepreneurship among migrants and refugees, it is crucial to integrate them into broader support initiatives.

➤ ***Technology exchange, innovation, the environment for start-ups***

Migrants and refugees often reside in impoverished areas with multiple vulnerabilities, hindering successful entrepreneurship. In such contexts, they may be compelled to engage in low-profit or informal businesses. This disconnects them from broader entrepreneurship ecosystems, limiting access to necessary resources such as working spaces and infrastructure.

Migrants and refugees often lose connections to their social networks in their home countries and broader diaspora communities. However, co-ethnic communities and diaspora networks in the destination country can help offset this challenge.

➤ ***Access to finance***

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, particularly those from less developed countries, often struggle to access credit through formal banking channels. Factors such as a lack of credit history and collateral make it difficult to secure loans. Loan providers may perceive migrant and refugee enterprises as high-risk and low-profit ventures, leading to distrust and reluctance to lend. Limited financial literacy and a lack of language support further contribute to this issue.

Cultural norms and beliefs may deter migrants and refugees from utilizing formal financial services, leading them to rely on personal savings and informal lending from family, friends, and diaspora networks to fund their businesses.

➤ ***Networks and awareness***

The absence of co-ethnic support networks can hinder entrepreneurial activity for migrants and refugees. Migrants and refugees frequently encounter discrimination and stigma in many host countries, posing significant obstacles to their business success.

Enabling factors such as national legislation granting rights to freedom of movement, employment, self-employment, and property ownership, as well as favorable government policies supporting the recognition of qualifications and access to welfare benefits, are crucial for entrepreneurship success.

Several international organizations play a vital role in assisting migrants and refugees, particularly young individuals, in integrating into the labor market and fostering entrepreneurship. These organizations empower migrants and refugees by providing skills, resources, and opportunities needed to thrive in their host countries and contribute to sustainable development. Key organizations include:

- ***The International Organization for Migration (IOM)*** – Operates globally through Migrant Training and Integration Centers (MTICs), offering vocational training, language courses, and job placement services. IOM's "Enterprise Development Fund" also provides financial assistance and business training (IOM, n.d.);
- ***The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*** – Runs the "YouthCo" initiative, empowering young entrepreneurs, including migrants and refugees, to address social and environmental challenges through innovation and entrepreneurship (YouthCo, n.d.);
- ***The International Labour Organization (ILO)*** – ILO's "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)" program provides entrepreneurship training to migrants and refugees, equipping them with the necessary skills for successful businesses (ILO, n.d.);
- ***United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*** – Implements the "Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion" program to enhance economic self-reliance through vocational training, microfinance access, and entrepreneurship support (UNHCR, n.d.).

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs face numerous challenges, such as language barriers, limited access to finance, and legal restrictions on work and business ownership. Discrimination and a lack of social networks further hinder their efforts. Despite these obstacles, success stories like immigrant-founded unicorns show their potential to succeed in entrepreneurship. To help overcome these barriers, international organizations such as IOM, UNDP, ILO, and UNHCR provide vital support through training, financial assistance, and entrepreneurship programs. These initiatives empower migrants and refugees to integrate into the labor market and contribute to economic development in their host countries.

V.2.3. Entrepreneurial Skills and the Role of Inclusive Leadership and Management

Two significant components of inclusive leadership are particularly relevant to young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs—the presence of inclusive leaders within their communities and the development of inclusive leadership skills among themselves.

When inclusive leadership is demonstrated by individuals in positions of influence within the community, it sets a powerful example and creates an enabling environment for young migrants and refugees to succeed. Whether in corporate boardrooms, government offices, or community organizations, the presence of inclusive leaders signals a commitment to equity and opportunity for all.

For example, government officials who exhibit inclusive leadership traits are more likely to champion policies that support immigrant-owned businesses, provide funding for culturally sensitive entrepreneurial training programs, and engage with migrant entrepreneurs to understand their unique

needs and challenges. In such an environment, young migrants and refugees are not only encouraged to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations but also have access to the resources and support networks necessary to thrive.

Similarly, companies that embrace inclusive leadership mindsets are more likely to implement diversity-focused hiring practices, provide mentorship opportunities, and establish inclusive workplace policies. This creates opportunities for young migrants and refugees to access employment, resources, and support networks, facilitating their entrepreneurial aspirations. For instance, consider a food delivery company with inclusive leadership values. If the managers of such a company recognize the culinary talents of a young migrant or refugee employee, they may go beyond traditional support mechanisms, offering resources such as entrepreneurship training or assistance in accessing grants to help the individual establish their own restaurant or similar business venture. In return, the company could potentially collaborate with these entrepreneurs in the future, creating mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance inclusivity and innovation within the business ecosystem.

On the other hand, young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs themselves have a unique opportunity to lead by example and champion inclusivity within their own ventures. By incorporating inclusive practices into their business operations, they can create environments where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute fully. This might involve implementing flexible work policies to accommodate diverse cultural practices, providing language interpretation services to ensure effective communication, or offering training programs to promote cultural competency among staff members.

Moreover, young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs can leverage their cultural heritage as a source of competitive advantage in the marketplace. By embracing their unique identities and experiences, they can develop products and services that resonate with diverse consumer segments and tap into niche markets often overlooked by mainstream businesses. In doing so, they not only achieve commercial success but also challenge stereotypes and perceptions about migrants and refugees, paving the way for greater social inclusion and acceptance.

Furthermore, by actively participating in industry networks, mentorship programs, and community initiatives, young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs can amplify their voices and advocate for systemic change. Whether advocating for inclusive policies within their industry associations, sharing their success stories to inspire others, or mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs from similar backgrounds, they contribute to the creation of more inclusive ecosystems that nurture the next generation of diverse talent.

Starting the journey of entrepreneurship as a young migrant or refugee requires a broad range of skills, including the ability to practice inclusive leadership. These skills empower individuals to navigate the challenges of starting and running a business and contribute to their long-term success and resilience in the entrepreneurial landscape (Cote, 2020; Jain, 2024):

- ***Adaptability and resilience:*** Entrepreneurs must be adaptable in the face of uncertainty and change, particularly as newcomers to a different country or community. This adaptability enables them to pivot their strategies, embrace new opportunities, and navigate

cultural and economic shifts effectively. Resilience is essential for overcoming setbacks and persevering through the challenges inherent in entrepreneurship. For example, a young refugee entrepreneur who faces initial rejection when seeking funding for their business must demonstrate resilience by seeking alternative funding sources or refining their business model;

- ***Networking and relationship building:*** Building a strong network of contacts is vital for accessing resources, mentorship, and opportunities. Effective networking involves cultivating relationships within communities, industries, and support networks. For instance, a young migrant entrepreneur may leverage their network to secure partnerships with local businesses or organizations, expanding their customer base and accessing new markets;
- ***Financial literacy and business management:*** Understanding financial concepts and mastering resource management are essential for sustainable business growth. Financial literacy involves skills like budgeting, cash flow management, and risk assessment. Business management encompasses planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve business objectives. By integrating financial literacy with business management principles, young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs can make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and build sustainable ventures;
- ***Creativity, innovation, and problem-solving:*** Creativity and innovation are crucial for identifying new market opportunities,

developing unique solutions, and differentiating offerings in competitive markets. A young migrant entrepreneur may use innovative marketing strategies or product features to stand out and attract customers in a saturated market;

- ***Marketing, sales, and communication:*** Entrepreneurs need to understand marketing principles, sales techniques, and effective communication to reach customers and generate revenue. For instance, a young migrant entrepreneur launching a fashion brand may use social media platforms to engage customers, showcase products, and drive online sales;
- ***Strategic thinking and time management:*** Strategic thinking and time management are crucial for anticipating market trends, identifying opportunities, and balancing tasks efficiently. By mastering these skills, young migrants and refugees can maximize productivity and build thriving businesses;
- ***Emotional intelligence and cultural competence:*** Emotional intelligence involves understanding and managing one's own emotions and those of others, while cultural competence is about navigating diverse markets and communities. These skills are essential for fostering inclusive work environments and successful customer engagement;
- ***Risk management and decision-making:*** Entrepreneurs must assess and mitigate risks, evaluate alternatives, and make informed decisions to safeguard their businesses and capitalize on growth opportunities;

- **Salesmanship and negotiation:** The ability to sell effectively and negotiate favorable business terms is key to driving sales and establishing beneficial partnerships.

By honing these entrepreneurial skills alongside embracing inclusive leadership principles, young migrants and refugees can enhance their ability to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship and achieve their business goals.

This section highlights the importance of inclusive leadership for young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, both in their communities and within their own ventures. Inclusive leaders create supportive environments that provide resources and opportunities for migrants and refugees to succeed. These entrepreneurs can also champion inclusivity in their businesses, fostering diversity and cultural competency. Additionally, key entrepreneurial skills such as adaptability, networking, financial literacy, and creativity are essential for navigating the challenges of starting and growing a business. By developing these skills, young migrant and refugee entrepreneurs can achieve long-term success.

V.3. Entrepreneurship and Young Migrants in the European Union

V.3.1. Overview of the Migration Situation in the European Union

Over the past decade, the European Union (EU) has grappled with a multitude of challenges that have profoundly shaped the migration debate. One of the most significant events was the 2015 European migrant crisis, which saw a massive influx of migrants and refugees, primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, fleeing conflict and persecution in their home countries.

The 2015 European migrant crisis strained the resources and capacities of EU member states, highlighting the need for a coordinated and comprehensive response to irregular migration. Images of overcrowded boats, perilous sea crossings, and makeshift refugee camps garnered international attention and prompted urgent calls for action.

In the years following the crisis, the EU implemented various measures to address the humanitarian needs of migrants and refugees while also enhancing border security and migration management. However, the challenges posed by irregular migration persisted, further complicating the migration debate within the EU.

The Ukrainian refugee crisis, which began on 24 February 2022, added another layer of complexity to the migration debate. The surge in Ukrainian refugees seeking shelter within EU borders underscored the importance of solidarity among member states and the necessity of providing support to those in need.

Additionally, the rise of populist and nationalist movements across Europe fueled anti-immigrant sentiment and shaped political discourse on migration. Debates over border control, national sovereignty, and multiculturalism became increasingly polarized, challenging the EU's commitment to open borders and solidarity. Integration challenges, including language barriers, employment discrimination, and social exclusion, continued to be significant obstacles for migrants seeking to rebuild their lives in Europe. Efforts to foster inclusive societies and promote intercultural dialogue became essential components of migration policy within the EU.

Moreover, heightened security concerns following terrorist attacks in European cities prompted debates on the relationship between migration and security. Striking a balance between safeguarding national security and upholding humanitarian principles remained a central point of contention in the migration debate.

Economically, the impact of migration on labor markets, public services, and social welfare systems remained a topic of intense discussion. Policies to maximize the economic contributions of migrants while mitigating potential strains on host countries' resources were continuously debated and refined.

Throughout these challenges, the EU remained committed to integrating and assisting legal migrants while finding the best solutions for those living in the shadows. Efforts were made to streamline immigration processes, improve access to education and employment opportunities, and promote social inclusion for migrants. The EU has reaffirmed its commitment to upholding its values of solidarity, compassion, and respect for human rights,

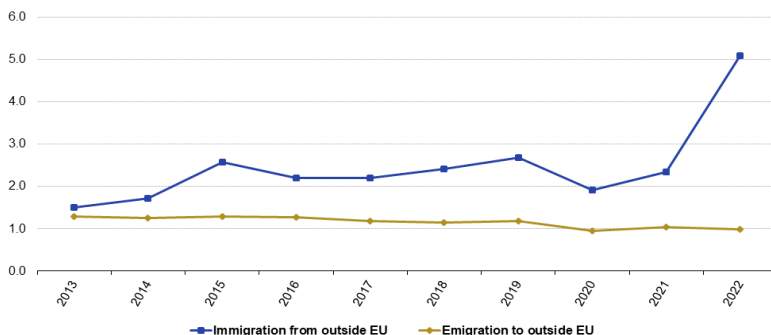
striving to forge a future where migration is managed effectively, and all individuals have the opportunity to thrive.

According to a Eurostat report published on 27 March 2024, as of January 1, 2023, 27.3 million people, representing 6.1% of the total 448.8 million residents in the EU, were non-EU citizens. In 2022, the European Union saw a significant influx of 5.1 million immigrants arriving from non-EU states, alongside 1.5 million individuals relocating from one EU Member State to another. Additionally, approximately 0.4 million migrants with untraceable previous residency moved to an EU Member State, culminating in a total of 7.0 million international arrivals through immigration that year. Conversely, about 2.7 million people left the EU, either relocating to another Member State or departing for countries beyond the EU borders. Among these, around 1.0 million individuals departed an EU Member State to settle in non-EU nations.

In comparison, as observed in the Eurostat graphic, the immigration landscape in 2021 showcased an estimated 2.4 million immigrants from non-EU countries entering the EU, with 1.4 million intra-EU migrants relocating within Member States. Approximately 1.0 million individuals emigrated from the EU to non-EU countries during that year. Preceding the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, there were approximately 2.7 million immigrants from non-EU nations arriving in the EU, alongside 1.4 million intra-EU migrants. Approximately 1.2 million people left the EU to settle outside its borders in 2019.

Immigrants from outside EU and emigrants to outside EU, EU, 2013–2022

(million)



Note: Cyprus (2013-2019) migration data include the United Kingdom in the composition of the EU. Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Liechtenstein did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_imm5prv, migr_imm12prv, migr_emi3nxt and migr_emi5nxt)

eurostat

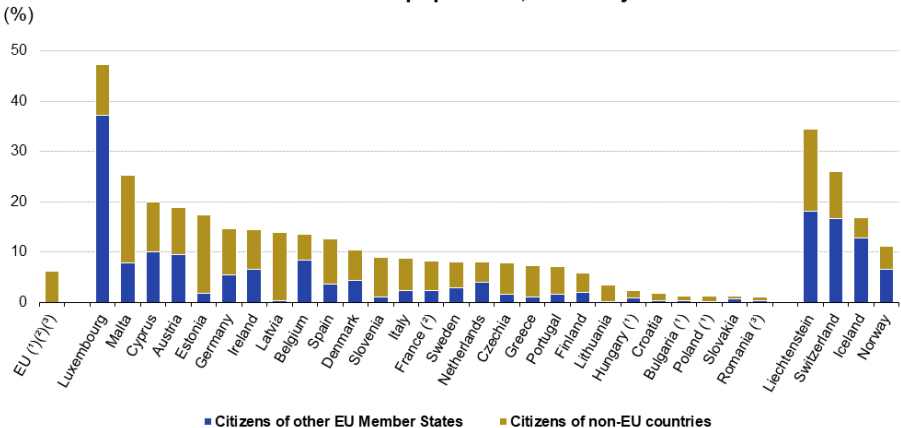
Figure 1. Immigrants from outside EU and emigrants to outside EU, EU, 2013-2022 (Source: Eurostat, 2024)

In 2022, Germany reported the highest overall number of immigrants, totaling 2.1 million (of which 80% were citizens of non-EU countries), followed by Spain with 1.3 million (70% were citizens of non-EU countries), and France and Italy each with 0.4 million (60% were citizens of non-EU countries). Furthermore, when compared to 2021, nearly all Member States, except Slovakia, noted an increase in total immigration figures in 2022. According to the Eurostat report, the most notable relative increases between 2021 and 2022 were observed in Czechia (401%), Latvia (205%), Estonia (153%), Germany (137%), and Portugal (132%).

According to the Eurostat graphic below, in terms of the resident population's size, Malta registered the highest immigration rate in 2022, with

nearly 66 immigrants per 1,000 persons. Luxembourg followed closely with 48 immigrants per 1,000 persons, trailed by Estonia with 37 immigrants per 1,000 persons. Cyprus recorded 34 immigrants per 1,000 persons, while Czechia, Lithuania, and Ireland reported 33, 31, and 30 immigrants per 1,000 persons, respectively. The European Union average was 11 immigrants from non-EU countries per 1,000 residents. It should also be noted that, on average, immigrants in EU Member States were younger than the established resident population. As of January 1, 2023, the median age of the EU's total population was 44.5 years, compared with a median age of 30.5 years among immigrants in 2022.

Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2023



Note: Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Liechtenstein did not include refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in their population and migration statistics.

(1) Break in series.

(2) Provisional.

(3) Estimate.

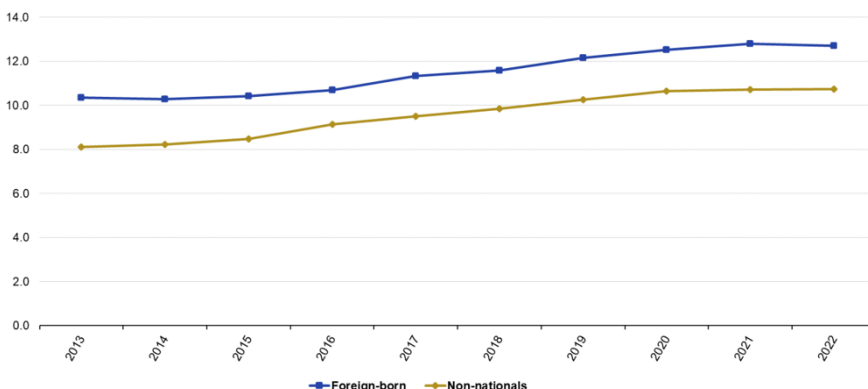
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_pop1ctz)

eurostat

Figure 2. Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2023
(Source: Eurostat, 2024)

Regarding the situation of young immigrants between the ages of 15-29, we refer to the data from the Eurostat report published on 27 November 2023. First, it is important to distinguish between the terms "non-national" and "foreign-born." The former refers to people without the citizenship of their country of residence, while the latter refers to people born outside their country of residence. According to the graphic below, we observe that following an upward trend from 2013, in 2022, young non-nationals comprised 10.7% of the population aged 15 to 29 years in the EU, whereas young foreign-born individuals constituted 12.7%.

Development of the share of young foreign-born people and young non-nationals in the total EU population aged 15 to 29 years, 2013-2022 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_pop1ctz and migr_pop3ctb)

eurostat

Figure 3. *Development of the share of young foreign-born people and young non-nationals in the total EU population aged 15 to 29 years, 2013-2022 (Source: Eurostat, 2023)*

The proportion of young non-nationals and foreign-born individuals in 2022 exhibited significant variation across different EU Member States. It ranged from 0.3% (in Romania) and 0.9% (in Slovakia) to 40.9% (in Luxembourg) and 27.4% (in Malta) for non-nationals, and from 1.9% (in Romania and Lithuania) to 43.2% (also in Luxembourg) and 32.6% (in Cyprus) for foreign-born individuals.

Between 2013 and 2022, the proportion of young non-nationals increased in 18 EU Member States, while the share of young foreign-born individuals increased in 23 Member States. The most significant growth in the share of young non-nationals was observed in Malta (+20.4 percentage points), Germany (+7.3 pp), Austria (+7.1 pp), and Slovenia (+6.4 pp). As for the share of young foreign-born individuals, Malta (+19.7 pp) also experienced the highest growth in percentage points, followed by Slovenia (+5.9 pp), Sweden (+5.5 pp), Germany (+5.4 pp), and Estonia (+5.3 pp).

It is also important to understand the situation of vulnerable people seeking protection within the European Union. The EU has long recognized the significance of international protection for vulnerable individuals, affirming its commitment to upholding human rights and providing refuge to those in need, as established by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Central to this commitment is the EU's dedication to ensuring that persons fleeing persecution, conflict, and other forms of adversity receive the necessary support and safeguarding within its borders.

Moreover, EU countries share a collective responsibility to welcome asylum seekers with dignity, ensuring fair treatment and uniform examination of their cases according to standardized criteria. This approach guarantees

consistency in outcomes, regardless of where an applicant applies. It is imperative that asylum procedures are equitable, effective across the EU, and resilient against exploitation or misuse.

According to information provided by the European Commission's Department of Migration and Home Affairs, in 1999, the European Council pledged to strive for the establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), grounded in the comprehensive application of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees. The initiatives outlined in the Tampere Programme, adopted during the European Council's special meeting in 1999, marked the initiation of the Common European Asylum System and resulted in the enactment of numerous EU legislations, emphasizing the need for solidarity and burden-sharing among member states.

The CEAS is governed by five legislative instruments and one agency:

- The Asylum Procedures Directive guarantees fair and efficient asylum decisions, with special support for vulnerable applicants;
- The Reception Conditions Directive ensures consistent living standards for asylum seekers, covering housing, healthcare, and education;
- The Qualification Directive clarifies criteria for granting international protection and access to integration measures;
- The Dublin Regulation determines which EU state is responsible for processing asylum claims;
- The EURODAC Regulation aids in identifying the state responsible for processing asylum claims by storing fingerprints;

- The European Union Agency for Asylum supports member states in processing asylum applications effectively.

Additionally, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, is a key component of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). It focuses on managing the EU's external borders, preventing irregular migration, and supporting member states in border control efforts. By enhancing border security and cooperation among EU countries, Frontex contributes to the overall goals of the CEAS in managing migration flows and ensuring the security of the EU's external borders.

Frontex currently deploys 2,500 EU border guard officers and staff in joint operations at Europe's borders. Their efforts support EU member states and third countries in managing migratory flows and combating cross-border crime, including migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorism. For example, Frontex reports that in 2023, the EU witnessed approximately 380,000 irregular border crossings, the highest number since 2015 (1.3 million) and 2016 (511,000). With over 100,000 irregular crossings, Syrians led among nationalities, followed by Guineans and Afghans. Together, these top three nationalities accounted for over a third of all detections in 2023 (Frontex, 2024).

Proposed in September 2020 and adopted by both the European Parliament and the Council in 2024, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum encompasses a series of regulations and policies aimed at fostering a fairer, more efficient, and sustainable migration and asylum process within the European Union. This comprehensive framework seeks to manage and regularize migration over the long term, ensuring certainty, transparency, and

dignified conditions for individuals arriving in the EU. Furthermore, the pact establishes a unified approach to migration and asylum, grounded in principles of solidarity, shared responsibility, and the protection of human rights.

The main reforms of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum include the following:

- ***Efficient asylum procedures*** – The pact aims to streamline asylum procedures across the EU, ensuring greater uniformity and efficiency in assessing asylum claims. It introduces a screening process at the EU's external borders to promptly identify individuals in need of international protection;
- ***Solidarity and responsibility-sharing*** – Acknowledging the disproportionate burden faced by certain member states in managing migration flows, the pact introduces mechanisms for enhanced solidarity and burden-sharing among EU countries. It suggests a more equitable distribution of responsibility for hosting refugees through a system of "mandatory solidarity," allowing member states to either relocate asylum seekers or provide support for returns and other measures;
- ***Return and integration policies*** – The pact seeks to bolster return policies for individuals with rejected asylum claims, while also promoting comprehensive integration measures for those granted protection. It proposes standardized procedures for returns and increased assistance for reintegration in countries of origin. Moreover, it underscores the significance of integration initiatives to

facilitate the inclusion of refugees and migrants into European societies;

- ***Cooperation with third countries*** – Highlighting the importance of cooperation with countries of origin and transit, the pact aims to address the root causes of migration and enhance external border management through partnerships and agreements with non-EU nations. It advocates for reinforced collaboration on migration management, border control, and addressing migration drivers with third countries;
- ***Humanitarian protection and resettlement*** – The pact reaffirms the EU's commitment to providing humanitarian aid and resettlement opportunities to vulnerable individuals, including refugees and asylum seekers. It suggests bolstering support for humanitarian assistance and promoting legal pathways for resettlement, including through private sponsorship schemes;
- ***Prevention of irregular migration*** – Emphasizing a comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing irregular migration, the pact includes measures to combat migrant smuggling and enhance border management;
- ***External dimension*** – The pact aims to strengthen the EU's involvement with countries of origin and transit to tackle migration root causes and bolster cooperation on migration management. This involves promoting economic development, governance, and stability in origin countries, as well as addressing displacement and

irregular migration drivers (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, 2023).

According to Eurostat, in 2023, a total of 1,129,640 non-EU citizens sought asylum in countries across the EU, with 1,048,880 of these being first-time applicants for international protection. This marks a notable increase of 20.1% compared to the previous year (873,680 in 2022) and represents the highest recorded number since the peak periods during the Syrian war refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016.

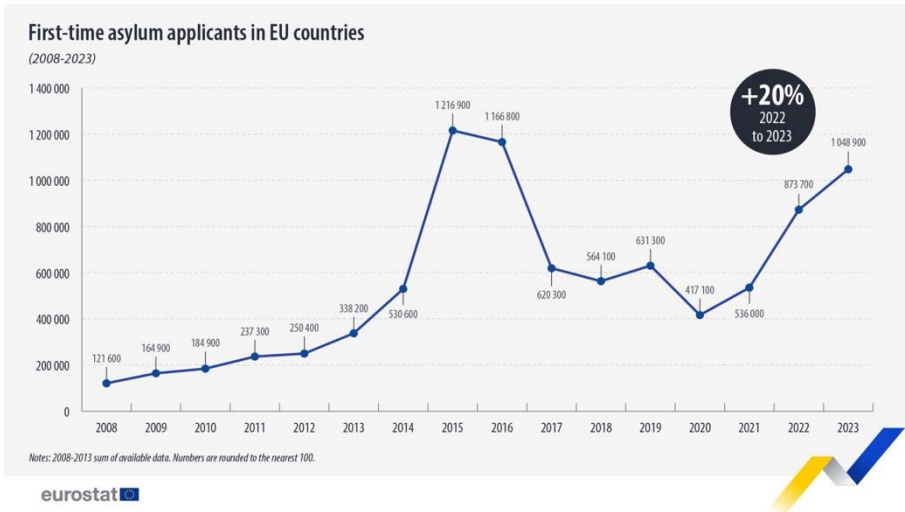
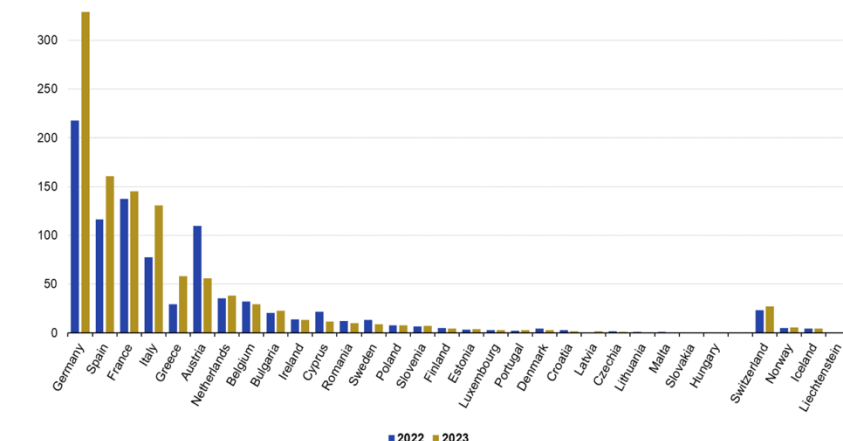


Figure 4. First-time asylum applicants in EU countries (Source: Eurostat, 2024)

Germany held the highest share of first-time asylum applicants within the EU, accounting for 31.4% of the total, with 329,035 applicants. Following Germany were Spain with 160,460 applicants (15.3%), France with 145,095 (13.8%), and Italy with 130,565 (12.4%). Conversely, Hungary, Slovakia, Malta, and Lithuania reported the lowest numbers of first-time asylum applicants in 2023, with figures ranging from 30 to 510. Among EU countries, the number of first-time asylum applicants rose in 13 nations.

First-time asylum applicants (non-EU citizens), 2022 and 2023
(thousand persons)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyapctza)

eurostat

Figure 5. First-time asylum applicants – non-EU citizens, 2022 and 2023
(Source: Eurostat, 2024)

Syrians, Afghans, Turks, Venezuelans, and Colombians were among the top nationalities lodging asylum applications, collectively representing nearly half (48.0%) of all first-time asylum applicants in EU countries in 2023.

Since 2013, Syria has consistently been the primary country of citizenship among asylum seekers in the EU. In 2023, the number of Syrian first-time asylum applicants in the EU surged to 183,035 (up from 131,790 in 2022), with their share of the total EU first-time asylum applicants rising from 15.1% to 17.5%.

Afghanistan maintained its position as the second-largest country of citizenship for the sixth consecutive year, with 100,935 applicants in 2023, accounting for 9.6% of the EU total. Applicants from Turkey represented 8.6% of the EU total, with 89,970 applicants in 2023. Venezuela and Colombia ranked as the fourth and fifth main countries of citizenship in 2023, comprising 6.4% and 5.9% of the EU total, respectively, totaling 67,085 and 62,015 applicants.

The most substantial relative increases were recorded for citizens of Burkina Faso (+569.2%) and Côte d'Ivoire (+124.1%). Conversely, citizens of India experienced the most significant relative decrease (-67.3%).

The largest numbers of Syrians, Turks, and Afghans seeking asylum were registered in Germany (accounting for 56.2% of all Syrian asylum seekers in the EU, 68.0% of Turks, and 50.8% of Afghans). Similarly, for Venezuelans and Colombians, the vast majority were registered in Spain (comprising 89.4% and 85.5%, respectively).

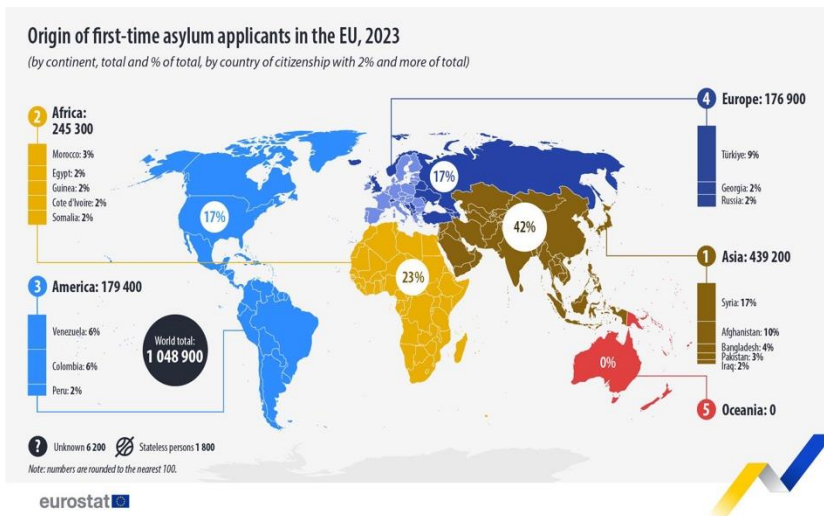


Figure 6. *Origin of first-time asylum applicants in the EU, 2023* (Source: Eurostat, 2024)

The 2023 Strategic Analysis, *Latest Asylum Trends*, published by the European Union Agency for Asylum, reports that in 2023, the recognition rate—representing the percentage of asylum applications resulting in decisions granting refugee status and subsidiary protection—reached approximately 43% (24% for refugee status, 20% for subsidiary protection). This marks the highest level observed since 2016, when the recognition rate was 58% (34% for refugee status, 24% for subsidiary protection).

For example, the EU recognition rate for Syrians in 2023 reached 94%; however, only 26% were granted refugee status, whereas 68% were granted subsidiary protection. Among the countries processing the highest number of favorable decisions for Syrians, Austria boasted a recognition rate of 99% (65%

were granted refugee status), Bulgaria 98% (only 1% refugee status), Germany 95% (13% refugee status), and the Netherlands 94% (17% refugee status).

On the other hand, the EU recognition rate for Turks in 2023 was only 24%, with 23% granted refugee status and 1% subsidiary protection. In the case of Afghans, 61% were granted favorable decisions—50% were granted refugee status, and 11% were granted subsidiary protection.

It's crucial to acknowledge that various objective factors contribute to fluctuations in recognition rates. The complexity of an asylum application and its assessment cannot be simplified solely to the nationality of the applicant. Disparities in the applicant's background, national legal systems and policies, as well as the interpretation of legal principles, all influence these rates and may yield divergent outcomes. It's also worth mentioning that certain applicants, particularly those from Venezuela, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan, often receive national forms of protection instead of international ones. These national protections are not standardized at the EU level and are thus categorized as negative asylum decisions in these statistics.

At present, the European Union is facing the most acute refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War—the Ukrainian refugee crisis caused by Russia's aggression in February 2022. According to data provided by UNHCR, as of 24 September 2024, there are 6,725,300 Ukrainian refugees recorded globally, of which 6,154,000 are in Europe.

The European Union swiftly acted in solidarity, providing tangible assistance to those in need. This included direct humanitarian aid, emergency

civil protection aid, border support, and extending protection to individuals fleeing the conflict and seeking entry into the EU.

Just 10 days after Russia's invasion, on 4 March 2022, Member States unanimously enacted a law offering protection to Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge, marking the first-ever activation of the Temporary Protection Directive since its inception in 2001 (Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382). Temporary Protection guarantees immediate access to residency rights, employment opportunities, housing, social welfare assistance, medical aid, and means of sustenance. It is implemented when the regular asylum system risks being overwhelmed by large numbers of applicants, which could result in processing delays and other negative consequences. The Directive also applies to stateless persons, as well as citizens of third countries other than Ukraine who had received international protection or similar national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022.

In light of the ongoing situation and to provide assurance to Ukrainian beneficiaries residing in the EU, the Council of the European Union unanimously decided in September 2023 to extend the duration of temporary protection in the EU until 4 March 2025 (Council of the EU, 2023).

According to the Eurostat report from 5 September 2024, as of 31 July 2024, approximately 4.1 million non-EU citizens (4,123,875) who fled Ukraine were granted temporary protection in the EU. The majority of these beneficiaries were located in Germany (1,110,600 individuals, constituting 26.9% of the total EU count), Poland (976,205, 23.7%), and Czechia (369,610, 9.0%). Relative to the EU population, the ratio of temporary protection beneficiaries stood at 9.2 per thousand people by the end of July 2024. Among

EU Member States, the highest ratios were observed in Czechia (33.9), Lithuania (27.4) and Poland (26.7).

At the close of July 2024, approximately 98.3% of those under temporary protection in the EU after fleeing Ukraine were Ukrainian nationals. Among the remaining non-EU citizens receiving temporary protection, the primary countries of origin were Russia (12,156 individuals, comprising 0.29%), Nigeria (4,393, 0.12%), and Azerbaijan (4,174, 0.10%). Regarding the age and sex structure of beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of July 2024, 24.8% were women aged 35 to 64 years, 16.1% were women aged 18 to 34 years, 11.3% were men aged 35 to 64 years, 9.5% were men aged 18 to 34 years, 4.3% were women aged 65 years and over, and 1.7% were men aged 65 years and over. Children accounted for 32.4% of the total, with similar proportions of boys and girls under 14 years old (12.4% and 12%) and between 14 and 17 years old (4.4% and 3.5%).

Eurobarometer surveys, which track public sentiment across the EU, have consistently revealed strong support for Ukraine following the 2022 Russian invasion. In the Eurobarometer poll conducted in August 2023 by Ipsos European Public Affairs at the request of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communication, 86% of EU residents endorsed the bloc's ongoing provision of humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict (with the highest level of support recorded in Portugal at 95% and the lowest in Czechia and Slovakia at 74%). Additionally, 77% expressed willingness to welcome refugees fleeing the war into the EU (with the highest level of support again in Portugal at 93% and the lowest in Czechia and Slovakia at 55%).

V.3.2. Legislative Framework for the Integration of Migrants

Within the mosaic of cultures and backgrounds that define the European Union (EU), the integration of migrants, particularly young migrants, emerges as a matter of great importance, in line with the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 and the European Commission's priority, "Promoting our European way of life" (European Union, n.d.). The EU's steadfast commitment to this endeavor is grounded in a profound recognition of the immense value migrants bring to the community and the critical role they play in forging a cohesive and prosperous Europe.

Central to the EU's dedication is the acknowledgment of the foundational principles of unity and solidarity that bind its member states. By embracing the integration of migrants, the EU reaffirms its core values of inclusivity and diversity, nurturing a sense of belonging and shared identity across borders. Migrants enrich the European tapestry with their diverse perspectives, traditions, and contributions, fostering an environment where mutual respect and understanding flourish.

Moreover, migrant integration is indispensable to the EU's economic dynamism and resilience. As Europe navigates demographic shifts and evolving labor market needs, harnessing the potential of immigrants is not only prudent but imperative. By facilitating their integration into the labor market and entrepreneurial ecosystem, the EU taps into a wellspring of talent and innovation, driving economic growth and competitiveness. Migrants bring skills, expertise, and entrepreneurial spirit, invigorating industries and fueling prosperity for all.

Furthermore, migrant integration serves as a linchpin for social cohesion and solidarity. By providing pathways to education, employment, and civic engagement, the EU empowers migrants to become active participants in their communities. Through inclusive policies and initiatives, the EU fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance, countering prejudice and discrimination. Migrants, in turn, enrich their adopted societies with their resilience, creativity, and cultural vibrancy, contributing to the fabric of European identity.

Crucially, the EU recognizes the pivotal role of inclusive leadership in advancing migrant integration, particularly among young migrants. By cultivating leaders who champion diversity, equity, and inclusion, the EU empowers communities to thrive in an interconnected world. Inclusive leadership fosters empathy, collaboration, and amplifies diverse voices, driving positive change and innovation across all sectors of society. Through inclusive leadership, the EU nurtures a culture of belonging and empowerment, ensuring that all individuals, including migrants, have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from Europe's collective success.

In essence, the EU's commitment to migrant integration and inclusive leadership is emblematic of its vision for a Europe that is united and prosperous. By embracing migrants and empowering them to thrive while fostering inclusive leadership, the EU not only upholds its values but also secures a brighter future for all its citizens. In fostering migrant integration and inclusive leadership, we nurture the foundation for a Europe that celebrates diversity, promotes economic opportunity, and stands as a beacon of unity in a complex world.

The Treaty of Amsterdam and the Tampere Programme represent a crucial turning point in the EU's approach to migrant integration. Enacted in 1999, the Treaty of Amsterdam expanded the legal framework for EU action on immigration and asylum, laying down principles of social inclusion, solidarity, and human rights. It provided the foundational principles necessary to address the complex challenges of migrant integration within the EU.

Building upon the foundation laid by the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Tampere Programme, adopted in the same year, marked a significant shift towards a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to immigration and asylum policies. Through the Tampere Programme, EU member states recognized the importance of proactive measures to support the social, economic, and cultural integration of migrants. As stepping stones in the evolution of EU migrant integration policy, these initiatives laid the groundwork for subsequent efforts to promote the full participation and inclusion of migrants in European societies (European Commission, n.d.).

The integration of third-country nationals legally residing in EU Member States and the establishment of policies for a secure labor environment for migrants saw significant advancements in 2000 with the adoption of the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC). These directives were crucial steps towards prohibiting discrimination in various areas, including employment, occupation, social protection, education, and access to public goods, on grounds such as religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, race, and ethnic origin.

In the same year, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was adopted and serves as a cornerstone of the European Union's

commitment to upholding human rights and promoting equality for all individuals within its jurisdiction. Among its provisions are key principles aimed at safeguarding the rights of migrants, including non-discrimination (Article 21) and the right to work (Article 15) or be self-employed (Article 16). These fundamental rights underscore the EU's dedication to ensuring that migrants are treated fairly and have access to opportunities for employment and economic self-determination within the European Union (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012/C 326/02). It should be mentioned that since the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights holds equivalent legal status to that of the European Union treaties.

The rights of asylum seekers and refugees to work are defined by specific EU legal frameworks. The Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU) mandates immediate access to the labor market for those granted international protection. Refugees who have obtained international protection typically have the same rights as nationals in terms of engaging in self-employment activities. Regarding asylum seekers, the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU) stipulates that Member States must allow access to the labor market no later than nine months after applying for asylum. A recent amendment, agreed upon by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in 2022, has reduced this waiting period to six months in the revised Reception Conditions Directive, which also requires Member States to ensure or facilitate access to language courses, civic education, or vocational training.

The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy, adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004 and

reaffirmed in 2014, offer guidelines for immigrant integration within the EU. These principles enable member countries to assess their integration efforts and cover essential aspects such as employment, education, access to institutions, goods, services, and societal participation. Importantly, they define integration as a mutual process requiring accommodation by both migrants and residents of EU Member States (Council of the European Union, 2004).

The European Commission has been actively shaping integration policies for third-country nationals within the EU. In 2005, it adopted the Communication “A common agenda for integration — Framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the European Union,” marking a foundational step towards establishing a coherent European framework for integration. This initiative proposed concrete measures aimed at implementing the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy through supportive EU mechanisms. In 2010, the Commission emphasized the need for a new agenda for migrant integration through the “Europe 2020 - a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.” This strategy aimed to enable migrants to fully leverage their potential for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth within European societies (European Commission, n.d.).

Building upon these efforts, in July 2011, the Commission proposed the “European agenda for the integration of third-country nationals.” This agenda highlighted actions to enhance the economic, social, cultural, and political participation of migrants, with an emphasis on local action and addressing challenges to fully benefit from migration's potential and diversity. In June 2016, the European Commission adopted an “Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals.” This comprehensive framework

supported Member States' efforts in developing and strengthening integration policies, addressing specific challenges faced by refugees. The plan encompassed actions across crucial policy areas, including pre-departure measures, education, employment, access to basic services, and social inclusion (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, n.d.).

Of particular importance to labor market integration, the Action Plan emphasized early integration into the labor market and supported migrant entrepreneurship. It aimed to prepare migrants for integration, promote language training, enhance vocational training, and facilitate access to housing and healthcare services. Additionally, it emphasized the importance of active participation, social inclusion, and combating discrimination. The Action Plan also presented tools to strengthen coordination between different players working on integration at national, regional, and local levels, and advocated for a more strategic approach to EU funding for integration. Through initiatives like the European Integration Network, the EU promoted mutual learning between Member States to enhance integration efforts.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan was also of great importance in supporting migrant entrepreneurship. Adopted by the European Commission in 2013, it aimed to foster entrepreneurship and create a conducive environment for entrepreneurs within the EU. One of its key focuses was on supporting migrant entrepreneurs as part of efforts to promote diversity, innovation, and economic growth.

Specifically, the Action Plan recognized the potential of migrant entrepreneurs to contribute to the EU's entrepreneurial ecosystem and emphasized the importance of providing them with adequate support and

resources. It included measures to facilitate access to finance, business development services, and networking opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs. Additionally, the Action Plan aimed to address barriers that migrant entrepreneurs may face, such as language difficulties, lack of recognition of qualifications, and limited access to markets. It proposed initiatives to promote language and skills training, facilitate the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, and enhance access to markets and networks (Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, n.d.).

In 2017, the EU adopted the European Pillar of Social Rights, a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering equitable and inclusive societies across the EU. Comprising 20 principles, it centers on three core areas: equal opportunities and labor market access, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, n.d.).

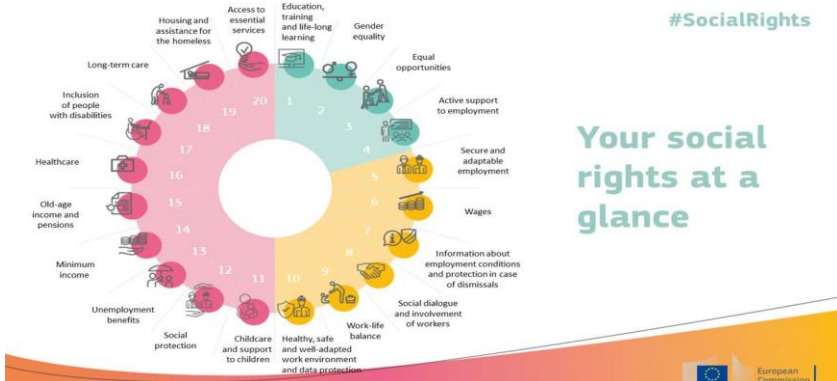


Figure 8. The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles
(Source:European Commissionn)

The European Pillar of Social Rights underscores the EU's unwavering commitment to upholding the rights of migrant workers and entrepreneurs, outlining specific measures to guarantee their equitable treatment, social inclusion, and economic participation within EU societies:

- ***Equal opportunities and labor market access*** – The Pillar champions equal footing in the labor market regardless of nationality or migrant status. It ensures migrants' access to employment services, training, and lifelong learning opportunities while condemning any form of discrimination in recruitment or employment practices based on nationality or migrant status;
- ***Fair working conditions*** – Migrant workers are guaranteed fair and dignified working conditions under the Pillar's guidance. This encompasses fair wages, safe workplaces, and measures promoting work-life balance. Additionally, it addresses concerns such as precarious employment, safeguarding migrant workers from disproportionate vulnerabilities;
- ***Social protection and inclusion*** – The Pillar extends social protection and inclusion rights to migrant workers and entrepreneurs. It advocates for their access to comprehensive social safety nets, including healthcare, unemployment benefits, and retirement pensions. Furthermore, it emphasizes combating social exclusion and poverty within migrant communities, ensuring their holistic integration into society.

In particular regard to migrant entrepreneurs, the European Pillar of Social Rights recognizes their pivotal role in driving economic growth and innovation within the EU. It advocates for an enabling environment for migrant entrepreneurs by:

- ***Facilitating access to finance*** – The Pillar supports initiatives to enhance migrant entrepreneurs' access to financing through tailored microfinance schemes, grants, and loans;
- ***Providing business support services*** – It champions the provision of business support services such as mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities to aid migrant entrepreneurs in establishing and expanding their ventures;
- ***Ensuring non-discrimination*** – The Pillar reaffirms the principle of non-discrimination, advocating for equal access to public procurement contracts, business support programs, and entrepreneurial networks for migrant entrepreneurs.

The European Skills Agenda, launched by the European Commission in 2020, embodies the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights by promoting social equity and guaranteeing universal access to education, training, and lifelong learning throughout the EU. It also plays a crucial role in supporting migrants by enhancing their access to education, training, and skills development opportunities:

- ***Recognition of prior learning*** – The agenda facilitates the recognition of skills acquired through various educational avenues, including formal, non-formal, or informal training. This is

particularly advantageous for migrants who bring valuable skills from their home countries, helping them integrate into the labor market more seamlessly.

- ***Upskilling and reskilling*** – Prioritizing upskilling and reskilling efforts, the agenda ensures that migrants possess the requisite skills demanded by the labor market. It offers tailored vocational training programs, language courses, and skill development initiatives, enabling migrants to enhance their employability and adapt to evolving job requirements.
- ***Integration into the labour market*** – By providing relevant skills and qualifications, the European Skills Agenda facilitates migrants' integration into the labor market. It promotes apprenticeships, traineeships, and work-based learning opportunities, enabling migrants to gain practical experience and forge connections within their chosen industries. Additionally, it addresses employment barriers such as discrimination and the non-recognition of foreign qualifications, thereby enhancing migrants' job prospects.
- ***Digital skills*** – Recognizing the significance of digital literacy in today's economy, the agenda emphasizes improving digital skills among all citizens, including migrants. It offers digital skills training and support, empowering migrants to navigate digital tools and technologies effectively, participate fully in the digital society, and seize employment opportunities in the digital economy (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, n.d.).

While the agenda primarily focuses on technical and vocational skills, it indirectly supports the acquisition of leadership skills. Leadership capabilities such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making are often embedded into vocational training programs and work-based learning initiatives promoted by the agenda. Additionally, migrants may have access to supplementary training or mentorship programs targeting leadership development, further enhancing their overall employability and potential for career advancement.

Furthermore, the European Union has long recognized the importance of empowering youth, including migrant youth, by facilitating their integration into the labor market and fostering entrepreneurship. At the heart of this endeavor lies a comprehensive framework comprising various policies, initiatives, and funding programs aimed at equipping young people with the skills, resources, and opportunities necessary for successful economic participation.

The primary strategy concerning youth is the European Union Youth Strategy 2021-2027, which was adopted in 2018 (2018/C 456/01). It was crafted to address the diverse needs and aspirations of young individuals throughout the European Union, based on their opinions during a 2017-2018 dialogue process involving young people from all over Europe. This comprehensive framework spans various dimensions, including education, employment, social inclusion, health, and democratic participation, which are incorporated into 11 European Youth Goals. A central aim of this strategy is to bolster youth employment and entrepreneurship by ensuring access to quality

job opportunities and avenues for entrepreneurial endeavors, while extending its benefits to young migrants and refugees:

- ***Labor market integration*** – The EU Youth Strategy prioritizes initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment rates and ensuring smooth transitions from education to employment. It promotes the development of skills and competencies aligned with labor market demands through vocational training, apprenticeships, and internships. Additionally, the strategy encourages creating supportive environments for young people seeking employment by fostering collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and policymakers. By addressing barriers such as a lack of experience or qualifications, the strategy aims to enhance youth access to quality job opportunities;
- ***Entrepreneurship*** – Recognizing the potential of young individuals to drive innovation and economic growth, the EU Youth Strategy emphasizes supporting youth entrepreneurship. It facilitates access to financing, mentorship, and networking opportunities for aspiring young entrepreneurs. Moreover, the strategy promotes entrepreneurship education and training to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among young people. By providing resources and guidance, the strategy aims to empower youth to start their own businesses and contribute to job creation and economic development;
- ***Inclusivity for young migrants and refugees*** – Importantly, the EU Youth Strategy is inclusive and applies to all young people,

including migrants and refugees. It acknowledges the unique challenges faced by young migrants and refugees in accessing education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities. As such, the strategy advocates for targeted support measures tailored to their specific needs, such as language training, recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, and tailored integration programs. By addressing these challenges and providing equal opportunities, the strategy contributes to the social inclusion and economic integration of young migrants and refugees into European societies.

Amidst the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, the European Union remains committed to ensuring the seamless integration of Ukrainian refugees, particularly youth, into European societies. Recognizing the urgent need to support this vulnerable population, the EU has implemented various measures aimed at facilitating their access to the labor market and fostering entrepreneurship.

Central to these efforts is the Temporary Protection Directive, adopted in March 2022, which grants Ukrainian refugees the right to work and pursue entrepreneurial ventures within EU Member States. This directive serves as a crucial legal framework, ensuring that refugees can fully participate in economic activities and contribute to their host communities' growth and development. Furthermore, the European Commission has issued two significant communications outlining its strategy to support the integration of Ukrainian refugees:

- ***"Ukraine: EU support to help Member States meet the needs of refugees"*** – This communication underscores the EU's commitment to providing comprehensive support to Member States in addressing the needs of Ukrainian refugees. It emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts, financial assistance, and resource allocation to ensure effective integration, with a specific focus on youth empowerment and access to education, training, and employment opportunities (European Commission, 2022);
- ***"Ukraine: Commission presents guidance to help people fleeing war access jobs, training, and adult learning"*** – This communication outlines practical guidance and recommendations aimed at facilitating Ukrainian refugees' access to jobs, training, and adult learning opportunities. It emphasizes the importance of removing barriers to employment, recognizing foreign qualifications, and providing tailored support to ensure refugees, including youth, can fully utilize their skills and talents in their host countries (European Commission, 2022).

The European Union (EU) emphasizes the integration of migrants, particularly young migrants, as crucial for fostering unity, diversity, and economic growth. Through policies like the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Skills Agenda, the EU promotes equal opportunities, labor market access, and social inclusion for migrants. It also supports migrant entrepreneurship, education, and leadership development. Recent initiatives, including the Temporary Protection Directive, focus on integrating Ukrainian refugees by providing access to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, ensuring their full participation in European society and economy.

V.3.3. Employment and Self-Employment Policies for Migrants

Migrants play a pivotal role in the vitality of Europe's economy and society. Over the past decade, they have substantially filled new job positions, effectively addressing labor market needs within the European Union. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, their invaluable contribution became increasingly evident. Many stepped forward to combat the crisis, with up to 13% of workers engaged in essential functions, ranging from doctors and nurses to drivers, being migrants (JRC, 2020).

Migrants' contribution is particularly critical given the demographic challenges Europe faces: an aging population and a shrinking workforce. By 2070, the working-age population is projected to decline from about 65% in 2019 to between 54% and 56% of the total EU population (European Commission, 2022). These trends exert pressure on labor markets, undermine competitiveness, and threaten economic growth.

To counteract these challenges and ensure sustained economic prosperity, the EU recognizes the necessity of attracting migrant workers and entrepreneurs. The ongoing demographic shifts and labor market shortages necessitate a proactive approach to talent acquisition from both within and outside EU borders. With labor shortages reported across almost all Member States, the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic further underscores the urgency of addressing these gaps, especially in sectors such as healthcare, IT, engineering, hospitality, and construction (European Labor Authority, 2023). Research conducted in 2020 by The Joint Research Centre (JRC) indicates that fully integrating migrants into the labor market could yield substantial

economic gains, including fiscal profits and contributions to national pension schemes and welfare programs. For example, it could result in an increase of up to €3,500 in the average net fiscal contribution of each migrant by 2035.

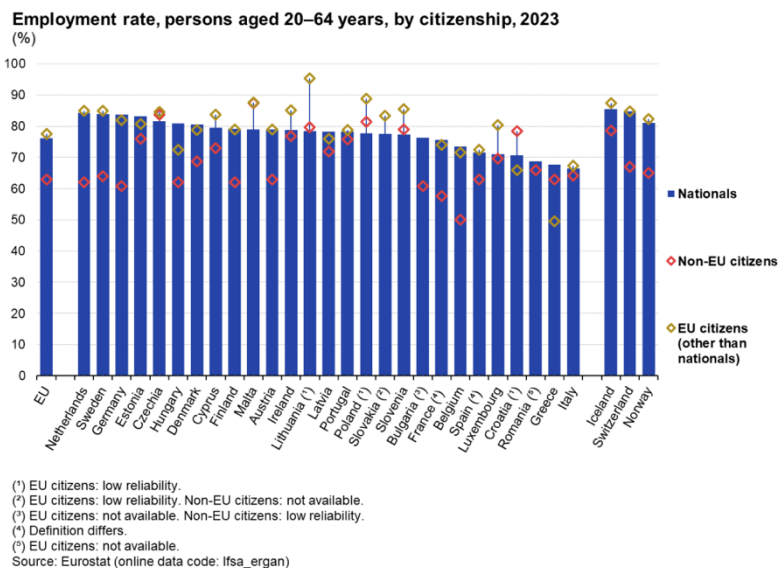
Furthermore, the EU acknowledges the vital role of migrants in supporting its transition towards a green and digital economy. As industries evolve and technological advancements reshape the labor landscape, specific skills become increasingly crucial. Sectors such as construction, energy, manufacturing, and transport will be significantly impacted by this transition, requiring additional labor and new skill sets.

In addition to addressing immediate labor market needs, attracting migrants contributes to the EU's global competitiveness. Highly qualified individuals from non-EU countries currently tend to favor destinations like North America or Oceania over Europe. Enhancing the EU's attractiveness for talent acquisition is, therefore, imperative. Measures to improve rights and streamline employment and self-employment procedures for migrants, while combating labor exploitation and discrimination, are crucial steps in this direction.

In essence, the EU's drive to attract migrant workers and entrepreneurs stems from the need to maintain competitiveness, address demographic challenges, and alleviate labor market shortages. By welcoming skilled migrants and fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, the EU aims to ensure sustainable economic growth and prosperity for its citizens and residents alike.

According to the Eurostat report from May 2024 regarding labor market indicators in 2023 within the European Union, 63% of non-EU citizens aged 20–64 were employed, compared to 77.6% for citizens of other EU Member States and 76.2% for nationals. These percentages indicate an increase in the employment rate compared to 2019, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (60% for non-EU citizens, 75.6% for citizens of other EU Member States, and 73.8% for nationals). It is important to note that in Eurostat statistics, employed persons refer to someone working as an employee, self-employed, or a contributing family worker. In 2023, the unemployment rate for nationals aged 20–64 in the EU stood at 5.4%. Comparatively, citizens of other EU Member States faced a higher rate of 6.9%, while non-EU citizens experienced a substantially higher rate of 12.2%, nearly double that of nationals.

In 2023, 19 out of the 25 EU countries with reliable data showed lower employment rates for non-EU citizens compared to nationals. The widest gaps were seen in Belgium (71% vs. 47.5%), Germany (80.8% vs. 57.9%), and the Netherlands (82.7% vs. 60.5%). On the other hand, in six EU countries where non-EU citizens had higher employment rates than nationals, Malta and Croatia exhibited the most notable differences.



eurostat

Figure 9. Employment rate, persons aged 20-64 years, by citizenship, 2023
(Source: Eurostat, 2024)

A Eurostat report from July 2023 highlights that the over-qualification rate in 2023 was 39.4% for non-EU citizens and 31.3% for citizens from other EU countries. In comparison, nationals had a significantly lower over-qualification rate of 20.8%. Over-qualified individuals are those with tertiary education working in low or medium-skilled jobs, suggesting that many migrants possess valuable skills but struggle to have them recognized and to secure jobs aligned with their qualifications. The highest over-qualification rates for non-EU citizens in 2023 were observed in Greece (69.6%), Italy (64.1%), and Spain (56.0%). Additionally, female non-EU citizens faced a

higher over-qualification rate, 6.7 percentage points more than their male counterparts.

According to data provided by the European Commission, in 2022 non-EU citizens were over-represented compared to EU citizens in specific economic sectors such as accommodation and food service activities (11.3% vs. 4.2%); administrative and support service activities (7.6% vs. 3.9%); domestic work (5.9% vs. 0.7%); and construction (9.1% vs. 6.6%). In terms of occupations, non-EU citizens were over-represented among cleaners and helpers (11.4% vs. 2.9%); personal services workers (7.3% vs. 4.1%); personal care workers (5.5% vs. 3%); construction workers, excluding electricians (6.1% vs. 3.7%); workers in mining, construction, manufacturing, and transport (6% vs. 2.5%); food preparation assistants (2.6% vs. 0.6%); and agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers (2.4% vs. 0.7%).

On the other hand, non-EU citizens were under-represented compared to EU citizens in other economic sectors, including public administration and defense, compulsory social security (1.1% vs. 7.4%); education (3.9% vs. 7.6%); human health and social work activities (8.5% vs. 11.2%); and professional, scientific, and technical activities (3.8% vs. 6%). In terms of occupations, non-EU citizens were under-represented among teaching professionals (2.4% vs. 5.5%); business and administration associate professionals (2.6% vs. 6.8%); clerical and administrative workers (1.5% vs. 4.4%); science and engineering associate professionals (1.7% vs. 3.5%); business and administration professionals (2.3% vs. 4.5%); and health professionals (1.5% vs. 3.1%).

Furthermore, adult learning plays a crucial role in the labor market by enabling individuals to acquire new skills and adapt to evolving job requirements. In today's rapidly changing work environment, technological advancements and shifting market demands necessitate continuous skill development. Adult learning equips individuals with the capabilities needed to meet these demands and remain competitive in the job market. Some of the new skills that individuals may acquire through adult learning include digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and collaboration, adaptability and flexibility, emotional intelligence, and leadership and management.

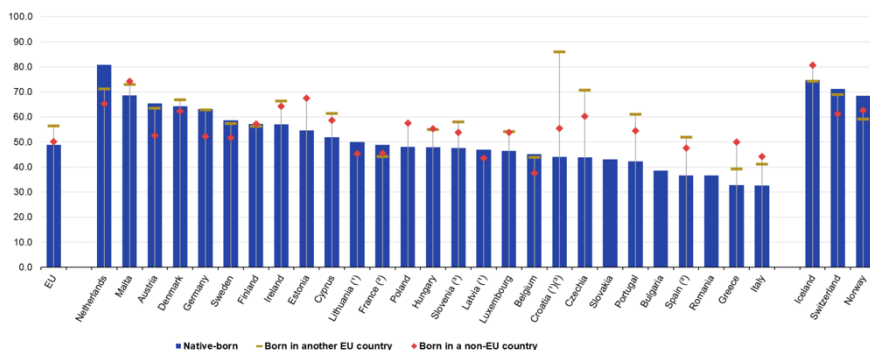
According to the Eurostat report from July 2023, in 2022, among individuals aged 25–64 years, participation in adult learning varied slightly based on citizenship, with no significant differences between non-EU citizens and nationals. Specifically, 11.6% of non-EU citizens residing in the EU, 9.8% of citizens of an EU Member State living in another EU Member State, and 11.9% of nationals residing in their own country participated in adult learning in the four weeks prior to the survey, which may include courses, seminars, conferences, or receiving private lessons or instruction outside the regular education system.

Additionally, we must address the employment situation of young people (15-29 years) in the EU based on their country of birth, according to the Eurostat report from 27 November 2023. The employment rates in 2022 for young people were as follows: 48.9% for those born in their native country, 50.1% for those born in a non-EU country, and 56.4% for those born in another

EU country. From 2013 to 2022, the employment rate among young individuals born in other EU countries consistently exceeded that of their native-born counterparts and those born outside the EU. Conversely, the employment rate of young individuals born outside the EU remained lower than that of native-born individuals until 2021. However, in 2022, the employment rate for non-EU-born individuals surpassed that of native-born individuals by 1.2 percentage points (pp).

In 2022, among EU countries with available data, the employment rate for young non-EU-born individuals was generally lower than for young persons born in other EU countries across most Member States. However, exceptions were observed in Greece, Italy, Malta, France, Finland, and Hungary. Additionally, the employment rate of non-EU-born individuals surpassed that of native-born individuals in 13 EU countries.

Employment rate of young people aged 15-29 years by country of birth, EU, 2022 (%)



Note: Only available data are presented in the graph.

(*) Born in a non-EU country: low reliability.

(**) Definition differs.

(*) Born in another EU country: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: yth_empl_020)

eurostat

Figure 10. Employment rate of young people aged 15-29 years by country of birth, EU, 2022 (Source: Eurostat, 2023)

Labor market disparities for young individuals who are non-EU citizens are evident when analyzing unemployment rates. In 2023, young non-EU citizens experienced higher unemployment rates compared to their native-born counterparts and citizens of other EU countries, with an unemployment rate of about 15.1%, whereas the rate for the other two groups was around 10-11%. Among Member States with available data, the unemployment rate for non-EU citizens exceeded that of nationals in all Member States except Italy.

Increased attention must also be given to young people who are not employed and not involved in further education or training. In 2022, 21.1% of young people born outside the EU were in this category, compared to 11.8% of native-born young people and 14.2% of young people born in other EU countries.

There is an alarming situation regarding the risk of poverty or social exclusion among young migrants. The risk of poverty or social exclusion refers to the likelihood of individuals experiencing low income, material deprivation, or social marginalization within a society. This risk encompasses various factors, including income inequality, insufficient access to essential services, and limited participation in social and economic activities. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) often lack the means and opportunities to actively engage in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the host country. Based on Eurostat data, in 2022, the most exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion were young non-EU citizens (aged 16-29 years), with a rate of 46.2%, compared to 27.3% for young EU citizens residing in another EU country and 19.3% for nationals.

In 15 out of 17 EU Member States with available data, the proportion of non-EU-born young individuals at risk exceeded that of young native-born individuals by 10 percentage points or more. The largest gap was observed in Austria, reaching 34.2 percentage points. However, there were exceptions to this trend, as the risk of poverty or social exclusion among young non-EU-born individuals was lower than among young native-born individuals in Finland and Poland.

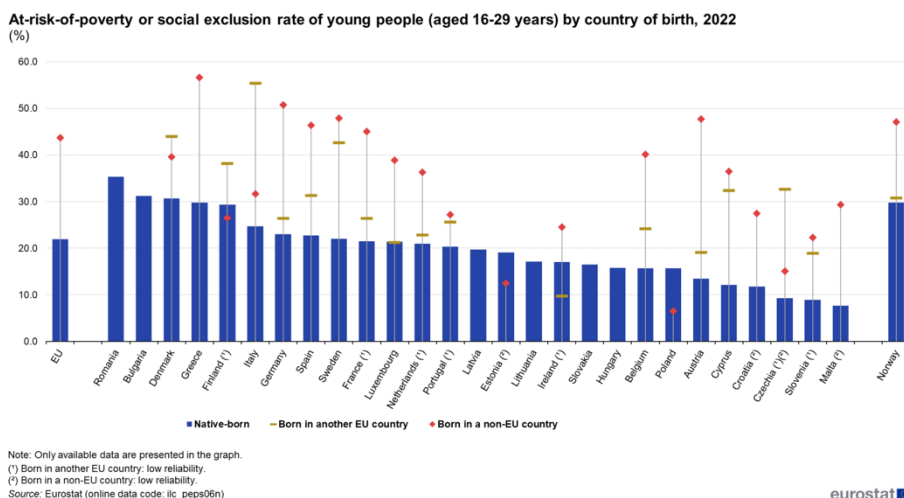


Figure 11. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of young people , aged 16-29 years, by country of birth, 2022 (Source: Eurostat, 2023)

Entrepreneurship stands as a formidable force propelling economic growth and fostering job creation within societies. It serves as the catalyst for the birth of new companies, the generation of employment opportunities, and the exploration of uncharted markets, all while cultivating fresh skills and capabilities. However, within the European Union, a significant demographic

often overlooked as potential entrepreneurs are migrants. Despite their potential, they encounter a myriad of obstacles—ranging from legal and cultural barriers to linguistic challenges. These hurdles are not exclusive to migrants but also affect other vulnerable groups within society. Among these underrepresented groups, young migrants face particularly daunting barriers when trying to access self-employment opportunities. The pathway to entrepreneurship remains arduous for them, further exacerbating existing challenges in the job market.

Acknowledging entrepreneurship as an effective piece of the employment puzzle, it becomes clear that self-employment serves as both a shield against marginalization and a gateway to economic empowerment. Through self-employment, individuals carve their own paths, independent of conventional job markets, thus evading the specter of marginalization. Yet, beyond mere survival, successful self-employment creates fertile ground for economic growth, benefitting not only immigrants but also the host country's society at large.

The Eurostat report from May 2024 states that in 2023, 10.3% of non-EU citizens pursued self-employment activities, slightly lower than the 13.3% self-employment rate among nationals and the 10.8% self-employment rate among citizens of other EU countries. Self-employed individuals are characterized as those who operate their own businesses, which may encompass professional practices, agricultural endeavors, retail establishments, and various other ventures, all with the primary objective of generating profit. Among non-EU citizens, the self-employment rates remain lower than the record established in 2016 (12.5%) and have not yet reached the level of 2019,

before the pandemic (11.2%). The ratio of men to women in self-employment favors males. In 2023, among non-EU citizens, males aged 20–64 years had a self-employment rate of 11.7%, compared to 8.4% for females in the same age group.

It is important to note that self-employment can be categorized into two distinct types: employers, who hire and oversee other individuals within their businesses, and own-account workers, who operate independently without employing any additional staff. In the European Union in 2022, the proportion of employers among non-EU citizens stood at 32.1%, slightly higher than the 31.8% observed among native-born individuals and 30.8% among citizens of other EU Member States. Furthermore, recent studies conducted in Germany indicate that businesses owned by immigrants are more prone to achieving notable levels of growth compared to enterprises led by non-immigrants (OECD/European Commission, 2023).

Among the 20 EU Member States with available data, the self-employment rates for non-EU citizens ranged in 2023 from 21.1% in Czechia to 5.6% in Sweden. In the majority of Member States (15 out of 20), the self-employment rate was higher for national citizens than for non-EU citizens, with the widest gaps observed in Greece (13.1 percentage points), Poland (9.5 percentage points), and Italy (6.7 percentage points). Conversely, among the five Member States where the self-employment rate was higher among non-EU citizens, the widest gap was in Czechia (5.4 pp).

Share of self-employed in total employment, persons aged 20–64 years, by citizenship, 2023 (%)

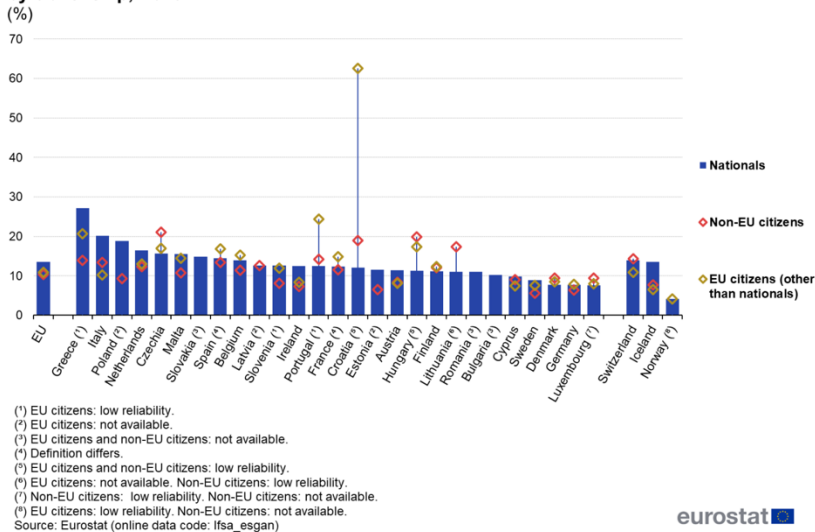


Figure 12. Share of self-employed in total employment, persons aged 20-64 years, by citizenship, 2023 (Source: Eurostat, 2024)

The study "The Missing Entrepreneurs 2023: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment," conducted by OECD and the European Commission, provides relevant information about the economic sectors of self-employed immigrants in the European Union. Notably, in 2022, people born in non-EU countries exhibited slightly lower self-employment rates in Professional and scientific activities (23%), Construction (19%), and Administrative and support services (8%) compared to those born in another EU Member State or the reporting country. However, immigrants born outside the EU demonstrated higher self-employment rates in Other service activities relative to their counterparts born in another EU Member State (26% vs. 24%),

although both rates were below the share of native-born individuals in the sector (30%). Conversely, those born outside the EU displayed a greater propensity for self-employment in Wholesale and food services (18%), Transportation and storage (11%), and Education (9%) compared to those born in another EU Member State or the native-born. Similarly, individuals born in another EU Member State showed slightly higher self-employment rates in Construction than those born in the reporting country (26% vs. 25%).

Entrepreneurship among young people, including young migrants, plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic landscape of the European Union. As a dynamic force driving innovation, job creation, and economic growth, entrepreneurship empowers young individuals to unleash their creativity, harness their talents, and pursue their aspirations. For young migrants, entrepreneurship offers a pathway to economic independence and integration into their host societies, providing opportunities to contribute to local economies and foster social cohesion. Moreover, by nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset among young people, the EU cultivates a culture of innovation and resilience, essential for tackling contemporary challenges and seizing emerging opportunities in an ever-evolving global market. Fostering an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurship among young people, including migrants, is not only essential for economic prosperity but also for unlocking their potential and building a more inclusive and vibrant future for Europe.

In 2022, nearly 26 million young people (aged 20-29 years) were self-employed within the European Union, accounting for 7% of all young people working in the EU (OECD/European Commission, 2023). Over the past

decade, the self-employment rate among young people in the EU has remained relatively consistent. Currently, there is no comprehensive data on the level of self-employment among young migrants in the EU. However, Eurostat reports that around 3% of working young non-EU citizens (aged 15-24 years) were self-employed in 2022. Thus, we will present the available data on all young people (aged 20-29 years) in the EU, which includes native-born individuals, those born in other EU states, and young people born outside the EU.

According to "The Missing Entrepreneurs 2023: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment," in 2022, young people had the highest self-employment rates in Poland and the Czech Republic (11% each), Greece and Italy (12% each), and Slovakia (13%). In contrast, only a small percentage of young individuals were self-employed in Germany, Sweden, and Ireland, each accounting for less than 3% of the total working young people. Furthermore, there is a significant gender disparity in self-employment. In 2022, approximately 5% of working young females were self-employed, compared to 8% of their male counterparts. Consequently, young men were 1.6 times more likely to be self-employed than young women. While gender parity in self-employment among young people is achieved in a few EU Member States, it remains elusive in most countries. In 2022, Hungary and Portugal showed no gender gap among young self-employed workers, while Italy and Lithuania displayed only a slight disparity. Interestingly, in Cyprus and Luxembourg, young women were more likely to venture into self-employment than their male counterparts. However, significant gender gaps were observed in Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, and Sweden, where young men were over three times more likely to be self-employed than young women. These disparities

signal the need for tailored strategies to inspire and support young women's entrepreneurial aspirations, reflecting their unique interests and business ventures.

Close to one-fifth of young self-employed individuals were job creators themselves. In 2022, 17% of self-employed youth in the EU employed at least one person, contributing to the creation of at least 350,000 additional jobs. Interestingly, the percentage of young self-employed individuals who assume the role of employers in the EU has remained steady over the past decade. The proportion of young employers varied significantly across EU Member States, ranging from 7% in the Czech Republic to 37% in Germany.

Young entrepreneurs often face resource constraints and challenges in accessing external support, leading them to gravitate towards sectors with lower entry barriers. In the EU in 2022, Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, along with Other service sectors, emerged as the top sectors where young workers were most likely to be self-employed. Approximately 30% and 18% of young individuals in these sectors pursued self-employment. Moreover, other sectors with above-average self-employment rates for young people included Real estate activities (16%), Arts, entertainment, and recreation (15%), Construction (12%), Professional, scientific activities (11%), and Information and communication (8%). Most sub-sectors within these industries require minimal capital investment. Conversely, self-employment among young individuals was scarce in sectors such as Transportation and storage or Manufacturing.

The distribution of self-employment among young people is influenced by various factors, including the country's economic landscape and vocational systems. For instance, nations with a significant share of economic activity in

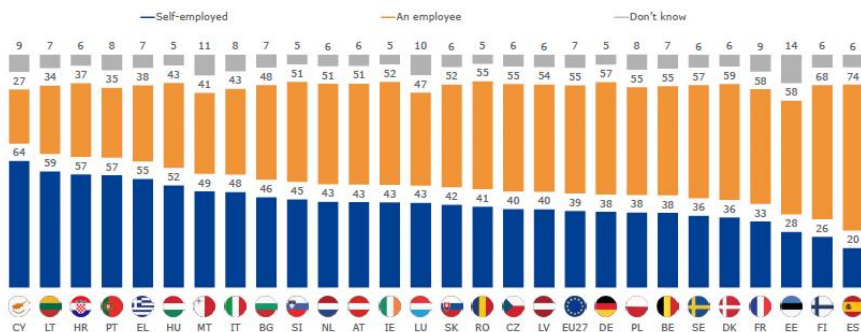
Agriculture, such as France and Italy, often witness higher rates of self-employment among young individuals in the agricultural sector. Conversely, countries like Austria and Germany, renowned for their robust vocational systems, tend to see a greater concentration of youth self-employment in professional and technical sectors. Moreover, a notable trend in recent years is the rapid expansion of technology sectors across many eastern EU Member States. This surge can be attributed to heightened investments in technology education and the allure of low living costs, which attract multinational IT companies. This influx of tech investment not only fuels economic growth but also creates opportunities for young entrepreneurs to thrive in the dynamic and evolving landscape of technology-driven industries (OECD/European Commission, 2023).

In 2022, the European Year of Youth, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion commissioned a Flash Eurobarometer to analyze the preferences and attitudes of around 26,000 young people, aged 15 to 30, from all EU member states, regarding entrepreneurship. The results of this survey are important and relevant in providing better support and designing policies closer to the needs and aspirations of all young people in the European Union who want to become entrepreneurs, including young migrants.

When presented with various job options, 39% of surveyed young individuals expressed a preference for self-employment over traditional employment, while 55% favored working as an employee rather than being self-employed. The inclination towards self-employment versus traditional employment varies significantly across EU Member States. In six countries,

over half of respondents leaned towards self-employment: Cyprus (64%), Lithuania (59%), Croatia (57%), Portugal (57%), Greece (55%), and Hungary (52%), Malta (49%) and Italy (48%). Conversely, the highest proportion selecting "employee status" was observed in Spain (74%), followed by Finland.

Q3 If you could choose between different kinds of jobs, would you prefer to be...? (% EU27)



(68%).

Figure 13. Source: Flash Eurobarometer 513, Social entrepreneurship and youth, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (March 2023)

The desire for independence and the freedom to dictate one's work schedule and environment, each chosen by 49% of respondents, emerge as the leading factors driving young people's preference for self-employment. Additionally, 33% of participants cite personal satisfaction derived from realizing their ideas, while 29% perceive self-employment as offering superior income prospects. The remaining reasons are less commonly selected, ranging

from 5% for the scarcity of employment opportunities to 17% for the potential to make a positive societal contribution.

The primary reason cited for preferring to work as an employee is the assurance of a regular, stable income (selected by 46%), followed closely by considerations of job security (39%) and fixed working hours (29%). Approximately 21% highlight access to social protection, including health insurance and unemployment benefits, as a significant factor in their preference for employee status.

Nearly four in ten respondents (37%) believe that a significant barrier preventing young individuals from pursuing entrepreneurship is the lack of capital or resources necessary for self-employment, while 36% identify financial risks associated with entrepreneurship as a deterrent. A slightly lower proportion (31%) cite a lack of knowledge, education, or skills required to initiate and manage a business venture as another notable obstacle. The remaining barriers are recognized by fewer respondents, ranging from 11% for concerns about access to social protection, including health insurance and unemployment benefits, to 25% for apprehensions regarding bureaucratic hurdles and administrative complexities. Interestingly, in five EU Member States, namely Estonia (49%), Sweden (46%), Czechia (42%), Romania (40%), and Lithuania (39%), a lack of knowledge, education, or skills necessary for initiating and managing a business emerges as the primary barrier to youth entrepreneurship.

Nearly half of the respondents (46%) express a willingness to establish their own business, even though they have not initiated any steps towards entrepreneurship. Additionally, 14% are in the process of taking steps to start

their own venture. Notably, the proportion of respondents willing to consider entrepreneurship but yet to take any steps is highest in Cyprus (67%) and lowest in Germany (38%) and France (39%). Among those surveyed, the largest shares of respondents who are not considering starting a business are found in France (34%), Finland, and Luxembourg (both 32%). However, in more than half of the Member States, this figure remains below 25%. This indicates that while a preference for traditional employment may be more common, many young people still entertain the idea of working for themselves in the future.

In terms of preferred sectors, if given the opportunity to establish their own business, young people show a strong inclination towards sectors such as IT, internet, e-commerce, or social media (13%), followed closely by arts, design, and culture (10%). Additionally, commerce, trade, and retail (9%) as well as hospitality, entertainment, and tourism (9%) emerge as popular choices among respondents.

Moreover, when asked about the types of support they would find most beneficial—ranging from financial assistance in the form of grants to guidance from experienced entrepreneurs—no single type emerges as distinctly more useful than the others. For instance, 23% cite financial support in the form of grants, while 22% indicate a preference for education and training, and also coaching and mentoring by experienced entrepreneurs. Additionally, 21% mention the importance of support with legal requirements, while 19% emphasize the significance of assistance in marketing their products or services.

Young people exhibit a strong preference for acquiring entrepreneurship training both within and outside formal education settings.

While 32% are inclined to seek such training at school or university, a significant portion (27%) also looks to online content creators, such as YouTube and Instagram, as valuable sources of entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, 21% expect to benefit from the guidance of an entrepreneurship coach or network. Smaller shares of respondents express interest in seeking training from institutions such as the chamber of commerce (18%), a job center (16%), EU institutions (15%), a business incubator (13%), or local administration (12%).

In recent years, the European Union has reaffirmed its commitment to fostering the inclusion of migrants, with a particular focus on the integration of youth. Central to this commitment is the EU's dedication to facilitating migrants' entry into the labor market, supporting their entrepreneurial endeavors, and empowering migrant youth. By actively promoting the inclusion of all migrants, including youth, the EU aims to harness their talents and skills, attract labor to the continent, and create a more dynamic and inclusive society. Through various initiatives and policies, the EU has made significant strides toward these goals, demonstrating its ongoing efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for migrants across its member states.

The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 is a policy framework adopted by the European Commission on 24 November 2020. It aims to support Member States in their efforts to integrate migrants and ensure their inclusion in society. The plan outlines various actions to promote the social, economic, and cultural integration of migrants, including access to

education, employment, healthcare, and housing (COM/2020/758 final). In connection with the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, stated, "Migrants are 'us,' not 'them.' Everyone has a role to play in making sure our societies are cohesive and prosperous. Integration and inclusion mean listening to migrant communities and ensuring that everyone can enjoy rights, regardless of background. Inclusive integration is giving the same tools and support needed to contribute to society, so that migrants can reach their full potential and our societies benefit from their strength and skills" (European Commission, 2020). However, the plan also underscores the importance of a two-way integration process, emphasizing that migrants should actively engage in integrating themselves while also receiving assistance in their integration efforts.

The Action Plan is closely connected to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. As mentioned earlier, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum is a comprehensive approach to managing migration in the European Union, focusing on both external and internal dimensions. It seeks to provide a more predictable and sustainable approach to migration management, including measures to enhance integration and ensure the effective inclusion of migrants into European societies. Therefore, the Action Plan is one of the key components of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, as it outlines specific measures and initiatives to support the integration of migrants in the EU. It places significant emphasis on integrating migrants into the labor market and supporting their entrepreneurial activities. This aspect of the plan is crucial for ensuring the economic empowerment and social inclusion of migrants in European societies.

One of the key initiatives outlined in the plan is to provide migrants with access to education and training opportunities that align with the needs of the labor market. This includes language courses, vocational education and training (VET), and recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, helping migrants acquire and develop the skills necessary for employment. Additionally, the plan emphasizes the importance of addressing barriers to employment, such as discrimination and the lack of recognition of foreign credentials.

Furthermore, the plan highlights the significance of nurturing migrant entrepreneurship as a vehicle for economic integration. This encompasses not only providing migrants with financial support but also offering mentoring programs and networking opportunities aimed at enhancing their leadership and management skills. By empowering migrant entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and resources, the plan aims to stimulate job creation, foster economic growth, and facilitate their full integration into European communities.

EU member states are responsible for adopting and implementing integration and inclusion policies, programs, and projects aimed at helping migrants more easily access the labor market and pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations, based on the directions provided by the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion. Government agencies (at national, regional, and local levels), as well as non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, public institutions (such as universities and research centers), private enterprises, and even individuals, can access European funds in this regard, benefiting from the

support of European Institutions. This support may include the development of guides and practical tools, coordination, and monitoring.

Some of the main European funds available are (European Commission, n.d.):

- ***Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)*** – The AMIF specifically targets the early phases of integration of third-country nationals, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, into EU societies. It supports projects related to education, employment, language training, social inclusion, and entrepreneurship. The budget for the AMIF for the 2021-2027 period is approximately €10 billion;
- ***European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)*** – The ESF+ is one of the primary sources of funding for social inclusion, education, and labor market integration initiatives in the EU for the medium and long term. It supports migrant integration into the labor market through various initiatives. It funds employment services (such as job counseling), skills development programs, and language training to enhance migrants' job prospects. ESF+ also supports entrepreneurship training (which can include the development of leadership and management skills), mentoring, and access to financial resources for migrant entrepreneurs. Additionally, ESF+ supports the development and delivery of integration services tailored to the specific needs of migrants, including social support, cultural orientation, and legal assistance. Furthermore, ESF+ encourages partnerships and collaboration between public

authorities, NGOs, employers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders involved in migrant integration efforts. By fostering cooperation and coordination, ESF+ maximizes the impact of integration initiatives, promotes knowledge sharing, and leverages resources to address complex challenges. The total budget for ESF+ for the 2021-2027 period is around €100 billion;

- ***The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*** – The primary objective of the ERDF is to promote economic development and reduce regional disparities across the European Union. ERDF indirectly supports migrant integration into European societies by investing in economic development, job creation, and infrastructure projects in regions with significant migrant populations. The total budget for ERDF for the 2021-2027 period is around €220 billion.
- ***InvestEU Programme*** – This program facilitates access to financing and reduces risks for entrepreneurs, including migrant entrepreneurs, across the EU. While not providing direct grants, InvestEU offers financial instruments such as loans, guarantees, and equity investments through partnering financial institutions. These resources empower entrepreneurs to start or grow their businesses, invest in innovation, and expand into new markets. By leveraging public and private investment, InvestEU stimulates economic growth, job creation, and social integration, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in Europe. It is estimated that InvestEU will mobilize over €372 billion in the 2021-2027 period;

- ***Horizon Europe*** – The EU's main research and innovation funding program supports projects ranging from fundamental research to market-oriented innovation, aiming to drive scientific excellence, technological advancement, and societal impact. It indirectly assists migrants in integrating into the labor market and entrepreneurship through various means. It funds research on migration and integration issues, which informs policymakers about effective strategies for migrant employment and entrepreneurship, provides resources for migrant entrepreneurs through technology hubs to aid in business development, invests in vocational programs tailored to migrants' needs, and promotes diversity and inclusion in research and innovation. The total budget for Horizon Europe for the 2021-2027 period is around €95 billion;
- ***The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV)*** – This program indirectly assists migrants in integrating into the labor market and starting businesses by funding projects that promote equality, combat discrimination, and foster social inclusion. Through training activities, networking opportunities, and support for legal rights awareness, CERV empowers migrants with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary for success, including inclusive leadership skills. By creating an inclusive environment and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, CERV contributes to the integration of migrants into European societies. The total budget for CERV for the 2021-2027 period is around €1 billion.

These European funds can also be accessed with the aim of improving the integration of refugees, including Ukrainian refugees who benefit from the right of temporary residence, into the labor market and supporting them in their entrepreneurial aspirations. According to available data, Ukrainian refugees in the EU are making progress in terms of finding jobs and starting businesses compared to other refugee groups, but employment and self-employment rates vary widely by country.

According to a recent survey conducted by the UNHCR (2024), approximately 45% of Ukrainian refugees across the EU were engaged in employment or self-employment as of February 2024. Based on the OECD report *International Migration Outlook 2023* and various other sources, it is estimated that the highest employment rates among Ukrainian refugees are in Denmark - 80% (February 2024, source: Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment), Czech Republic - 66% (December 2023, including daily workers and self-employed Ukrainians, source: IOM), Poland - 62% (July 2023, source: Narodowy Bank Polski), Sweden - 56% (May 2023), Netherlands - 55% (November 2023, source: Statistics Netherlands), and Lithuania - 53% (July 2023). Ukrainian refugees in the EU often find employment in sectors like construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and hospitality, where jobs tend to be lower-skilled, despite many having higher education qualifications. This mismatch between skills and available opportunities presents challenges for their integration into the labor market.

Germany has provided refuge to more than a million individuals fleeing Ukraine over the past two years. However, by the end of 2023, only 214,000 of them had secured employment within the country (20%). A possible

explanation is that every month they receive generous welfare payments—higher than the support other refugees and asylum seekers receive—ranging from €563 per adult to €471 per child. Germany also covers expenses for health insurance and housing, including rent and heating. Furthermore, financial assistance is provided for home furnishings and school supplies. Other factors include the complexity and time-consuming process of verifying and recognizing their professional qualifications, academic degrees, and doctorates, as well as the challenge of mastering the German language. In response to the low employment rate among Ukrainian refugees, the German government initiated a pilot program called "Job Turbo," which allows individuals to learn German while simultaneously engaging in employment. Additionally, 65% of the adult Ukrainian war refugees are women, many of whom arrived as single parents with approximately 350,000 children and young people. Securing childcare has proven challenging, as daycare centers, kindergartens, and schools are grappling with severe staff shortages (Deutsche Welle, 2024).

Poland stands out as the most attractive country in the European Union for Ukrainian refugees who want to become entrepreneurs. According to data from the Central Registration and Information on Economic Activity (CEIDG), over 44,500 Ukrainian companies commenced business activities in 2022-2023. In 2023, Ukrainian citizens accounted for 9.4% of all new businesses established in Poland. Ukrainian companies in Poland have a strong presence in various industries, with significant dominance in sectors like construction (24%), information and communication (18%), and other service activities (14%). This phenomenon can be explained by the financial relief and preferential rates offered by the Social Insurance Institution for the first two

years, as well as more simplified procedures for establishing businesses compared to other European countries. A notable trend is the involvement of women in Ukrainian businesses operating in Poland, with approximately 37% of these companies owned by Ukrainian women. Although this proportion experienced a slight decline in 2023 compared to the previous year, it remains higher than the share of companies founded by Polish women, which stands at 34%. It's worth noting that following the outbreak of the war, there was a significant increase in the number of businesses founded by Ukrainian women, peaking in July 2023 (Trade.gov.pl, 2024). Additionally, in April 2024, the Ministry of Finance of Poland reduced the VAT tax rate from 23% to 8% for various services, including beauty services, where many Ukrainian women are employed. This change is expected to further incentivize Ukrainian women to become entrepreneurs in Poland (Visit Ukraine, 2024).

As mentioned before, the COVID-19 pandemic left a lasting imprint on national labor markets, amplifying pre-existing shortages and bottlenecks. Within this challenging context, the European Union prioritized the attraction and retention of qualified migrant workers as a critical objective, particularly in light of the aging working population across the EU.

In 2021, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted the recommendations proposed in 2016 by the European Commission regarding the EU Blue Card Directive. The EU Blue Card is a residence and work permit aimed at attracting highly qualified non-EU nationals across 25 EU countries to contribute to the EU's labor market. The objective of this new directive is to simplify procedures, expand eligibility criteria, and strengthen

the rights of EU Blue Card holders. In 2022, only 82,000 highly qualified non-EU workers successfully applied for and received an EU Blue Card. Among these, the majority were issued in four EU countries: Germany (63,242, comprising 77.3% of the total), Poland (4,831, accounting for 6.0%), Lithuania (3,924, making up 4.8%), and France (3,876, representing 4.7%). The top five countries whose citizens were granted the most EU Blue Cards in 2022 were India, Russia, Belarus, Turkey, and Iraq (Eurostat, 2023).

Key revisions introduced to the EU Blue Card Directive include (EU Blue Card, n.d.):

- ***Family reunification*** - To attract and retain highly skilled workers from non-EU countries, the EU Blue Card program now allows for the reunification of family members with EU Blue Card holders. This provision enables family members to accompany the cardholder and gain access to the EU labor market;
- ***Reduced work contract duration*** - The minimum duration of the work contract required for obtaining an EU Blue Card has been shortened to 6 months from the previous 12 months, offering greater flexibility for employers and employees alike;
- ***Streamlined residence requirements*** - Prospective migrants now need to spend only 12 months in their initial Member State before being eligible to reside in another, down from the previous 18 months, facilitating intra-EU mobility;
- ***Enhanced mobility rights*** - EU Blue Card holders are now permitted to work for up to 90 days in other Member States without the need for additional work permits, promoting cross-border labor mobility;

- ***Extended validity period*** - The standard validity period of the EU Blue Card has been extended to at least 24 months or the length of the contract plus three months, providing greater stability for migrants and their families;
- ***Accelerated decision-making Process*** - The time frame for receiving a decision on the EU Blue Card application has been significantly reduced to 60 days, with a maximum of 30 days for applications submitted by 'recognized employers,' ensuring a more efficient process;
- ***Revised salary thresholds*** - Salary requirements have been adjusted to a range between 100% and 160% of the average gross annual salary in the member state of employment, offering a more balanced approach to wage requirements;
- ***Recognition of professional experience*** - Professional experience can now serve as an alternative qualification, particularly in the ICT sector, where three years of relevant work experience within the past seven years can substitute for a diploma;
- ***Expanded rights for blue card holders*** - Blue Card holders are now permitted to engage in self-employed activities alongside their primary profession, providing greater opportunities for entrepreneurship.

In April 2022, the Commission took a significant step forward with the introduction of the 'Skills and Talent Package.' This forward-thinking initiative recognizes the importance of sustainable EU legal migration in not only attracting talent but also addressing the demographic challenge posed by the aging workforce. By facilitating the EU's transition toward a greener and more digital economy, this package acknowledges the urgent need for additional labor and new skills across various sectors (COM/2022/657).

First of all, to enhance the efficiency of legal pathways to the EU, the Commission proposed revising two existing Directives: the Single Permit Directive and the Long-Term Residents Directive. The Single Permit Directive (2011/98/EU), adopted in 2011, establishes a common procedure for issuing single permits, combining residence and work permits into one document for non-EU citizens seeking employment in the EU. It also guarantees equality in treatment between third-country workers and nationals of the destination Member State, ensuring both groups enjoy equivalent working conditions and access to social security benefits. It stands as a key component of the EU's labor migration legislation. The Long-Term Residents Directive (2003/109/EC), adopted in 2003, grants a permanent and secure residence status for third-country nationals who have lived in an EU Member State for 5 years, and provides additional rights, such as the right to family reunification, allowing long-term residents to bring their family members to join them in the EU.

However, both pieces of legislation have fallen short of their intended goals. The Single Permit Directive has not fully simplified admission procedures for all non-EU workers, as Member States often prioritize their national migration schemes. For example, by the end of 2022, a total of 27.3

million individuals from non-EU countries were residing in an EU Member State, but only 3.6 million non-EU citizens acquired the right to both reside and work in the EU through the single permit administrative procedure (Eurostat, 2023). Similarly, the Long-Term Residents Directive remains underutilized by Member States and lacks provisions for effective intra-EU mobility. In response, the Commission has proposed a comprehensive revision of both Directives. The main aims are to enhance procedural efficiency, promote swifter processes, bolster intra-EU mobility for non-EU nationals already residing and working in the EU, foster deeper integration, and mitigate labor exploitation.

On 13 March 2024, the European Parliament endorsed the political agreement for a revised Single Permit Directive, and on 12 April 2024, the Council of the EU gave its formal approval (Sofia Globe, 2024). EU Member States will have two years from the directive's entry into force to implement the changes into their national laws. Key revisions to the Single Permit Directive include (European Commission, 2022):

- A requirement for Member States to accept applications submitted either within their territory or from a third country;
- Within a maximum period of 4 months, Member States must make a decision regarding the granting of the Single Permit and will now be required to issue a visa when the conditions of the Single Permit are fulfilled;
- The Single Permit would no longer be tied to a single employer, allowing the holder to switch employers without losing the permit's validity. This change not only enhances mobility within the labor

market but also decreases migrant workers' reliance on a single employer, thereby reducing their vulnerability to labor exploitation. However, EU countries may stipulate a minimum period during which the Single Permit holder must work for the initial employer;

- The Single Permit remains valid in the event of unemployment for a minimum of three months without being withdrawn, as opposed to two months;
- New provisions regarding penalties for employers who violate working conditions, freedom of association, and access to social security benefits, along with the introduction of complaint mechanisms, are to be implemented.

Currently, no political agreement has been reached regarding the Long-Term Residents Permit. The main changes proposed by the European Commission include (European Commission, 2022):

- The necessary 5-year residency period can be cumulative across various Member States, given that at least two years of uninterrupted residency have been completed in the Member State of application. Furthermore, periods of residency under temporary and national protection, as well as time spent as a student, should also be taken into account;
- Enhanced family reunification rights without integration requirements, granting family members full access to employment opportunities. Moreover, children born in the EU to long-term residents can immediately acquire residency status. Also, migrants will enjoy equal rights as nationals when acquiring private housing.

The Skills and Talent Package also reiterated the desire to accelerate the implementation of the Talent Partnerships, first announced in 2021. The Talent Partnerships initiative, a key component of the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, aims to address labor market needs in a mutually beneficial manner for EU Member States and partner states, boosting international labor mobility and skills and talent development for students, graduates, and skilled workers from third countries.

Various types of mobility schemes for work or training, including vocational training and professional exchange schemes, will be implemented. These mobility schemes can be temporary, long-term, or circular in nature, as agreed by both sides. Partner countries will also receive capacity-building support in areas like technical and vocational education and training, contributing to skills development for better labor market integration. Currently active with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, these Talent Partnerships aim to promote legal pathways to the EU, reduce irregular migration, and better assist returning migrants (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, n.d.).

In April 2022, the European Commission also proposed creating the EU Talent Pool, the first EU-wide platform and matching tool designed to boost the EU's appeal to non-EU nationals and aid EU employers in overcoming talent shortages in the labor market. In November 2023, the Commission provided further details on the EU Talent Pool as part of the "Skills and Talent Mobility Package" (COM(2023)715). This innovative platform serves as a centralized hub where jobseekers residing outside the EU can showcase their

talents and qualifications, while EU employers can advertise their job vacancies.

One key feature of the EU Talent Pool is its emphasis on transparency and accessibility. Jobseekers from non-EU countries can create detailed profiles highlighting their skills, work experience, and language proficiency, providing employers with valuable insights into their capabilities. Similarly, EU employers can specify their requirements and expectations for each vacancy, ensuring a tailored approach to recruitment.

Participation in the EU Talent Pool is voluntary for Member States, allowing flexibility and adaptation to national contexts. National Contact Points established in participating Member States play a crucial role in managing the platform and providing support to users. This decentralized approach empowers Member States to leverage the Talent Pool according to their specific needs and priorities.

The EU Talent Pool also incorporates tools to facilitate matching between jobseekers and employers, streamlining the recruitment process. Filters and a semi-automated matching tool help both parties identify suitable matches efficiently. Additionally, the platform provides clear information on recruitment and immigration rules, qualification recognition, and working conditions, ensuring transparency and fairness. Ethical recruitment practices are paramount within the EU Talent Pool. Employers must comply with Union and national laws, guaranteeing fair treatment and protection for recruited individuals. Breaches of these regulations may result in suspension from the platform, underscoring the EU's commitment to upholding standards of integrity and fairness.

Furthermore, the EU Talent Pool aligns with broader EU initiatives aimed at addressing labor market challenges and promoting legal migration pathways. By targeting occupations facing shortages in the EU job market, the Talent Pool supports efforts to fill critical skill gaps and boost economic growth. It also complements the Talent Partnerships initiative. Jobseekers who participated in Talent Partnerships can register on the platform with a 'Talent Partnership pass,' certifying their skills and enhancing their visibility to employers in participating Member States.

In response to the urgent need to support individuals displaced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Commission initiated the EU Talent Pool Pilot in October 2022. This pilot, derived from the original concept proposed in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, is a temporary online job-search tool aimed at assisting temporary protection beneficiaries from Ukraine. Its primary objective is to identify and map the skills and qualifications of these individuals and facilitate their matching with potential employers across seven participating Member States (Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain). Accessible via the European Labour Authority's EURES portal, the pilot initiative seeks to aid in the labor market integration of those fleeing Ukraine's invasion (EURES, n.d.).

Apart from Ukrainian refugees, the EU Talent Pool serves exclusively as a platform for jobseekers from third countries residing outside the EU. While the Commission is actively engaged in supporting the integration of third-country nationals into EU society, those legally residing in the EU already benefit from various tools, including EURES and assistance from Public Employment Services.

EURES, a collaborative network between the European Commission, the European Labour Authority (ELA), national public employment services, and other partners, offers access to nearly 4 million job vacancies. Employers can efficiently search for candidates through a comprehensive CV database, supported by approximately 1,000 EURES Advisers offering guidance throughout the recruitment process (EURES, n.d.). Non-EU citizens residing in the EU, including refugees and migrants, also have access to the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals. This tool assists service providers in conducting early assessments during interviews, enabling the creation of detailed skills profiles. These profiles are beneficial for further assessing skills, offering guidance and support, identifying opportunities for upskilling or additional education, and streamlining job searching and matching processes by showcasing relevant skills and qualifications (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, n.d.).

To ensure the successful integration of foreign talent already present in the country, the streamlined validation of skills and recognition of qualifications are vital. In November 2023, the Commission adopted a recommendation on the recognition of qualifications for third-country nationals as part of the Skills and Talent Mobility Package. This recommendation aims to simplify and expedite the recognition process, granting access to regulated professions, employment visas, and learning programs.

Effective recognition of skills and qualifications is essential for talent attraction and recruitment, mitigating issues such as "brain drain," where individuals, especially women, are employed below their qualification level.

Complex recognition procedures can deter third-country nationals from seeking employment opportunities, highlighting the importance of simplifying these processes. The Commission's recommendation proposes a systematic approach to enhancing national recognition services, focusing on capacity building, cooperation with third countries, and user-friendly procedures. These measures aim to shorten processing times, reduce costs, simplify translation and authentication processes, and ultimately improve the efficiency of recognition processes without compromising professional standards.

Furthermore, as part of the Skills and Talent Mobility Package announced in November 2023, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation titled "Europe on the Move – Learning Mobility Opportunities for Everyone" as a pivotal initiative within the European Education Area (EEA). This proposal aims to integrate learning mobility into all education and training pathways, presenting significant opportunities for migrant integration into the labor market, particularly among young migrants, through the development of important skills, including leadership and management skills (Erasmus+, 2023).

At its core, the proposal seeks to increase the accessibility of learning periods abroad, aiming to boost the share of individuals in the EU benefiting from such experiences. It also endeavors to enhance inclusivity by increasing the participation of people with fewer opportunities, including migrants, in learning mobility programs. By promoting learning mobility as an integral aspect of education and training across various sectors, such as higher education, vocational education and training (VET), school education, adult

education, and youth exchanges, the proposal creates avenues for migrants to access diverse educational opportunities.

Moreover, the proposal addresses barriers to mobility, such as language proficiency and recognition of learning outcomes, thereby facilitating the integration of migrants into the labor market. By promoting outreach and awareness, enhancing language learning, and facilitating the transition to the labor market, the proposal equips migrants with the necessary skills and competencies to succeed professionally. Additionally, the emphasis on digital tools and environmentally sustainable mobility aligns with modern learning trends, offering innovative solutions that can empower migrants to access educational opportunities more readily (COM(2023)715).

The proposal sets ambitious targets for 2030, including ensuring that at least 25% of graduates in higher education experience learning mobility, up from the current target of 20%; facilitating learning mobility for at least 15% of vocational learners, doubling the previous target set for 2025; ensuring that at least 20% of all learners benefiting from learning mobility are individuals with fewer opportunities, including young migrants. Furthermore, it aims to promote the EU as an attractive learning destination for talent from third countries, aligning with the geopolitical dimension of the European Education Area (Erasmus+, 2023).

While there isn't a single comprehensive EU-wide program specifically for supporting and financing migrant entrepreneurs, EU member states have access to the aforementioned funds to finance policies, programs, and projects for integrating migrants into the labor market and supporting entrepreneurship,

both financially and through the development of specific skills, including leadership and management skills. Many EU countries offer start-up and entrepreneur visas to attract immigrants with in-demand skills and experiences, such as the Red-White-Red Card for Startup Founders in Austria, the D-Visa in Germany, the STEP Start-up Entrepreneur Programme in Ireland, the French Tech Visa, and the Dutch Startup Visa (Mayes, 2023).

Likewise, some European states implement training or non-reimbursable financing programs to support entrepreneurs, which migrants residing in these states can apply for, subject to certain criteria. For example, Germany offers various programs and initiatives to support entrepreneurs, including migrants. The EXIST program provides funding for startups launched by university graduates, including foreign students. Additionally, the "Gründerzuschuss" (Startup Grant) offers financial support to individuals who are unemployed and wish to start their own business. Furthermore, the Migrant Accelerator program provides workshops and personalized mentoring delivered by a diverse group of mentors, mirroring the diversity of the entrepreneurs it serves. This approach sets a precedent for other immigrant entrepreneurship initiatives, as it is led by individuals from the targeted communities, with most frontline workers also belonging to these communities. This model ensures that the support provided is both relevant and appealing to potential participants (European Commission/OECD, 2023).

As mentioned previously, the European Union places great importance on the integration of young people into society through equal access to jobs, education, and entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for young people who

are neither in employment nor in education or training, and young people from disadvantaged groups, such as migrants.

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee, established as a commitment by all EU Member States, guarantees that young individuals under the age of 30 receive a high-quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. This initiative, outlined in a Council Recommendation of October 2020, is a pivotal component of the broader Youth Employment Support package proposed by the European Commission. Through this comprehensive framework, EU countries are dedicated to providing tailored support and opportunities to empower young people, including career guidance, skills development, job search assistance, vocational training, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, n.d.).

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ program offers invaluable support to migrants, particularly young migrants, in integrating into labor markets and pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. It facilitates mobility exchanges, providing opportunities for migrants to study, train, or gain work experience abroad. Through these experiences, migrants can improve language skills and acquire new qualifications, enhancing their employability and integration prospects.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is part of the broader Erasmus+ program. It offers a unique opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs, including young migrants, to gain invaluable experience and mentorship in starting their own businesses. Through this program, aspiring entrepreneurs are matched with experienced business owners in another EU country, allowing them to

learn from their expertise and gain practical insights into running a successful venture. This cross-border exchange not only fosters entrepreneurship skills, such as inclusive leadership and management skills, but also promotes cultural exchange and networking opportunities (Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, n.d.).

The Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy (YEPA), initiated by the EU and OECD, also supports young entrepreneurs, including young migrants, by engaging them in policy discussions and advocacy. Through workshops, mentorship, and networking opportunities, YEPA equips young entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to thrive in the business world while advocating for youth-friendly policies that support entrepreneurship (YEPA, n.d.).

The section highlights the European Union's commitment to supporting migrants and refugees, especially young people, in their efforts to become entrepreneurs and integrate more successfully into the labor market. Through a range of initiatives, such as specialized funding programs, vocational training, entrepreneurship mentoring, and policies like the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, the EU actively works to remove barriers that hinder access to employment and self-employment opportunities. By providing financial assistance, facilitating skill development, and offering support for leadership and management capabilities, the EU aims to empower migrants and refugees to achieve economic independence. In doing so, the EU fosters social inclusion, encourages active participation in local economies, and helps these individuals contribute to the overall growth and competitiveness of European societies.

V.4. Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants: A Comparative Study of Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania

This subchapter examines the entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges facing young migrants in Malta, Italy, the Maldives, and Romania, exploring the mechanisms these countries have put in place to facilitate migrant entrepreneurship and labor market integration. Additionally, the chapter considers the situation of refugees, particularly Ukrainian refugees, within the European context and how these countries support their entrepreneurial endeavors.

V.4.1. Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Malta

Malta's geographic location and size make it a unique case in the context of migration and entrepreneurship. Over the last decade, the country has experienced a steady influx of migrants. According to Eurostat's Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, as of 1 January 2023, there were about 94,800 third-country nationals (TCNs), representing 17.5% of the population, and another 42,600 EU citizens (7.9%) living in Malta at the time (Eurostat, 2024).

In Malta, the self-employment rate for non-EU nationals has grown steadily, reflecting the broader increase in labor force participation. By 2023, Malta had one of the highest employment rates for non-EU citizens in the EU at 87.4%, with around 10% of these individuals engaged in self-employment (Eurostat, 2024). Popular sectors for non-EU entrepreneurs include

construction, retail, hospitality, and small services. However, strict regulations apply to third-country nationals, such as the requirement to invest at least €500,000 to qualify for self-employed status. Despite these barriers, long-term residents, refugees, and those with subsidiary protection or asylum status may be exempt from such requirements (Camilleri, 2023).

Malta has been proactive in fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, particularly for its migrant population. The government, along with EU-backed programs, has implemented a range of initiatives designed to encourage entrepreneurship and ease the integration of migrants and refugees into the labor market.

JobsPlus, Malta's national employment agency, plays a crucial role in helping migrants access the labor market and become entrepreneurs. The agency not only offers job placement services but also provides entrepreneurship training programs tailored to migrants. The training focuses on essential skills such as business planning, marketing, and financial management. In collaboration with EU-funded programs, JobsPlus also offers mentorship opportunities and financial assistance to help migrants transition into entrepreneurial ventures (English in Malta, n.d.).

For example, in 2022, JobsPlus introduced a training allowance under the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF), which provided supported employment services for migrants. This measure aims to increase migrants' participation in basic language training for employment. In November 2022, under the same AMIF project, JobsPlus introduced a work exposure initiative offering up to 120 hours of hands-on training with an employer over a

minimum of three weeks to help migrants transition into employment (Eurostat, EMN, 2023).

The Start in Malta initiative is another significant effort aimed at simplifying the process of business registration for migrants. This program provides comprehensive mentorship to help young entrepreneurs navigate the complex business regulations in Malta, including understanding taxation, employment law, and local market dynamics. In addition to mentoring, the initiative covers critical areas such as financial literacy, marketing strategies, and networking. These services are particularly beneficial for young migrant entrepreneurs, who often lack a deep understanding of the Maltese business environment (Start in Malta, n.d.).

The Malta MicroInvest Scheme, managed by Malta Enterprise, is designed to support young migrant entrepreneurs by providing tax credits on eligible business expenses. Migrants can benefit from tax credits of up to 45% on costs such as equipment purchases, business premises refurbishment, and technology investments, with a higher credit of 65% available for female-owned businesses or those based in Gozo. This makes it easier for migrant entrepreneurs, who often face financial barriers, to start and grow their ventures. The scheme covers up to €50,000 in tax credits per business, supporting various sectors like retail, hospitality, and construction, where many migrant entrepreneurs operate. By simplifying the application process and offering inclusive support, the scheme encourages entrepreneurship among migrants, including those who are long-term residents or refugees, allowing them to formalize and expand their businesses. It is a key part of Malta's efforts

to foster inclusive economic growth, especially for underrepresented groups like migrant women (Malta Enterprise, n.d.).

There are a number of business incubation centres offered by the government at various entities and through educational institutions. The MITA Innovation Hub, part of the Malta Information Technology Agency, supports students, start-ups, and innovators by transforming ideas into products or services through digital technologies. It supports start-ups by identifying problems that require innovative solutions and funds the start-up with the best proposition (European Commission, n.d.).

In 2014, MCAST (The Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology) established the MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre in collaboration with Malta Enterprise and the Kordin Business Incubation Centre (KBIC). This facility provides MCAST students and alumni with entrepreneurial potential access to space within KBIC to develop and launch their business ideas (MCAST, n.d.). Similarly, the University of Malta's Takeoff Programme functions as a business accelerator and incubator, offering tailored support and access to the Takeoff Seed Fund Award, which distributes €100,000 between start-ups and academic ventures to aid their next phase toward commercialization (TakeOff, n.d.).

In addition to these initiatives, the Ministry for Economy, Investment, and Small Business, in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment, issues an annual scheme called Entrepreneurship through Education. This scheme offers grants to secondary education institutions to fund projects related to entrepreneurship, aiming to promote entrepreneurial qualities through education (European Commission, n.d.).

Malta, with its supportive environment for business and entrepreneurship, has seen significant contributions from migrant entrepreneurs. However, despite this framework, young migrant entrepreneurs still face several challenges that impact their ability to thrive in the Maltese business landscape. These challenges range from legal and financial obstacles to language barriers and cultural integration issues.

One of the most significant challenges for young migrant entrepreneurs in Malta is the difficulty in obtaining long-term residence permits. Without permanent residency, migrants are often considered higher-risk borrowers by local financial institutions. This creates a substantial barrier to accessing traditional forms of capital, such as bank loans, which are essential for starting or expanding a business.

Many financial institutions require permanent residency status to grant loans, leaving migrants with limited options for financing their ventures. As a result, many young migrant entrepreneurs must rely on personal savings or informal financial networks, which may not be sufficient for scaling their businesses. The lack of access to formal credit systems limits growth opportunities and puts migrant businesses at a disadvantage compared to their local counterparts.

The bureaucratic processes involved in setting up a business in Malta are another significant hurdle for migrant entrepreneurs, especially those who are unfamiliar with local regulations. Although initiatives like Start in Malta have been established to simplify the business registration process for migrants, navigating Malta's legal and financial systems can still be overwhelming. The

complexity of tax regulations, employment laws, and permit requirements can create significant delays and increased costs for migrant entrepreneurs.

Young migrants, in particular, may lack the experience and knowledge to effectively navigate these challenges, leading to frustration and potential legal issues. While some mentorship programs and advisory services are available, they may not always be comprehensive or accessible enough to fully support all migrant entrepreneurs in overcoming these bureaucratic obstacles.

Access to financing is a major challenge for young migrant entrepreneurs in Malta. As mentioned, without long-term residence permits, it is difficult for migrants to secure loans from banks and other financial institutions. Even when financing options are available, they often come with higher interest rates or stricter conditions for migrants, making it difficult for them to raise the necessary capital to start or grow a business.

In addition, migrant entrepreneurs may face challenges in understanding and accessing the various financial support programs that are available. Programs such as JobsPlus and EU-funded initiatives provide some financial assistance, but awareness of these programs and the ability to navigate their requirements can be a barrier. This is especially true for younger migrants who may not have extensive business networks or experience in accessing such resources.

While English is widely spoken in Malta, the lack of fluency in Maltese can still be a challenge for deeper integration into local business communities. Language barriers may prevent young migrant entrepreneurs from fully understanding legal contracts, negotiating business deals, or accessing certain government services. Although some programs offer language support, this

does not fully resolve the issue, as integration into local culture and business practices often requires a deeper understanding of both languages.

Cultural differences can also hinder young migrant entrepreneurs from effectively engaging with local markets and clients. The ways in which business is conducted in Malta may differ from the practices migrants are accustomed to, creating challenges in areas such as customer relations, marketing strategies, and local market expectations. These cultural barriers can limit the ability of young migrants to expand their customer base or establish partnerships with local businesses.

Building a strong business network is essential for success, but many young migrant entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing local networks that can provide mentorship, partnerships, and investment opportunities. Migrants often lack established connections within the Maltese business community, which can make it difficult to find suppliers, business partners, or mentors who can offer guidance and support.

While some initiatives aim to provide networking opportunities for migrants, these are often limited in scope or may not be well-known among the migrant community. Without a robust local network, young migrant entrepreneurs may find it difficult to expand their businesses or access critical resources needed for growth.

Discrimination and social exclusion remain challenges for migrant entrepreneurs in Malta, particularly for those from non-EU countries. Although Malta has a diverse population, young migrants may still face biases that affect their ability to build trust with customers, suppliers, or potential investors. This

can be especially challenging for those who operate in sectors traditionally dominated by local entrepreneurs, such as retail or hospitality.

Social exclusion can also manifest in the form of limited opportunities to participate in mainstream business events or associations, which can further isolate young migrant entrepreneurs from the broader business community. This exclusion can hinder their ability to network, learn, and grow their businesses effectively.

The Maltese government has also implemented specific initiatives aimed at supporting refugees, including those from Ukraine. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has resulted in an influx of refugees to Malta, with approximately 2,500 Ukrainians present as of July 2024, according to UNHCR. In collaboration with NGOs and EU-funded programs, the Maltese government has created specialized integration programs tailored to refugees.

These initiatives provide assistance in areas such as legal documentation, housing, and healthcare. Importantly, they also offer entrepreneurial support, helping refugees to start their businesses and become financially independent. Micro-loans, mentorship, and access to business training courses are key elements of these programs, enabling refugees to transition from dependency on aid to self-sufficiency through entrepreneurship.

The integration of Ukrainian refugees into the entrepreneurial landscape is facilitated by partnerships between government agencies and NGOs, such as the Malta Refugee Council. These partnerships offer workshops, networking events, and training opportunities designed to equip refugees with the skills they need to succeed in the Maltese market.

Malta's efforts to promote entrepreneurship among young migrants and refugees have been robust and multifaceted. Through a combination of government programs, EU-backed initiatives, and NGO support, young migrants are increasingly becoming key contributors to the island's economy. While challenges such as access to capital and bureaucratic hurdles persist, the entrepreneurial landscape for migrants is steadily improving. The Maltese government's continued focus on creating an inclusive and supportive environment for migrants ensures that they not only integrate into the labor market but also thrive as entrepreneurs.

V.4.2. Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Italy

Italy, home to one of the largest migrant populations in Europe, has cultivated a dynamic environment where migrant entrepreneurship thrives. According to Eurostat's Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, as of 1 January 2023, there were about 3.7 million third-country nationals (TCNs), representing 6.4% of the population, and another 1.4 million EU citizens (2.4%) living in Italy at that time (Eurostat, 2024).

The number of businesses run by Italians declined between 2011 and 2022, while businesses managed by migrants grew significantly during the same period, according to the report titled *Immigration and Entrepreneurship in Italy and in Europe*, conducted by the research center IDOS in collaboration with CNA, the National Confederation of Craftsmanship and Small and Medium-sized Companies (InfoMigrants, 2024). The report reveals a remarkable 42.7% growth in businesses managed by migrants from 2011 to 2022, compared to a 5% decline in businesses managed by Italians. By the end

of 2022, the total number of businesses managed by migrants had reached 647,797, constituting 10.8% of the national total, up from 7.4% in 2011.

The study highlights that migrant-run businesses are predominantly located in central and northern regions (77.3%), though they are also present in the South. Lombardy and Lazio stand out as the epicenters of migrant enterprises, with 124,000 and 81,000 businesses, respectively. Most migrant-managed businesses focus on services, which make up 59% of the total, followed by retail (31.8%) and construction (23.9%).

The study also found that 82% of immigrant business owners come from non-EU countries, primarily Morocco (63,000) and China (52,000). Additionally, migrant women represent a significant and growing component of entrepreneurship, making up 24.6% of the total, with most working in the service sector. The research further noted that 75.8% of immigrant entrepreneurs were under the age of 50, highlighting the youthfulness of the migrant entrepreneurial community.

Italy recognizes the importance of migrant entrepreneurship and has introduced several initiatives to support young people and migrants in starting businesses. These programs offer financial assistance, mentorship, and legal support, creating an enabling environment for migrants to integrate into the labor market and contribute to economic growth.

Invitalia, Italy's National Agency for Economic Development, is dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship, economic growth, and job creation across the country. The agency plays a pivotal role in supporting the establishment of startups, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, and helping individuals who face barriers to traditional employment. Invitalia's

focus includes encouraging young entrepreneurs, women, and migrants to launch and grow their businesses by providing them with financial backing, advisory services, and strategic guidance. Through various tailored programs, Invitalia aims to reduce the hurdles often encountered by aspiring entrepreneurs, such as access to funding and navigating Italy's legal and regulatory frameworks (Invitalia, n.d.).

One of Invitalia's key programs, ON - Oltre Nuove Imprese a Tasso Zero (ON - Beyond New Zero Rate Businesses), is designed to support young entrepreneurs under the age of 35, as well as women of all ages, including migrants. This initiative offers zero-interest loans to cover up to 90% of the startup costs for eligible businesses. The goal is to stimulate economic growth and job creation by removing financial barriers that often prevent young and migrant entrepreneurs from starting their ventures. In addition to financial support, entrepreneurs can access mentoring services to help them with business planning, market strategy, and operational management.

For migrants, this program is particularly beneficial as it removes the need for personal collateral, which is a common hurdle for those new to Italy. It also offers consultancy services, which guide migrant entrepreneurs through the often complex legal and business environment in the country, helping them overcome bureaucratic challenges and thrive in Italy's entrepreneurial landscape (Invitalia, n.d.).

Another important Invitalia initiative is Selfiemployment, which targets young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), including migrants. It is part of the Youth Guarantee Program, under the supervision of the National Agency for Active Labor Policies (ANPAL). The

program provides interest-free microloans, ranging from €5,000 to €50,000, to help young entrepreneurs launch small businesses. Unlike traditional loans, Selfiemployment does not require personal collateral or guarantors, making it accessible to migrant entrepreneurs who may lack the assets typically demanded by banks.

In addition to financial support, Selfiemployment offers business training and mentoring to help young entrepreneurs develop their business plans and effectively manage their operations. This program is particularly useful for young migrants who are facing unemployment or are not involved in formal education, as it provides them with a pathway to financial independence through entrepreneurship. The coaching provided through the program ensures that these entrepreneurs receive the guidance they need to succeed, even if they have limited prior business experience (Invitalia, n.d.).

For migrants interested in high-tech or innovation-driven businesses, Smart&Start Italia provides essential support. This program is designed to help innovative startups, including those founded by migrants, by providing both financial assistance and mentorship. Startups that focus on technology, green energy, biotechnology, and other innovative sectors can receive up to 80% of their project costs through a combination of grants and loans, which can rise to 90% if the startup is made up entirely of women and/or young people under 36.

In addition to funding, Smart&Start Italia provides mentoring on business scaling, technological innovation, and international market expansion. For highly skilled migrants or those with innovative business ideas, this program provides access to Italy's vibrant startup ecosystem, including incubators, accelerators, and potential investors. The program is especially

beneficial for migrant entrepreneurs who want to launch tech-focused startups but may lack the necessary financial resources or industry connections (Invitalia, n.d.).

Resto al Sud is another Invitalia initiative that focuses on encouraging entrepreneurship in Italy's southern regions, which tend to have higher concentrations of migrant populations. This program offers significant support for entrepreneurs who wish to start businesses in southern Italy. Entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 55, including migrants, can access both non-repayable grants and low-interest loans to cover startup costs. The program aims to revitalize the economy in southern Italy by providing financial incentives to individuals willing to create businesses in the area. Migrants benefit from this program as it offers comprehensive funding for startups, eliminating one of the most common barriers faced by new entrepreneurs. The program also offers support for businesses across a wide range of sectors, including services, agriculture, and manufacturing, providing flexibility for entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds and skills.

For migrant entrepreneurs interested in the cultural and creative industries, Cultura Crea 2.0 offers financial and technical support. This program promotes entrepreneurship in areas such as tourism, heritage conservation, and cultural services—sectors that often attract migrants who bring diverse cultural perspectives. Cultura Crea provides grants and loans of up to €500,000 to finance cultural and creative projects, as well as mentoring services to help entrepreneurs manage and grow their businesses. The program is especially beneficial for migrant entrepreneurs who want to build businesses that celebrate their cultural heritage or contribute to Italy's rich cultural

landscape, particularly in regions such as Basilicata, Campania, Puglia, Calabria, and Sicily. By supporting entrepreneurs in this sector, Cultura Crea encourages diversity and helps integrate migrants into the local economy through cultural entrepreneurship (Invitalia, n.d.).

The Italia Startup Visa is a program designed to attract non-EU entrepreneurs who want to start innovative businesses in Italy, particularly in high-tech sectors like IT, biotech, and green energy. The visa simplifies the process for non-EU citizens, enabling them to easily obtain work visas and establish or join startups in Italy. The program's goal is to foster innovation and economic growth by bringing international talent into the country. Applicants need to demonstrate a strong, innovative business idea and have at least €50,000 in financial resources to support their startup. They must also submit a business plan, which is evaluated by a technical committee. The application process is fully online, and decisions are typically made within 30 days. If approved, entrepreneurs receive a two-year renewable visa and gain access to Italy's startup ecosystem, including incubators, accelerators, and funding opportunities (Italia Startup Visa, n.d.).

Despite these supportive initiatives, migrants can face a number of challenges in establishing and growing their businesses. These challenges are particularly pronounced for young migrants.

One of the most significant challenges for migrant entrepreneurs in Italy is the complexity of the country's legal and regulatory framework. Navigating the intricate bureaucratic processes, from acquiring necessary permits to setting up a business, can be overwhelming for anyone, but is particularly difficult for migrants unfamiliar with Italian laws. Young migrants,

who may lack experience in dealing with administrative procedures, often find these hurdles especially daunting.

The process of business registration, securing licenses, and complying with tax regulations can be time-consuming and costly. In some cases, young migrants might not fully understand these procedures due to language barriers or limited access to legal advice. Moreover, acquiring long-term residency permits or legal status can be a major obstacle, as it affects the ability to access bank loans, insurance, and other essential business services.

Another major challenge for young migrant entrepreneurs is limited access to financial resources. Many migrants, particularly those who have recently arrived in Italy, struggle to secure loans from traditional banks due to a lack of credit history or collateral. Young migrants, often without substantial personal savings or assets, are at a particular disadvantage when trying to finance their business ventures.

Even though programs like Selfiemployment and Invitalia's ON - Oltre Nuove Imprese a Tasso Zero offer interest-free loans, they are often not sufficient to cover the entire costs of starting and growing a business. Additionally, the requirements for obtaining these loans, such as providing a detailed business plan and proof of financial viability, can be difficult for inexperienced entrepreneurs to meet. Migrants also face higher interest rates from traditional financial institutions due to perceived risk factors related to their immigration status or lack of collateral.

Language and cultural differences present significant obstacles for migrant entrepreneurs, particularly young migrants who are still adapting to life in Italy. Proficiency in Italian is essential not only for navigating legal and

regulatory processes but also for networking, marketing, and building relationships with clients, suppliers, and business partners. Without fluency in Italian, young migrant entrepreneurs may struggle to effectively communicate with local authorities, understand regulations, or negotiate favorable business deals.

Cultural differences can also impact the success of migrant-owned businesses. Young migrant entrepreneurs often bring innovative business ideas influenced by their home countries, but these may not always align with local market expectations. Understanding consumer behavior, building a customer base, and tailoring products or services to meet Italian market demands can be challenging for those unfamiliar with the country's business culture.

Business success is often influenced by access to networks and support systems, including mentors, investors, and business communities. For young migrants, these networks are typically underdeveloped, which can isolate them from potential opportunities for growth, partnerships, and investment. Migrants may lack connections within local business communities, making it harder to gain visibility, find suppliers, or establish client relationships.

Many young migrants also experience difficulty accessing mentorship or professional guidance. While programs offer some mentorship opportunities, many young migrant entrepreneurs still face challenges in finding experienced mentors who can guide them through the intricacies of the Italian business landscape.

Discrimination and social exclusion continue to affect migrant entrepreneurs in Italy. Migrants, especially those from non-EU countries or regions such as North Africa and the Middle East, may face biases that limit

their opportunities in business. Young migrant entrepreneurs are often at risk of being perceived as less trustworthy or capable compared to their Italian counterparts, particularly when seeking partnerships or funding. This type of discrimination can manifest in subtle ways, such as exclusion from business networks or difficulties in building customer trust, and may significantly hinder the growth of migrant-owned businesses.

Social exclusion is another barrier, as migrant entrepreneurs may find it difficult to integrate fully into Italian society, which can impact their ability to reach broader markets. Businesses owned by migrants are often concentrated in certain sectors like retail or small-scale services, partly due to these exclusionary dynamics.

Although Italy offers several programs aimed at supporting entrepreneurs, many young migrants are not aware of or able to access these resources. A lack of information, language barriers, and difficulty navigating the application processes can prevent migrant entrepreneurs from taking full advantage of these opportunities.

Furthermore, young migrants may lack access to business training, including financial management, marketing, and business planning skills. Many young entrepreneurs have great business ideas but lack the knowledge and experience to turn those ideas into sustainable ventures. While some initiatives offer training and mentorship, these programs may not always be tailored to the specific needs of young migrants, leaving gaps in critical business skills.

Italy's regional economic disparities further complicate the challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs. Migrants in southern Italy, where economic

opportunities are more limited, may struggle to access the same level of support available in northern regions like Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna. The south, which has a higher concentration of migrant populations, often suffers from higher unemployment rates, fewer business resources, and less access to financial services, making it harder for entrepreneurs to thrive. While initiatives like Resto al Sud aim to address this imbalance, young migrants in the south still face more significant hurdles compared to those in the north.

The Italian government has also implemented specific initiatives aimed at supporting refugees, including those from Ukraine. The recent conflict in Ukraine has led to a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees in Italy. According to UNHCR, as of July 2024, over 170,000 Ukrainian refugees have been resettled in Italy, with many seeking opportunities for economic integration through entrepreneurship. The Italian government, in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations, has implemented specialized support programs to help refugees transition from dependency on aid to self-sufficiency through business ventures.

The National Integration Plan for Refugees is one such initiative that offers a range of services designed to support refugees in starting businesses. This plan includes business management training, language courses (primarily in Italian), and access to financial services. The integration plan recognizes the unique challenges faced by refugees, such as navigating legal systems, securing funding, and understanding market dynamics (European Commission, n.d.).

In Italy, microcredit initiatives have been crucial in supporting refugee entrepreneurs, particularly those from Ukraine. Institutions such as Banca Etica and the Ente Nazionale per il Microcredito (National Microcredit Agency) have

played a key role in providing microloans to refugees who lack access to traditional banking services. These small loans offer the financial foundation needed for refugees to start and grow their own businesses, helping them achieve economic independence.

For Ukrainian refugees, who have been significantly impacted by the ongoing conflict, these microcredit facilities have proven particularly valuable. Many Ukrainian refugees have entered sectors such as retail, hospitality, and personal services, using the financial support from microloans to launch small businesses. This has not only helped them integrate into Italy's economy but has also allowed them to contribute to local communities by creating jobs and services.

Italy, with one of the largest migrant populations in Europe, has seen significant growth in migrant entrepreneurship, especially in regions like Lombardy and Lazio. Between 2011 and 2022, businesses managed by migrants grew by 42.7%, while Italian-run businesses declined. Initiatives by Invitalia and others, such as ON - Oltre Nuove Imprese a Tasso Zero, Selfiemployment, and Smart&Start Italia, offer financial support and mentorship to migrant entrepreneurs, particularly young people. Despite these efforts, young migrants still face challenges such as complex bureaucratic procedures, limited access to financing, language and cultural barriers, and social exclusion. Regional disparities also impact migrants in southern Italy, where fewer resources are available. For Ukrainian refugees, microcredit initiatives have provided essential financial support, helping them start businesses and integrate into Italy's economy. Programs like the National Integration Plan for Refugees offer training and resources to ease this transition.

V.4.3. Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in the Maldives

While the Maldives is globally recognized for its thriving tourism industry, the country has also seen an increase in migrant workers, primarily from South Asia. According to the report *Protecting Migrant Workers in Maldives*, published by the International Labour Organization, there were only 2,422 migrant workers in the Maldives in 1985. However, this number surged to 180,000 by 2020, with an estimated 63,000 being undocumented. The total number of migrant workers is thought to fluctuate between 145,000 and 230,000.

Currently, migrant workers make up a significant portion of the workforce and constitute one-third of the population. The majority of these workers are young men between the ages of 20 and 34, hailing from India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, and they are predominantly employed in low-skilled sectors such as construction, domestic work, and tourism. These industries are essential to the Maldivian economy, but they offer limited opportunities for upward mobility or entrepreneurial ventures. While migrants play a critical role in sustaining these sectors, few transition into entrepreneurship due to the restrictive legal environment governing foreign ownership.

The legal framework in the Maldives, specifically the Maldivian Foreign Investment Law, allows for 100% foreign ownership in some sectors like tourism and construction. However, many sectors, such as manufacturing, transportation and storage, professional and scientific activities, education,

human health and social work, retail, and small-scale services (including food and beverage service activities), remain off-limits to non-Maldivian citizens (Crowe, n.d.). These restrictions prevent migrants from diversifying their business options and confine their entrepreneurial aspirations to highly regulated or limited fields, which can be financially risky and difficult to sustain without local connections.

These legal restrictions are further compounded by the Maldivian government's increasingly stringent approach toward undocumented migrant businesses. In July 2024, the government launched a crackdown on unlicensed businesses run by migrant workers, targeting small-scale operations such as cafés and retail outlets that were being operated illegally without the necessary permits. This initiative was part of a broader effort to ensure compliance with the law and protect local businesses. As a result, several migrant workers were detained, and their businesses were shut down as part of this enforcement drive (Maldives Republic, 2024).

One of the most significant challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs is access to financial resources. Many financial institutions in the Maldives are hesitant to lend to non-citizens, often requiring extensive documentation and high levels of collateral, which migrants are rarely able to provide. Migrants are also excluded from traditional financial services, such as bank loans, making it difficult to gather the necessary capital to start a business. The recent government crackdown on unlicensed businesses exacerbates this issue by further limiting opportunities for informal business activities among migrants.

Without access to formal financing options, many migrants are forced to rely on personal savings or informal financial networks. These limited

resources make it difficult to launch and sustain a business, especially in competitive sectors like tourism, where start-up costs are high and profits uncertain. The lack of access to affordable credit is a major obstacle for young migrants seeking to establish themselves as entrepreneurs.

In addition to financial barriers, the legal and regulatory processes for setting up a business in the Maldives are complex and often inaccessible to migrants. Migrants unfamiliar with local regulations find it difficult to navigate business registration, tax compliance, and permit requirements. For young migrants lacking experience and legal support, these bureaucratic hurdles can be overwhelming.

The Maldivian economy is highly dependent on tourism, which, while offering some opportunities for entrepreneurship, is also a volatile industry. The tourism sector is susceptible to global economic downturns, environmental challenges, and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. For migrant entrepreneurs, particularly those who manage to enter the tourism industry, this volatility presents a significant risk. During downturns, many migrant-owned businesses struggle to survive due to limited access to financial safety nets or support from local institutions.

The recent government crackdown adds to the uncertainty faced by migrant entrepreneurs. The government's strict stance on unlicensed businesses, many of which are tied to tourism and service industries, poses a direct threat to migrants who rely on informal business opportunities to make a living. This uncertainty, coupled with the challenges posed by the economic instability of tourism, further complicates the prospects for migrant entrepreneurship in the Maldives.

The Maldivian government has initiated several programs aimed at fostering youth entrepreneurship, such as StartUp Maldives and the Youth Entrepreneurship Programme, but these initiatives are primarily reserved for Maldivian citizens. Migrants are largely excluded from these programs, leaving them without access to crucial resources such as training, mentorship, and financial assistance. The lack of government-backed support for migrant entrepreneurs leaves them in a precarious position, especially in the face of regulatory crackdowns.

This exclusion from entrepreneurship programs creates a gap in opportunities for young migrants to advance economically. The government's focus on enforcing stricter regulations against unlicensed businesses further reduces the chances of migrants, particularly younger ones, to establish formal enterprises in the Maldives.

Migrant entrepreneurs also face significant social and cultural challenges. Language barriers pose a considerable obstacle, as most migrants do not speak Dhivehi, the local language. Although English is widely spoken, especially in the tourism sector, proficiency in Dhivehi is essential for engaging with local communities, suppliers, and government institutions.

Cultural integration is another challenge, as business success in the Maldives is often tied to local networks and relationships. Migrants, particularly young ones who are new to the country, often lack these connections, which limits their ability to establish a customer base or secure business partnerships. The recent government crackdown on migrant-run businesses has heightened the sense of social exclusion, making it even more difficult for migrants to operate businesses legally and successfully.

While the Maldivian government has not implemented specific programs to support migrant entrepreneurship, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work to improve the conditions of migrant workers, indirectly supporting their entrepreneurial aspirations. Mission for Migrant Workers Maldives (MMWM) is one such organization that advocates for the rights of migrant laborers. Though primarily focused on labor rights and social justice, MMWM plays an essential role in helping migrants navigate the legal complexities of the labor market, which can indirectly support those seeking to become entrepreneurs (Mission for Migrant Workers Maldives, n.d.).

In addition to advocacy, some NGOs provide vocational training and financial literacy programs, which help migrants build the skills needed to better integrate into the labor market. These programs, while not explicitly geared toward entrepreneurship, can serve as a stepping stone for migrants who wish to start their own businesses by providing them with basic financial and business management knowledge.

The Maldives does not have a significant refugee population and has not implemented policies for refugee integration into the labor market. Consequently, there is little data or official support for refugee entrepreneurship in the country. This lack of refugee-specific policies highlights the broader challenges faced by non-citizen groups, including migrants, in accessing economic opportunities beyond low-wage labor.

Migrant entrepreneurship in the Maldives is fraught with challenges, particularly for young migrants who aspire to transition from low-wage jobs to business ownership. The recent crackdown on unlicensed businesses run by migrants highlights the legal and regulatory barriers they face, while financial exclusion and social isolation further complicate their ability to establish and grow businesses. Although NGOs provide some support through labor rights advocacy and vocational training, more comprehensive policies and initiatives are needed to create an inclusive environment where migrant entrepreneurs can thrive. Without such interventions, the economic potential of migrants will remain largely untapped, limiting their contribution to the Maldivian economy.

V.4.4. Entrepreneurial Perspectives Among Young Migrants in Romania

Since joining the European Union in 2007, Romania has emerged as an increasingly attractive destination for migrants, especially from Asia. According to Eurostat's Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, as of January 1, 2023, Romania was home to approximately 160,000 third-country nationals (TCNs), accounting for 0.8% of the population, along with an additional 54,000 EU citizens (0.3%) (Eurostat, 2024).

Migrants are making a significant contribution to Romania's economy. By the end of 2023, the number of foreign nationals holding residence permits for employment purposes in Romania had nearly reached 74,400, representing a remarkable 44% increase compared to the previous year. The majority of these individuals were between the ages of 18 and 60. Most migrants chose to settle in urban areas, with the highest concentrations found in Bucharest (over

15,000), followed by Ilfov (7,800), Constanța (6,100), Timiș (4,200), Brașov (3,907), Cluj (3,300), Sibiu (2,600), Arad (2,400), and Prahova (2,100).

In terms of employment, foreign workers in Romania were mainly employed in positions such as unskilled construction labor (over 5,100 individuals), assembly workers (approximately 4,500), kitchen assistants (around 4,100), warehouse staff (nearly 4,100), and other kitchen-related roles (around 3,000). The number of workers from Sri Lanka nearly doubled by the end of 2023 compared to December 31, 2022, with 15,000 individuals now employed in Romania, placing Sri Lanka second among the countries of origin for migrant workers. During the same period, the number of Vietnamese workers decreased by over 14%, Moldovan workers by around 9%, and Turkish workers by more than 7%. Nepalese workers made up the largest group of foreign nationals with work permits, numbering approximately 19,000, accounting for 45% of the total foreign workforce in Romania (Economica.net, 2024).

However, despite their economic contributions, migrant workers remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in sectors such as construction, cleaning, and delivery services. Investigations by local media in recent years have shed light on these issues. In 2023, several Nepalese workers were deceived by a recruitment agency that falsified their qualifications and brought them to Romania for jobs that did not match their skills, leaving them jobless. Additionally, ten Sri Lankan workers were hospitalized after suffering carbon monoxide poisoning while attempting to heat their substandard living quarters. These workers not only endure poor housing conditions but also work up to ten hours a day for a salary of 2,000 lei (400 euros).

Another common practice used by some employers is known as social dumping, where workers demanding better conditions are threatened with being replaced by cheaper labor. This tactic undermines collective bargaining power, weakening the rights of both migrant and local workers (Panorama, 2024). Ensuring the protection of migrant workers from abuse and exploitation would help create a more equitable and safer working environment for everyone, regardless of nationality.

However, some of Romania's most prominent brands were founded by foreign entrepreneurs, significantly contributing to the country's economic development (Ziarul Financiar, 2022). One notable example is Alexandrion Group, the largest local producer of spirits by revenue. Its founder, Nawaf Salameh, a Romanian citizen of Syrian origin, first arrived in Romania in 1983 as a student at Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, where he graduated in 1991. After completing his studies, Salameh moved to Greece for medical practice, where he first ventured into the business world. He began by selling sweets from Greece to markets such as Ukraine, Romania, and the former USSR. In 1994, he co-founded Alexandrion Group with a Greek partner. Initially, they focused on importing alcoholic beverages to Romania, but soon decided to establish a local distillery. Over the span of 30 years, this business grew into a company with a turnover exceeding 1 billion lei. Moreover, the products manufactured in Romania are now exported to dozens of markets worldwide.

Another successful foreign entrepreneur is Wargha Enayati, the founder of the private healthcare network Regina Maria, which he later sold. Unlike Nawaf Salameh, Enayati pursued his medical studies in Romania and

later invested in the same field within his adopted country. Born in Germany, Enayati chose to stay in Romania, where he continues to impact the healthcare system. He is now leading the Enayati Medical City project, an innovative healthcare services complex, demonstrating the positive influence foreign entrepreneurs can have on Romania's economy.

In recent years, the growing demand for services in Romania's urban areas has prompted a surge in migrant-led start-ups, particularly in tech, consulting, and service-oriented industries. Migrants have been instrumental in driving innovation and entrepreneurship, and their contributions are particularly evident in the IT sector, where Romania has developed a reputation as an emerging tech hub. Young entrepreneurs from Ukraine and Moldova, in particular, have taken advantage of Romania's strong tech infrastructure, establishing start-ups in software development, digital consulting, and healthcare technology.

To encourage economic integration and reduce unemployment, the Romanian government, in collaboration with the European Union, has launched a variety of programs that specifically target young entrepreneurs, including migrants. These initiatives are designed to foster innovation, support business development, and provide financial and technical assistance to entrepreneurs from all backgrounds.

The Start-Up Nation Romania and Femeia Antreprenor (Woman Entrepreneur) programs are two major initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurship in Romania, and they provide significant support to both local and migrant entrepreneurs.

Start-Up Nation Romania is designed to provide non-reimbursable financial support to new and existing small businesses, including those founded by migrant entrepreneurs. The program, funded in part by the European Union, offers grants of up to 200,000 lei (approximately €40,000) per project, aimed at stimulating entrepreneurial growth across various sectors. In 2024, the program is expected to allocate around €400 million, with a focus on increasing participation in professional development courses for entrepreneurs. Migrants, especially those with business experience or qualifications from their home countries, are eligible to apply for these grants, making it an attractive option for individuals looking to start businesses in Romania (Romanian Ministry of Investments and European Projects, n.d.)

The Femeia Antreprenor (Woman Entrepreneur) program specifically targets women entrepreneurs, offering non-reimbursable grants of up to 200,000 lei (around €40,000). This initiative, which is especially relevant for migrant women, aims to promote gender equality in the business world by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are majority-owned by women. The program covers a wide range of eligible expenses, including equipment, workspace, salaries, and even entrepreneurial courses.

The 2024 edition of Femeia Antreprenor has a budget of 200 million lei and is expected to benefit around 1,000 women-led businesses. Migrant women entrepreneurs, whether starting or scaling their businesses, can access funds and support to grow their ventures in sectors like technology, services, and manufacturing (Romanian Ministry of Investments and European Projects, n.d.).

Both programs offer vital financial resources, networking opportunities, and technical support, making them essential tools for any migrant entrepreneur looking to establish or expand a business in Romania.

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, Romania has made substantial efforts to integrate Ukrainian refugees, offering both immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term economic opportunities. According to the UNHCR, as of July 2024, over 160,000 Ukrainian refugees have resettled in Romania. According to the Report on the Needs of Ukrainian Refugees by the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Children (FONPC), 39% of Ukrainian refugees expressed a desire to find employment in Romania, 11% showed interest in starting their own businesses, while 48% hoped to return to Ukraine once the conflict ends (FONPC, 2023).

By February 2023, more than 450 businesses had been established in Romania by Ukrainian refugees, particularly in fields such as IT, construction, commerce, and services. Most Ukrainian entrepreneurs have chosen Bucharest as the location for their businesses, with over half of the newly founded Ukrainian companies based in the capital. Other popular areas include Constanța and Suceava, a county bordering Ukraine (EuroNews Romania, 2023).

Much of the focused support for entrepreneurial development has come from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have played a vital role in empowering Ukrainian refugees to start and grow businesses. Numerous NGOs in Romania have stepped up to provide specialized assistance to Ukrainian refugees, particularly those looking to become entrepreneurs.

For example, World Vision Romania, in collaboration with the Braşov Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable Development and with financial support from UNHCR Romania, launched the project "Protection and Socio-Economic Inclusion of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Romania". Running until December 2024, this project aims to support the social and economic integration of 1,200 individuals, including Ukrainian refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable Romanians from Bucharest and five counties (Braşov, Cluj, Constanţa, Iaşi, and Suceava). Among these, 80% are Ukrainian refugees or asylum seekers, while 20% are vulnerable Romanians.

The project activities include comprehensive services such as: information, counseling, entrepreneurship and professional mediation services; Romanian language courses; participation in job fairs; support for recognizing educational qualifications; networking events between potential employees and employers; coaching sessions and assistance for small business development; grants for entrepreneurial initiatives; vouchers to stimulate labor market integration; and the creation of community support networks to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Through this project, World Vision Romania and its partners provide refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable members of local communities with the tools and knowledge necessary for labor market integration and broader societal inclusion. This initiative not only supports refugees fleeing the war but also contributes to the sustainable development of host communities, creating a model of solidarity and socio-economic inclusion (World Vision Romania, n.d.).

Another significant initiative is the CDMiR 4 Ukraine Project, which focuses on raising awareness about human rights and equal treatment for Ukrainian refugees in Romania. The project addresses the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine by providing refugees with information and services related to socio-economic rights, including access to the labor market. In addition, the project offers complementary training services on employment and entrepreneurship in Romania. By facilitating collaboration between local authorities, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders, CDMiR enhances the capacity to support Ukrainian refugees. The project also advocates for improvements to legal and policy frameworks that govern refugee integration based on data collected through consultations with refugee communities (CNRR, n.d.).

This project, carried out from March 2023 to March 2024 by the Coalition for Migrants and Refugee Rights (CDMiR), demonstrates the essential role of NGOs in advocating for and supporting refugee rights. CDMiR, established in 2017, initially brought together 11 NGOs with experience in migration, anti-discrimination, human rights, and public policy. Today, CDMiR is the only active entity in Romania dedicated to migration, asylum, and integration, now representing 22 NGOs across the country, along with academic and international organization partners (CDMiR, n.d.).

Young migrant entrepreneurs in Romania, including young refugees, face several substantial challenges despite the existence of numerous programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurship. These challenges stem from a combination of bureaucratic, financial, social, and legal barriers that disproportionately affect migrants and refugees, particularly those who are new to the country.

While Romania has implemented several entrepreneurial support programs, bureaucratic hurdles continue to impede the success of young migrant entrepreneurs. Inconsistencies in how policies are implemented across regions pose significant obstacles. For instance, while urban centers such as Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca offer relatively straightforward access to legal support, financial services, and business networks, these resources are much scarcer in rural areas. This regional disparity limits the ability of young migrants to establish businesses outside major urban hubs, where the cost of living and competition may be lower but the institutional support is weaker.

In addition, the bureaucratic processes for securing permits, registering businesses, or applying for government grants can be complex, especially for migrants unfamiliar with the Romanian legal system. The language of official documentation is often available only in Romanian, making it difficult for non-Romanian speakers to navigate these processes without external help.

Language barriers remain a critical issue for young migrant entrepreneurs, particularly for refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and other non-EU countries. While some NGOs offer language courses, many migrants find it difficult to achieve the fluency needed to confidently manage a business in Romania. Even when financial and mentoring programs are available, migrants may struggle to understand or take full advantage of these opportunities due to the language gap.

Cultural differences also play a role, as young migrants often face challenges in understanding local market behaviors, consumer preferences, and business practices. Without established networks in Romania, young migrant entrepreneurs lack access to the informal mentoring and advice that local

entrepreneurs typically rely on. These social networks are crucial for navigating the business landscape, from securing investment to finding business partners.

Although some programs offer significant financial support, accessing these funds can be particularly challenging for young migrant entrepreneurs. Many migrants arrive without an established credit history or financial connections within Romania, making them ineligible for certain types of funding or loans. Additionally, the application processes for grants and loans can be cumbersome, requiring detailed business plans and documentation that may be difficult for migrants to prepare, particularly if they lack experience with the Romanian banking or financial system.

Moreover, while Romania offers some microfinance programs targeted at disadvantaged populations, these tend to be underfunded and not always accessible to the migrant community. Refugees, in particular, face additional scrutiny when applying for credit due to their temporary or unstable legal status.

Refugees and migrants often encounter challenges related to legal recognition and social integration. Even though Romania has made strides in simplifying residency permits and work visas, some migrants and refugees experience delays or inconsistencies in the process. This legal uncertainty can discourage migrants from pursuing long-term business ventures, as they may feel their status in the country is not secure enough to invest in entrepreneurial activities.

Additionally, social exclusion can exacerbate the difficulties faced by young migrant entrepreneurs. Many migrants feel isolated from local business communities, particularly in industries dominated by Romanian nationals.

Discrimination and xenophobia, though not as prevalent as in some other European countries, still exist and can discourage young migrants from fully engaging in entrepreneurial activities or accessing the same opportunities as local entrepreneurs.

Romania, since joining the EU in 2007, has become an appealing destination for migrants, particularly from Asia. Migrants significantly contribute to the economy, predominantly in urban areas like Bucharest and Constanța. While many migrants engage in sectors such as IT, construction, and services, they often face exploitation and poor working conditions. Entrepreneurial support programs, including Start-Up Nation and Femeia Antreprenor, provide funding and resources to both local and migrant entrepreneurs, particularly women, though barriers like bureaucracy, language, and access to finance persist. NGOs play a crucial role in supporting refugees, especially Ukrainians, by offering training, legal support, and funding for small businesses, aiding their integration and contributing to the sustainable development of host communities.

V.5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

In contemplating the transformative potential of entrepreneurship for young migrants and refugees, we enter a domain where economic prosperity intertwines with broader notions of societal progress. Through the comprehensive exploration of this multifaceted topic, we uncover the profound impact that entrepreneurship can have on individuals navigating the complex paths of migration and displacement. Entrepreneurship not only provides avenues for attaining economic self-sufficiency in unfamiliar lands but also acts as a catalyst for cross-cultural exchange and resilience-building, offering hope amidst the challenges and uncertainties faced by young migrants and refugees.

At the heart of our discourse is the pivotal concept of inclusive leadership and management—an ethos that underscores the importance of embracing diversity, equity, and collaboration in entrepreneurial endeavors. As we envision a world where every young migrant and refugee can harness their entrepreneurial spirit to drive positive change, it becomes increasingly clear that cultivating inclusive ecosystems is paramount. These ecosystems must not only facilitate the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities but also ensure that every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, has equitable access to resources, mentorship, and support networks. By fostering environments where every voice is heard, every talent is nurtured, and every opportunity is accessible, we pave the way for the emergence of inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems that empower and uplift all members of society.

To policymakers worldwide, particularly those in countries hosting migrants and refugees, the following recommendations offer actionable steps to foster inclusive entrepreneurship. In the face of the intricate challenges of migration and displacement, policymakers hold a crucial position in crafting policies and frameworks that facilitate economic integration and social harmony.

The following recommendations present a blueprint to harness entrepreneurship as a driver for sustainable development and inclusive prosperity. While significant strides have been made, there remains ample opportunity for progress. Though the primary focus is on host countries of migrants and refugees, the principles outlined herein are relevant across borders and political landscapes, offering a path toward a more inclusive and prosperous future:

- ***Developing a comprehensive strategy for migrant and refugee entrepreneurship*** – Identifying the unique opportunities and challenges for migrant and refugee entrepreneurship at the national and local levels; ensuring alignment of these strategies with broader policies on entrepreneurship, migration, and refugee integration at local, national, and regional levels; ensuring that the approach to migrant and refugee entrepreneurship aligns with international frameworks; and assessing and disseminating the outcomes of initiatives promoting migrant and refugee entrepreneurship;
- ***Optimizing and improving the regulatory environment*** – Streamlining the process for migrants and refugees to start businesses; providing guidance and support to entrepreneurs as they

navigate the startup process; and addressing additional regulatory obstacles that may impede refugee and migrant entrepreneurship.

- ***Improving entrepreneurial education and skill enhancement*** – Creating, tailoring, and concentrating entrepreneurship training for specific demographics and environments; developing impactful entrepreneurship curricula to foster an entrepreneurial mindset, along with inclusive leadership and management skills; involving experienced trainers; and enhancing coordination between entrepreneurship training programs and vocational education initiatives.
- ***Promoting the exchange of technology and fostering innovative startups*** – Building connections with the private sector and integrating refugees and migrants into entrepreneurship ecosystems; providing access to essential infrastructure, such as internet and electricity; promoting the adoption of ICT and emerging technologies within refugee and migrant communities; and encouraging the growth of social innovation and enterprises led by and for refugees and migrants.
- ***Enhancing access to financial resources*** – Expanding alternative and innovative funding sources for refugee and migrant entrepreneurship; helping entrepreneurs access formal banking services; and linking access to financial resources with entrepreneurship education programs.
- ***Encouraging awareness and networking opportunities*** – Facilitating connections between entrepreneurs and experienced

mentors; building and strengthening networking platforms for entrepreneurs; assisting in engagement with diaspora networks; and challenging the stigma associated with migrants and refugees.

This exploration of entrepreneurship among young migrants and refugees extends beyond economics to embrace ideals of social unity, innovation, and empowerment. By promoting inclusive leadership and management principles and creating nurturing environments for diverse entrepreneurial endeavors, we pave the way for a future where entrepreneurship becomes a catalyst for positive societal change and inclusive progress. By embracing these recommendations, policymakers can unlock the potential within young migrant and refugee populations, fostering resilience, empowerment, and economic independence. This chapter underscores the vital need for inclusive policies and initiatives that not only recognize the value of diversity but also empower individuals to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

Part VI:

NEEDS OF YOUNG MIGRANT WOMEN



NEEDS OF YOUNG MIGRANT WOMEN

VI.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on migration, with a particular focus on migrant women, and examines the factors contributing to migration in general, and specifically for young women. It also explores the unique vulnerabilities young female migrants encounter during the migration process, as well as the support systems required to address their needs. The migrant status in each participating country will also be studied to examine the specific needs and challenges faced by young migrant women. The paper highlights the importance of gender-sensitive policies and interventions to ensure the well-being and empowerment of young migrant women. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical studies, this chapter identifies the challenges encountered by young migrant women, including issues related to education, employment, social integration, and discrimination. It concludes by suggesting potential strategies and policies to mitigate the challenges faced by this vulnerable group.

The chapter is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature (which, in the case of the Maldives, is very limited), reports, and studies on the topic, as well as interviews with young migrant women and experts in the field. The findings aim to inform policymakers, service providers, and organizations working with young migrant women to develop effective strategies and programs that cater to their specific needs.

VI.2. Methodology and Literature Review

To conduct this literature review, a comprehensive and systematic search was carried out across academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Search terms such as "young women migrants," "needs," "challenges," and "interventions" were utilized to identify relevant studies. Only peer-reviewed articles published in English were considered for inclusion. A significant number of relevant publications were thoroughly reviewed as part of the analysis.

This literature review aims to explore the existing research on the needs of young migrant women and provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face. It will also highlight the importance of addressing these needs and suggest possible interventions to support young migrant women.

According to the latest global estimate, prepared in 2022 by the Population Division, there were approximately 281 million international migrants worldwide in 2020, representing 3.6% of the global population (IOM, World Migration Report, 2022). Nearly three out of four international migrants were aged between 20 and 64, with 41 million being under the age of 20. Most international migrants reside in Asia and Europe (31% each), followed by North America (21%), Africa (9%), Latin America and the Caribbean (5%), and Oceania (3%). Global remittance flows due to migration reached USD 647 billion in 2022 and are projected to increase by 1.4% to USD 656 billion by 2023, making remittances a central issue in discussions of migration and development (Ahsan Ullah & Chatteraj, 2023).

Migration is often categorized into three major stages: pre-migration, migration, and post-migration (Bhugra, 2004). The post-migration stage can be further divided into three sub-stages: overcompensation, decompensation, and the processes of acculturation or assimilation. La Cascia et al. (2020) gave reference Sluzki (2001), stating that the mental well-being of migrants is deeply impacted by their experiences before migration, the migration process itself, and the conditions they encounter in their host country. Each stage of migration subjects individuals to different conditions that affect their mental health. While many of these experiences are shared by both men and women, certain factors disproportionately affect women due to differing levels of insecurity and violence. These differences are influenced by social and economic circumstances in their countries of origin, transit, and host countries, as well as power dynamics within marital relationships (Freedman, 2016).

Migration is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon worldwide, bringing social, economic, and cultural implications for individuals and communities. Young migrant women face unique challenges and have specific needs that must be addressed to ensure their successful integration and well-being in their host countries. Throughout their migration journey, women are exposed to violence, including gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV). Such violence can be pervasive, appearing throughout the migration process or during specific phases (La Cascia et al., 2020). Violence against women is one of the most severe human rights violations, rooted in systemic power imbalances between men and women. In the context of migration, SGBV manifests in five dimensions of violence: physical, psychological, sexual, socio-economic, and cultural harmful

practices, including threats, coercion, or deprivation of freedom based on an individual's gender or sex (UNHCR, 2003). GBV is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, with women disproportionately affected (EIGE).

A publication from the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) highlights the vital role migrant workers play in the growth and development of their destination countries, while their countries of origin benefit from the remittances they send back and the skills they acquire during migration. However, the migration process presents complex challenges in governance, protecting migrant workers' rights, managing the link between migration and development, and fostering international cooperation.

Migration is considered a global development strategy in certain regions of the world. In these areas, remittances sent by migrant workers are viewed as a means to generate foreign revenue, boost the economy, and address unemployment (Meghani, 2016). As a result, some countries actively promote migration by creating institutional and legal frameworks to facilitate overseas employment. However, despite the comparable number of women migrating, their contributions, needs, and challenges are often overlooked. Migration studies have traditionally marginalized women's experiences, neglecting their unique perspectives and socio-economic contributions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, migration theories often assumed that migrants were predominantly male, portraying women as dependents who followed their husbands. This view led to migration being seen as a male phenomenon. However, women have always been part of migratory movements, historically as spouses, daughters, and dependents of male migrants. In recent decades,

there has been a rise in women engaging in autonomous migration, often becoming the primary economic providers or "breadwinners" for their families.

Migrants in general play a significant role in both their host countries and their countries of origin. In destination countries, they contribute to economic growth by filling labor gaps, particularly in industries with a shortage of local workers, often taking on jobs that locals are unwilling or unable to do.

Countries of origin benefit from the remittances sent by migrant workers. These financial inflows contribute to poverty reduction, improved education, and better healthcare in the home countries. Additionally, migrant workers, whether male or female, acquire new skills and knowledge during their migration experience, which they can bring back to their home countries, contributing to the development of various industries and sectors.

This subchapter explores the needs and challenges faced by young migrant women, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. It highlights the importance of addressing these needs and suggests interventions to support their successful integration. Globally, migration affects millions, with significant economic and social implications. Young migrant women face specific vulnerabilities, such as gender-based violence and socio-economic barriers. While migration contributes to economic growth and development in both host and origin countries through labor and remittances, the unique challenges and contributions of female migrants have often been overlooked. The review underscores the importance of gender-sensitive policies and interventions to address the needs of young migrant women and promote their well-being.

VI.3. Factors Influencing Migration Among Young Women

The number of migrant women workers is increasing globally. Nearly half (48.1%) of all international migrants are female (Abel, 2022). Gender is recognized as a major factor influencing migration at all stages, including pathways, destination choices, and settlement experiences in host countries (Abel, 2022).

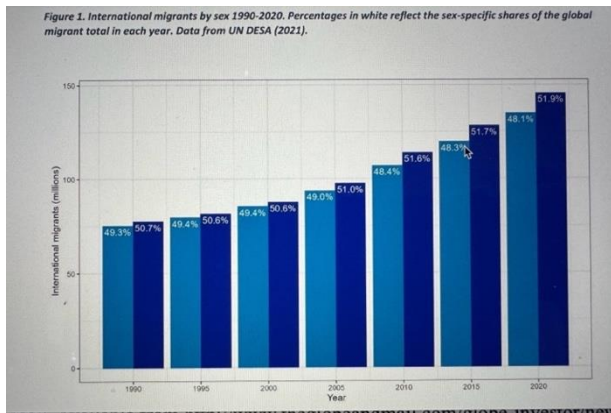


Figure 1. International migrants by sex 1990-2020. Data from UN DESA (2021)

The growing presence of migrant women in labor markets has drawn attention from governments, international organizations, and civil society to their potential contributions to the economic development of both home and host countries. Despite the limited availability of sex-disaggregated data, it is reported that migrant women contribute over half of the World Bank's estimated US\$582 billion in global remittances (ILO, 2015).

While both men and women migrate for various reasons, women often have distinct motivations. This study focuses on exploring the factors that drive female migration. These reasons may include economic opportunities, social and political conditions, marital circumstances, and the desire to escape poverty, violence, conflict, or environmental challenges. Female migration is also often linked to family reunification following male migration (Ferrant & Tuccio, 2015).

According to the Migration Data Portal (2023), migrant women actively seek employment opportunities in the global market, sometimes through legal or illicit means. A growing number of women now migrate independently for work, education, and as heads of households, making up 48.1% of the global migrant population (135 million). Though they typically earn less than men, studies have shown that migrant women workers tend to remit a higher proportion of their income more regularly. Migrant women currently account for half of the World Bank's global remittances estimate of \$582 billion (Western Union, 2015).

Migrant women are more likely to send home a higher proportion of their wages regularly, with remittances often spent on health, education, and family and community development. For example, in Nepal, migrant women workers, primarily domestic workers, contribute around 50% of migrant remittances, amounting to approximately 30% of the country's GDP (UN Women, 2013).

However, the benefits of migration for women's empowerment and social and economic development depend on aligning policies and institutional responses with international human rights standards. Migrant women workers

often face discrimination, violence, health risks, and exploitation throughout the migration process. These vulnerabilities arise from their gender, social class, ethnicity, and immigration status, and in some cases, the governance strategies meant to regulate mobility and work, which often use the language of protection and security (UN Women, 2016). Evidence suggests that migrant women face dual discrimination based on both their gender and migration status (Meghani, 2016).

The international migration of women, whether with their families or independently, is an increasingly important and complex phenomenon. However, it remains under-documented due to a lack of data (ILO, 2020). Additionally, migrant women often face disadvantages in terms of job quality, frequently finding employment in low-skilled roles such as domestic work and cleaning. Regardless of where they work or why they migrate, migrant women have specific needs that must be addressed. This literature review aims to explore and categorize these needs.

The migration of young women is influenced by various factors, including economic opportunities, social and political conditions, marital circumstances, and the need to escape poverty, violence, or environmental challenges. While women share some common motivations with men, their migration pathways and experiences are often distinct, especially as more women migrate independently for work and education. Migrant women contribute significantly to global remittances, despite earning less than men. However, they face challenges such as discrimination, exploitation, and limited access to high-quality jobs, with many employed in low-skilled roles like domestic work. Addressing their specific needs requires policies aligned with international human rights standards..

VI.4. Needs of Young Migrant Women

Educational Needs

- **Access to education:** Young migrant women often face barriers in accessing education due to language challenges, discrimination, and a lack of information about available educational opportunities (Smith et al., 2015);
- **Gender-sensitive education:** Offering gender-sensitive education programs can address the specific needs of young migrant women, such as reproductive health education and vocational training (Mendoza & Melgar, 2018).

Health Needs

- **Reproductive health:** Young migrant women frequently lack access to reproductive health services, including contraception and sexual health education (Falah-Hassani et al., 2017);
- **Mental health support:** These women are at higher risk for mental health issues due to the stress of migration and acculturation. Access to culturally appropriate mental health services is essential (Pang & Cuadra, 2019).

Social Support

- **Social integration:** Support is needed to help young migrant women build social networks and integrate into host communities. Programs

that foster social interaction and provide mentorship can be beneficial (Baldassar et al., 2017);

- **Family support:** Maintaining strong family ties and having access to family support is vital for the well-being of young migrant women (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2016).

Legal Support

- **Access to legal services:** Young migrant women often face legal challenges such as immigration issues and labor exploitation. Access to legal services and information is crucial for their protection (Lutz et al., 2018);
- **Know your rights programs:** Providing information and education on legal rights and entitlements can empower young migrant women to navigate legal processes effectively (Morrell et al., 2020).

This subchapter outlines the key needs of young migrant women across various areas. Educational needs include overcoming barriers to access education and offering gender-sensitive programs. Health needs focus on reproductive health services and mental health support due to the stresses of migration. Social support is crucial for integration and maintaining family ties, while legal support is essential for addressing immigration issues and labor exploitation, with "know your rights" programs empowering young migrant women to navigate legal challenges.

VI.5. Country Perspectives

VI.5.1. Malta

Malta, a small nation situated in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, was historically known for emigration. However, in recent years, it has seen a significant increase in immigration, bringing in diverse populations from various countries. This shift began around 2002, driven by growing instability and conflict in Africa, as well as Malta's accession to the European Union in 2004 (Rossoni, 2017). Consequently, while many EU citizens moved to Malta for work and study, asylum seekers from Somalia, Sudan, and other Sub-Saharan African countries also started settling in the country.

VI.5.1.1. Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women

Despite the various factors driving migration, migrant women in Malta face unique challenges that require focused attention.

➤ *Language and communication barriers*

One of the main challenges for migrant women in Malta is the language barrier. Limited proficiency in Maltese or English hampers their ability to communicate effectively, find employment, and integrate into society. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2019), language difficulties significantly hinder migrant women's access to education, employment, and daily tasks. Offering language courses and support programs can play a crucial role in overcoming this barrier.

➤ ***Discrimination and stigmatization***

Research by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR, 2023) highlights the various forms of discrimination faced by migrant women in Malta, including unequal pay, limited access to certain job sectors, and workplace harassment. Additionally, migrant women often experience stigmatization based on their nationality, ethnicity, or cultural background. Discrimination affects access to essential services such as housing, healthcare, and employment. Raising awareness about cultural diversity and promoting inclusive practices are necessary steps to combat these discriminatory behaviors.

➤ ***Limited access to employment***

Migrant women in Malta face considerable difficulties in accessing employment opportunities that match their skills and qualifications. A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2018) notes that language barriers, unrecognized foreign credentials, unfamiliarity with the local job market, and discriminatory hiring practices contribute to these challenges. To address these issues, inclusive hiring practices should be promoted, vocational training programs offered, and the recognition of foreign qualifications improved.

➤ ***Gender-based violence and exploitation***

Migrant women in Malta are at an increased risk of gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation due to their vulnerable status. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2019) reports that factors such as language

barriers, limited social support networks, and a lack of knowledge about local laws exacerbate their vulnerability. Empowering migrant women through awareness campaigns, accessible support services, legal aid, and educational programs is vital in preventing and addressing these forms of abuse.

➤ ***Limited social support networks***

According to a study by the Malta Emigrants' Commission (2017), many migrant women in Malta struggle to build social support networks, resulting in isolation, homesickness, and mental health challenges. Yang et al. (2023) found a strong correlation between social support and the quality of life among migrant workers, highlighting the importance of fostering healthy support systems. Initiatives such as community engagement programs, cultural exchanges, and safe spaces for interaction can help build connections and a sense of belonging. While NGOs in Malta provide important social support, they face challenges such as complex administrative procedures and limited coordination with the government, which can result in inefficiencies (African Media Association, 2023).

VI.5.1.2. Needs of Young Migrant Women

In recent years, the number of young migrant women arriving in Malta in search of better opportunities has significantly increased. However, as Rossoni (2017) notes, despite the growing feminization of migration, the stories of female migrants and asylum seekers in Malta are often overshadowed by those of men. These women face distinct challenges and have specific needs that must be addressed by both the government and civil society to ensure their

successful integration into Maltese society. It is essential that their voices be heard and their experiences acknowledged to promote fairness, gender equality, and recognition of the unique, often violence-related, obstacles they face both during their migration and upon arrival in Malta. Meeting these challenges requires coordinated efforts from governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and the wider community.

Addressing the exploitation and concerns of migrant women is urgent. Improving cultural sensitivity among authorities who assist these women, providing them with cultural education to understand the host culture, and breaking down communication barriers are key to reducing frustration and building trust. Strengthening institutional mechanisms and creating specialized services to address the diverse issues migrant women face is also critical. Rossoni (2017) highlights a lack of intercultural training and training on gender-based violence among staff, as well as limited access to interpreters and cultural mediators. Despite recognition of these challenges in 2017, they remain significant today.

While migrant women have many complex needs, several priorities must be addressed for them to thrive in Malta:

➤ ***Access to education***

Access to quality education is a primary need for young migrant women in Malta. However, language barriers, cultural differences, and legal complexities often hinder their ability to enroll in educational institutions. Government initiatives that provide language support and culturally sensitive

education programs can significantly enhance their chances of building a strong educational foundation (Malta Independent, 2019).

➤ ***Health and well-being***

Young migrant women often face limited access to healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health care, due to a lack of information, language barriers, and fear of discrimination. Empowering them through comprehensive health awareness campaigns, multilingual informational materials, and ensuring medical staff are trained in culturally sensitive practices can help address these challenges (UNFPA Malta, 2014).

➤ ***Social integration and empowerment***

Integration into Maltese society is crucial for young migrant women to succeed. Reports from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2019) suggest that promoting cultural exchange programs, community engagement, and vocational training opportunities can significantly enhance social inclusion. These initiatives empower migrant women to form meaningful connections and secure sustainable livelihoods in their new communities.

➤ ***Legal support and protection***

Navigating legal complexities is a significant challenge for young migrant women in Malta. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) emphasizes the importance of access to free legal aid, partnerships with NGOs specializing in migration and gender-based violence, and raising awareness of legal rights to ensure their protection.

Addressing the unique needs of young migrant women in Malta requires collaboration among government, civil society, and the local community. By providing language and legal support, removing educational barriers, combating discrimination, improving employment opportunities, protecting against gender-based violence, promoting social integration, and establishing strong social support networks, Malta can create an inclusive environment where young migrant women can thrive and reach their full potential.

The experiences of migrant women in Malta depend on a structured approach that addresses the intersection of gender, migration, and social integration. Azzopardi (2017) stresses the need for tailored services and policies, while Caruana and Vella (2019) highlight the importance of empowering migrant women and adopting an inclusive approach to enhance their well-being and integration. By recognizing the diversity and agency of migrant women, Malta can foster a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

Migrant women in Malta face unique challenges due to language barriers, discrimination, limited access to employment, and gender-based violence. These women often struggle with communication, which hampers their integration into society and access to essential services. Discrimination in employment and public services is also prevalent, exacerbating their difficulties. Gender-based violence and exploitation are common due to their vulnerable status, while social isolation further affects their mental health. To support these women, Malta needs to provide inclusive education, healthcare, legal protection, and social support, promoting their empowerment and integration into the community.

VI.5.2. Italy

Women are playing an increasingly prominent role in global migration, a trend seen not only in Italy but across Europe and worldwide (Crippa, 2020). In Italy, women make up 50.9% of the foreign resident population (Istat, 2023). In 2022, the largest group of female migrants came from Romania, numbering over 616,000, followed by women from Albania (around 204,000), Morocco (nearly 192,000), Ukraine (175,000), and China (148,000). It's important to note that these figures do not reflect the substantial influx of Ukrainian women after the invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, the gender distribution among different nationalities varies significantly. Thai and Indonesian women make up the highest proportions of their respective national populations in Italy, at 90% and 85%. Among larger groups, 57% of Romanian residents are women, compared to 46% of Moroccans and 49% of Albanians. In contrast, women constitute a smaller percentage among Bangladeshi (29%) and Pakistani (28%) residents.

Crippa (2020) highlights that many treaties, conventions, and laws designed to protect migrant women often fall short in practice due to systemic issues in Italy. Cristi (2020) suggests that addressing the labor exploitation of migrant women requires political, economic, and social reforms, alongside changes to regulatory frameworks. This includes strengthening legal protections for migrant workers and adopting multi-agency strategies with long, medium, and short-term goals.

VI.5.2.1. Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women

Migrant women face challenges at every stage of their migration journey, including cultural and language barriers, socioeconomic disadvantages, and gender-based inequalities. In Italy, the roles most often occupied by migrant women are those typically associated with female jobs, and the challenges they face are often gender-specific. Those with irregular status face harsh realities, including labor exploitation. In general, migrant women encounter multiple obstacles linked to their gender and are subjected to triple forms of discrimination based on race, gender, and social class (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi, 2019).

According to Marchetti and Garofalo Geymonat (2019), migrant women are exposed to various forms of violence, discrimination, severe exploitation, and torture throughout the migration process, including domestic violence. In the workplace, they not only deal with emotional trauma from guilt, fear, and sorrow but also bear the burden of stress due to separation from family and children (Bonizzoni 2015). Among the challenges migrant women face are:

➤ *Language and communication barriers*

Many migrant women struggle with language barriers, which can hinder their ability to integrate into Italian society and access necessary services. Ghio et al. (2023) note that lack of language knowledge can, in many cases, affect their adaptation process, though not always.

➤ ***Discrimination and gender-based violence***

Migrant women often experience discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, exploitation, and domestic violence, exacerbated by their vulnerable status as migrants. UNICEF (2019) reports that nearly all migrant women and adolescent girls who have taken the central Mediterranean route to Italy have survived sexual violence. Many have also endured child marriage, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and trafficking.

A report by EU Human Rights Expert Mijatovic (2023) highlighted violence and discrimination against women in Italy as a "prevailing and urgent concern" (The Associated Press, 2023). She also expressed concerns about Italian courts and police exacerbating the distress of gender-based violence victims and noted a decline in women's access to abortion services. Italy also ranks lowest in the EU for gender equality in the workplace.

➤ ***Limited access to healthcare***

Migrant women face difficulties accessing quality healthcare due to language barriers, lack of information, and legal or bureaucratic obstacles. This poses risks to their health and well-being. Di Napoli (2022) highlights that immigrants face disparities in accessing healthcare due to various formal and informal barriers, with legal status often limiting access to necessary services. Even in Italy, where healthcare is accessible to all immigrant populations, barriers persist.

➤ ***Unemployment and job segregation***

Many migrant women struggle to find stable employment and often face gender-based job segregation, being limited to low-paid, low-skilled positions with little upward mobility. A recent study on migrant economic integration in Europe highlighted ongoing gender discrimination in the European labor market. About half of immigrant women in Italy are unemployed (ANSA, 2022).

Cripper (2020) attributes severe labor exploitation to three factors: 'the vicious circle' of limited focus and data on the issue, a 'gender-unfriendly' legislative framework, and the lack of an enabling structure that prevents women from reporting abuse due to fear, intimidation, language and cultural barriers, and vulnerability. These challenges underscore the need to address inequalities and promote equal opportunities for migrant women in the European labor market.

➤ ***Lack of social support networks***

Migrant women often experience social isolation due to the absence of strong support networks, negatively impacting their mental health and overall well-being. Despite these challenges, various organizations and initiatives in Italy work to promote the rights and improve the conditions of migrant women.

VI.5.2.2. Needs of Young Migrant Women

Italy has become a key destination for migrants, including young women seeking refuge, improved economic opportunities, or family reunification. However, young migrant women often face unique challenges

that necessitate targeted attention and support. While their needs may vary based on individual circumstances and backgrounds, common needs include:

➤ ***Language learning***

Many young migrant women face language barriers, which can significantly hinder their access to education, employment, and social integration. Providing language learning programs tailored to their needs can greatly support their integration efforts. Ghio (2023) found that poor communication skills in Italian were much more crucial than deficiencies in formal skills in determining immigrants' labor force participation and their working status. Many other studies point out that limited language proficiency hinders their access to education, employment, and integration. Tailored language learning programs are vital for successful integration (De Arcangelis et al., 2016).

➤ ***Education and vocational training***

Access to education and vocational training is crucial for young migrant women to gain skills, qualifications, and employment opportunities. Offering targeted programs and scholarships can help them build a brighter future. The research of Boccagni and Lafleur (2020) emphasizes the importance of educational opportunities for building skills and qualifications. Tailored programs and scholarships should be available to foster their academic and professional development.

➤ ***Legal assistance***

Many young migrant women may face legal challenges related to migration status, residency permits, or family reunification. Navigating these processes can be overwhelming, but legal assistance can alleviate their anxieties and ensure their rights are protected. Legal aid programs, such as those offered by the Italian Council for Refugees (CIR) or NGOs like Save the Children, provide necessary support (Bono et al., 2019).

➤ ***Health services***

Access to healthcare is vital for the physical and mental well-being of young migrant women. Providing information about available healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health, counseling, and support for survivors of violence, can address their specific healthcare needs. A study by Santoro et al. (2019) highlights the importance of providing tailored healthcare services for young migrant women, including mental health support and assistance for survivors of violence.

➤ ***Safe housing***

Young migrant women often face housing instability or live in overcrowded and unsafe conditions. Ensuring access to safe and affordable housing can provide stability and security to help them thrive in their new environment. Initiatives like the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (Fondo Nazionale Politiche e Servizi dell'Asilo, FPSA) aim to provide safe housing (Skleparis & Triandafyllidou, 2017).

➤ ***Employment opportunities and entrepreneurship support***

Facilitating access to decent and fair employment opportunities is essential for young migrant women's economic empowerment and independence. Entrepreneurship support programs can help them launch their own businesses and become self-reliant. Programs like "Mentoring for Integration" by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provide support for business ventures and labor market access (Gozdziak & Jacques, 2014).

➤ ***Social integration and community support***

Building social networks and receiving community support is crucial for young migrant women to feel included and reduce isolation. Cultural exchange initiatives and mentorship programs, such as "Youth@Migration" by Caritas Italia, play a vital role in fostering connections with local communities and supporting social integration (Riccio et al., 2018).

➤ ***Trauma-informed support***

Many young migrant women may have experienced trauma during their journey or migratory experience. Providing trauma-informed support, mental health services, and counseling can help them heal and overcome psychological challenges. Culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support systems, including mental health services, are crucial for their recovery (Norredam et al., 2017).

In Italy, as in other countries, eliminating the exploitation of migrant women requires raising awareness beyond domestic violence and sexual exploitation to include racial discrimination and emotional trauma. This must be coupled with legislative and institutional reforms. The diverse needs of young migrant women call for a comprehensive and individualized approach to effectively address their unique challenges and circumstances.

Migrant women in Italy face significant challenges throughout their migration journey, including cultural and language barriers, socioeconomic disadvantages, and gender-based inequalities. They often occupy gendered roles and experience triple discrimination based on race, gender, and social class. Many struggle with unemployment, labor exploitation, and limited access to healthcare, legal support, and safe housing. Young migrant women, in particular, need tailored programs for language learning, education, vocational training, and trauma-informed mental health services. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms and multi-agency strategies to ensure their rights, safety, and successful integration into society.

VI.5.3. Maldives

The Maldives experiences both internal and external migration. According to Riyaza (2019), internal migration within the country has been increasing, primarily due to the uneven distribution of resources and services between Male' and the Atolls. Male' has become a hub of growth, offering extensive health, education, and job opportunities, making it one of the most densely populated cities in the world.

As the capital and socio-economic center of the Maldives, Male' provides unparalleled access to essential services such as high-quality

healthcare, education, water, sanitation, and employment, attracting a growing number of people over the years. This trend has led to increased migration from other islands to Male', resulting in vacant homes on the islands and crowded living conditions in small rented spaces within the capital. The recent improvement in land connectivity to Hulhumale' has helped ease congestion, providing some relief to those living in cramped conditions. Additionally, significant infrastructure and construction projects in Male' have attracted a substantial number of foreign migrant workers, many of whom live in substandard and overcrowded accommodations.

According to the Maldives Population Projection (2014-2054), it is projected that by 2050, half of the population will reside in Male'.

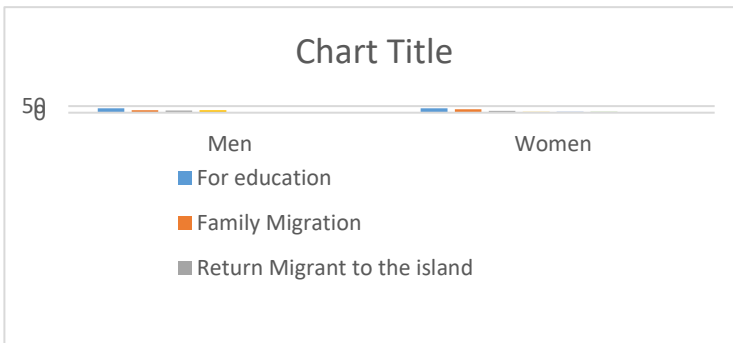


Figure 2. *Reasons why men and women are migrating to Male', 2019 (Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey)*

According to the UN Network on Migration (2023), the Republic of Maldives has the highest proportion of migrants in South Asia, with an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 international migrants, making up about one-

third of the total population (International Organization for Migration, 2018). Beyond the official count, there are over 60,000 undocumented immigrants in the country. The Maldives relies heavily on inbound labor migrants from neighboring South Asian countries, predominantly lower-skilled workers from Bangladesh and India. These migrants are vital to key sectors such as tourism and hospitality, construction, agriculture, and fisheries, as well as other service industries. Additionally, the Maldives employs higher-skilled workers in the education and health sectors to address workforce shortages in these areas.

Despite the strong link between migration and the Maldivian economy, lower-skilled migrants often face significant challenges, including exploitation, discrimination, and limited access to healthcare and justice. These issues are particularly severe among the large number of irregular migrants, with over 60,000 believed to be undocumented (United Nations Network on Migration in the Maldives, 2023). Although the government has taken steps to register some of these migrants, many still remain vulnerable to exploitation, forced labor, and wage theft. These persistent issues have led to the Maldives being placed on the 'Tier 2 Watchlist' in the Trafficking in Persons Report for three consecutive years (2018-2020) due to its insufficient response to trafficking and labor exploitation.

In 2021, there were 182,666 registered international migrants in the Maldives, with only 9% being migrant women and the remaining 89% being men. Of these migrants, 57% are from Bangladesh, 24% from India, and 11% from Sri Lanka, with a median age of 33 years. A smaller percentage of migrants from China, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Nepal have also started to arrive on the islands, and their numbers are gradually increasing. Among these

groups, the majority are male (88%) compared to migrant women (12%). Specifically, among Bangladeshi migrants, an overwhelming 99% are men (Integral Human Development, 2023).

According to the same source, there is no available data on the number of refugees or asylum applications in the Maldives. It's important to note that the Maldivian government has not signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, and there are no national programs in place for refugee protection. Additionally, the UNHCR does not have a physical presence in the country and instead operates remotely from New Delhi.

In 2021, the Maldivian government amended The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA), making both sex trafficking and labor trafficking criminal offenses. The amended Act prescribes penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment for trafficking offenses involving adult victims, and up to 15 years' imprisonment for offenses involving child victims (US Department of State, 2023). Additionally, the Maldives conducted training for police officers and maintained a trafficking case management system, enabling potential victims to submit cases to the police online.

The Maldives Immigration Act (Law No. 01/2007), amended in 2020 (President's Office, 2020), outlines the regulations for the departure and entry of Maldivian nationals, as well as the entry, exit, and deportation of foreign nationals. This Act replaces Act Number 2/92, which concerned the fees for foreign nationals holding a resident permit in the Maldives. However, the national legal framework lacks sufficient clarity regarding the treatment of asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, and migrants, as there is no specific

system in place to distinguish and appropriately address these different categories.

The Maldivian Constitution, in its Article 25, prohibits slavery and forced labor, affirming the right of individuals not to be held in slavery or servitude, nor to be compelled to perform forced labor. In 2021, the government amended the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act No. 12/2013 (President's Office, 2021), aligning the Maldives' definition of human trafficking with the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

The Maldives is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol and does not have an asylum adjudication system or national refugee protection framework in place. Additionally, the Maldives has not acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (UNHCR, 2019). There is no national legislation addressing the prevention and reduction of statelessness or the protection of stateless individuals.

The Ministry of Economic Development is the primary authority responsible for managing migration in the Maldives. It regulates the issuance of official permits for recruiting expatriates for employment in the country, in line with the Employment Act and related regulations. The Ministry's jurisdiction extends to Immigration and Emigration, Labor, Maritime, and Land Transport sectors. Since 2014, the Ministry of Economic Development has expanded its mandate to include labor and migration management and to provide support services for victims of human trafficking. The Maldives

Immigration and the Labor Relations Authority also fall under the Ministry's responsibilities.

The Maldivian Immigration Department plays a crucial role in safeguarding national security by delivering high-quality, convenient, and professional immigration services. Its main objective is to facilitate the entry of legitimate travelers while detecting and preventing immigration-related crimes. The department also provides reliable international travel identification for Maldivian citizens. For Maldivian nationals planning to migrate abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assists through its Consular Services Department, helping citizens obtain visas from Missions accredited to the Maldives.

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office (ATO) provides temporary shelter, food, and medical care to the victims housed in guesthouses. The National Anti-Human Trafficking Steering Committee, overseen by ATO and comprising senior government officials, serves as the primary interagency body responsible for coordinating the government's anti-human trafficking efforts. The committee held several virtual meetings during the reporting period. The Ministry of Defense continued to provide office space for ATO, which is staffed by the director of anti-trafficking and a policy and outreach consultant.

International organizations with migration mandates, including IOM, ILO, and the World Bank, oversee the Maldives from their offices in Sri Lanka. The IOM has one staff member based in Male. Additionally, UNDP and UNICEF have representatives in Male, although they have not engaged in any migration-related activities within the country.

VI.5.3.1. Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women

To gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by migrant women, several interviews were conducted. These interviews shed light on the difficulties encountered by migrant women, particularly those from Asia, and provided insights into their diverse experiences and perspectives as they navigate these challenges.

“Migration has its benefits and is filled with many challenges. Although it has financial benefits in comparison to staying in our own country, it can be lonely, and also frustrating.” (Migrant woman from India).

“Migration is also attached with societal criticism, because in my society my decision is seen as stepping out of the boundaries laid by society. While I am the breadwinner, also managing a home remotely, my husband is also abroad somewhere else earning money to provide a good education to our children. Not being able to see the children is hard while facing many challenges in a foreign land trying to fit in with the host country norms and amidst much pressure that comes from family back home due to societal views.” (Migrant woman from Bangladesh).

Conversations with many migrant women revealed a range of challenges they face. While discrimination and prejudice are among their primary concerns, mistreatment and gender-based violence were also frequently highlighted. Access to appropriate healthcare is another major issue, as they often find that there are no affordable insurance schemes available to them, either from their home country or the host country. Regardless of the approach, the migration process presents numerous challenges. Migrant

workers frequently encounter exploitation, discrimination, and a lack of legal protection in their destination countries. Ensuring their rights and well-being is essential for establishing a fair and ethical migration system.

VI.5.3.2. Needs of Young Migrant Women

Nearly all migrant women in the Maldives are there for work, with many employed in professional sectors like healthcare and education or as domestic workers. A smaller number reside in the country based on marriage. The needs of young migrant women in the Maldives are significant, though they vary depending on whether their migration is related to work or marriage. These needs also differ according to the type of employment they hold, ranging from domestic work and labor roles to managerial and relatively well-paid positions.

Some of these needs include:

- ***Safe and secure accommodation:*** Young migrant women need access to safe and secure accommodation to protect them from exploitation, abuse, and trafficking;
- ***Access to education and skills training:*** It is important for young migrant women to have access to education and skills training programs that can help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to secure better job opportunities and improve their livelihoods
- ***Health and reproductive rights:*** Young migrant women need access to healthcare services, including reproductive health services, to

ensure their well-being and to address any health issues they may face;

- ***Legal protection and support:*** Young migrant women need access to legal protection and support services to ensure their rights are protected and to seek justice in case of any violations or abuses.
- ***Social integration and support networks:*** Young migrant women need support in integrating into the local community and building social networks to reduce isolation and provide a sense of belonging;
- ***Access to information and resources:*** Young migrant women need access to accurate and reliable information about their rights, available services, and resources that can help them navigate their new environment;
- ***Empowerment and leadership opportunities:*** It is important to provide young migrant women with opportunities for empowerment and leadership development to enhance their self-esteem, confidence, and decision-making abilities.

Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach involving government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to ensure the well-being and protection of young migrant women in the Maldives.

Many international organizations are collaborating with the government to develop a fair, just, and convenient system for migrants in general. Most international organizations with direct or indirect migration mandates, such as the IOM (with one staff member based in Male), ILO, and

the World Bank, oversee the Maldives from Sri Lanka. Although UNDP and UNICEF have representatives in Male, they have not engaged in any migration-related activities in the country. Additionally, the Maldives Red Crescent runs a support program specifically for migrants.

Migrant women in the Maldives, mainly from Asia, face various challenges depending on their migration reasons, typically work or marriage. Many work in sectors such as healthcare, education, or domestic work. Key needs include safe accommodation, access to healthcare (especially reproductive services), education and skills training, legal protection, social integration, and leadership opportunities. Migrant women also face discrimination, gender-based violence, and limited access to affordable healthcare. International organizations and the government are working together to create a fair migration system, but many issues remain, especially for vulnerable migrant populations.

VI.5.4. Romania

Romania, both a significant source and destination for migration, provides a unique context for examining the challenges faced by young migrant women. With substantial migration flows in recent decades, Romania offers valuable insights into the specific hardships encountered by these women.

Migration trends in Romania are marked by a significant outflow of people seeking better economic opportunities and living conditions in other European Union countries. This is particularly true for young individuals, including young migrant women, who often leave Romania in search of employment, education, and a higher quality of life.

Before 2005, Romania did not face the challenge of "importing" foreign workers for its labor market. The use of foreign specialists, paid at the national level, was rare and mostly limited to multinational companies. However, with nearly 1.5 million Romanians, along with their families, moving abroad for work, the local market experienced a severe labor shortage. Over the past 5-6 years, this shortage has led local employers, in collaboration with authorities, to implement compensatory measures, resulting in an increasing number of workers from diverse multicultural backgrounds entering Romania each year.

A recent report by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2024) highlights that Romania is experiencing an unprecedented surge in both emigration and immigration, making it an increasingly attractive destination for economic migrants. The number of work permits issued to non-European Union (EU) citizens has been steadily rising. In 2022, Romania issued nearly 5,200 work permits to Sri Lankan citizens, representing over 50% of such permits granted by the entire EU. Additionally, Romania issued 6,700 work permits to Nepalese citizens (22% of EU permits) and 2,600 to Bangladeshi citizens (12% of EU permits).

The report also notes that the annual number of work permits issued to non-EU nationals tripled between 2013 and 2022. In 2024 alone, 100,000 work permits were approved, with expectations for the figure to rise to 140,000. This is in addition to 50,000 to 60,000 workers who entered Romania over the past six years. Romania is clearly transitioning from a nation of emigrants to one of immigrants.

Among the immigrants were migrant women, who faced issues related to pay inequality, receiving lower salaries than men despite national legislation prohibiting such discrimination.

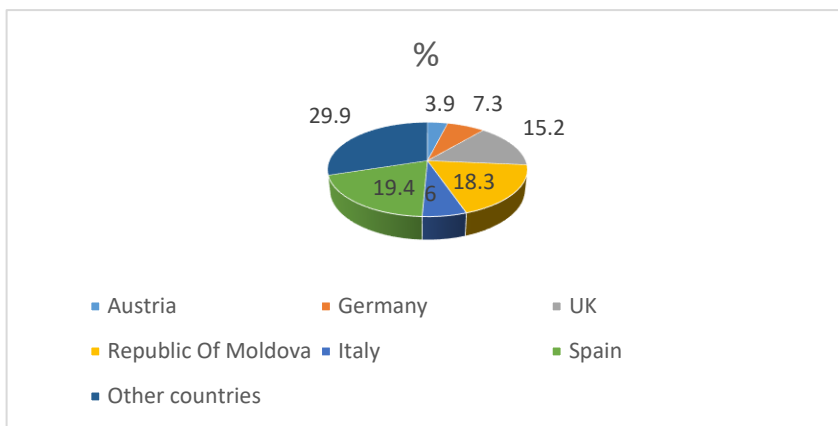


Figure 3. Distribution of migrants from Romania in 2019, by country of destination (Source: Lukic, Forrester, & Faragó)

VI.5.4.1. Challenges Faced by Young Migrant Women

Romania, as both a major source and destination for migration, provides a distinctive context for exploring the challenges faced by young migrant women. Within the migration landscape, young migrant women in Romania encounter specific challenges due to their gender, age, and migratory status. This group represents a unique demographic that faces a range of obstacles throughout the migration process.

According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022), young migrant women in Romania face several challenges,

including limited access to education, employment opportunities, and social services in the host country. Additionally, they encounter gender-specific issues such as discrimination, exploitation, and restricted access to support networks.

➤ ***Educational challenges***

Young migrant women in Romania often struggle to access quality education due to language barriers, cultural differences, and insufficient educational support. Additionally, the lack of recognition of credentials earned in their home countries can further hinder their educational progress (Colhon, 2019; Lăzăroiu et al., 2017).

➤ ***Employment and economic challenges***

These women frequently face difficulties in securing suitable employment due to limited language skills, lack of work experience, and low educational attainment. These challenges are compounded by labor market discrimination, often leading to underemployment or exploitation (Stoica, 2018).

➤ ***Social integration challenges***

Adapting to a new cultural and social environment can be particularly challenging for young migrant women in Romania. They often experience isolation, social exclusion, and a lack of support networks. Cultural differences, stereotypes, and prejudices further hinder their integration into Romanian society (Mărmureanu et al., 2019; Sandu & Grigoraș, 2017).

➤ ***Discrimination and gender-based violence***

Young migrant women in Romania are especially vulnerable to discrimination and gender-based violence, including exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by their migrant status, language barriers, and limited access to legal and social support (Lăzăroiu & Vilceanu, 2019; Sandu, 2018). A report by the ICAR Foundation (2022) examined gender-based violence (GBV) within the migrant population in Romania, highlighting significant issues. Most respondents were Muslim women under 34 years old, with varied educational levels, some employed and others managing household and childcare duties.

The study found that most migrant women associate GBV with physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual violence. A notable 77% reported experiencing GBV in their countries of origin, mainly within their families, while 70% had not encountered GBV since arriving in Romania. Surprisingly, 75% of respondents were unaware of the severe consequences of GBV on victims and their communities. Many felt pressured to remain silent about their experiences to avoid bringing public shame upon their families and communities. In response, stakeholders provide services such as social, psychological, and legal counseling, medical assistance, shelter, and in-kind support.

Young migrant women often face heightened vulnerability and marginalization due to the numerous barriers they encounter. Reports suggest that in Romania, the specific needs of young migrant women are frequently overlooked, with a lack of targeted policies and programs to support them. As a result, these women often struggle with integration, social inclusion, and

empowerment in their host country. Authorities must recognize their challenges and implement solutions that address their needs, allowing them to lead dignified and inclusive lives.

VI.5.4.2. Needs of Young Migrant Women

The status of migration and the needs of young migrant women in Romania are critical issues that demand greater attention and research (Smith, 2021). In the coming years, there is expected to be a stronger emphasis on inclusive leadership, with leaders required to recognize and combat all forms of discrimination. Training inclusive leaders will become a priority for authorities, private companies, and individuals in leadership roles. Key areas of focus should include the following:

➤ ***Education and skills development***

Efforts should be made to improve educational support, language training, and recognition of educational qualifications earned abroad. Schools and educational institutions should adopt inclusive policies and develop multicultural programs to better support the integration of young migrant women (Diaconu & Dascălu, 2019; Ivănescu, 2016).

➤ ***Employment and economic empowerment***

Promoting vocational training, entrepreneurship, and skills development programs can enhance the employability of young migrant women. Ensuring their access to guidance, social protection, and targeted

employment support can help mitigate economic challenges and reduce the risk of exploitation (Carstea & Grigoraş, 2018; Tomiţă, 2015).

➤ ***Social integration and support networks***

Creating safe spaces and support networks that encourage social interaction and cultural exchange can facilitate the social integration of young migrant women. Awareness campaigns, intercultural events, and mentorship programs can help bridge the gap between communities and promote understanding (Petrescu & Milos, 2019).

➤ ***Combating discrimination and gender-based violence***

Strengthening legislation against discrimination and gender-based violence is essential. Awareness-raising initiatives, training programs for law enforcement, and victim support services can help prevent and address discrimination and violence (Voicuţ et al., 2019; Zamfir & Sandu, 2019).

To effectively tackle gender-based violence (GBV) within migrant communities, it is crucial to enhance collaboration among consulates/embassies, the General Inspectorate for Immigration, health facilities, NGOs, international organizations, and UN agencies. This coordination aims to improve responses to GBV incidents. Regular data collection on migrants' experiences with GBV is essential for informed decision-making. Offering culturally sensitive support through training and seminars enhances understanding of migrants' backgrounds. Additionally, improving access to essential services for GBV survivors and promoting awareness of available services through professional networks is necessary.

Aligning national GBV policies and laws with international standards ensures effective protection for victims.

Therefore, it is crucial for policymakers, organizations, and communities to recognize and address the needs of young migrant women in Romania. This includes providing access to education and training programs, healthcare services, legal support, and opportunities for economic empowerment. Addressing these needs will promote the well-being and success of young migrant women in their host countries and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable migration policies.

Young migrant women in Romania face numerous challenges, including limited access to education, employment opportunities, and social services. They also encounter gender-specific issues such as discrimination, exploitation, and vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). Social integration is hindered by language barriers, cultural differences, and isolation. Many young migrant women struggle with finding suitable employment and face pay inequality. Addressing these issues requires targeted efforts in education, employment support, social integration, and combating GBV through stronger legislation and coordinated services. Policymakers must prioritize inclusive policies to support the well-being and empowerment of migrant women in Romania.

VI.6. Conclusions

As migration continues to rise, an increasing number of migrants are women. Young migrant women face distinct challenges, including exploitation, discrimination, gender-based violence, and insufficient legal protection in their destination countries. Protecting their rights and well-being is essential for establishing a fair and ethical migration system. Addressing their specific needs is also vital to promoting inclusive leadership and building a more equitable society.²

Addressing the challenges faced by young migrant women is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, young migrant women bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and ideas that enrich the leadership landscape. Their unique backgrounds and insights foster fresh ideas, innovative solutions, and a deeper understanding of complex issues. Including their voices in decision-making processes ensures a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of all individuals.

Secondly, meeting the specific needs of young migrant women is essential for achieving gender equality and social justice. These young women often face intersecting forms of discrimination, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. By supporting their access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and social support systems, we empower them, creating a level playing field that allows them to thrive and contribute fully. This support not only enhances their individual potential but also strengthens the communities and organizations they are part of.

Additionally, investing in the leadership potential of young migrant women has a ripple effect on society. By equipping them with skills, knowledge, and opportunities, we empower them to become leaders who can advocate for the rights and needs of others. These young women can serve as role models, inspiring future generations and breaking down barriers for marginalized communities.

Moreover, the linkages between migration and development must be carefully managed. The multifaceted challenges young migrant women face require comprehensive strategies and policies. Addressing issues related to education, employment, social integration, gender-based violence, exploitation, and discrimination is essential for the inclusion and empowerment of this vulnerable group. Governments, civil society organizations, and international institutions must collaborate to create an environment that ensures the well-being and rights of young migrant women. Policies should maximize the positive impacts of migration on development while minimizing any negative consequences.

International cooperation is also key in addressing these complex challenges. Collaboration between countries of origin, destination countries, and international organizations can lead to better migration governance, improved protection for migrant workers, and enhanced development outcomes. Recognizing the contributions of migrant workers and addressing the challenges they face is crucial for creating a more inclusive and sustainable global migration system.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges and needs of young migrant women is not only the right thing to do but also a strategic imperative for

fostering inclusive leadership and creating a more equitable world. By recognizing their value, supporting their development, and providing them with opportunities, countries can fully benefit from their diverse perspectives and contributions. It is critical to champion the cause of young migrant women, enabling them to navigate societal integration and leadership, and empowering them to build a more inclusive society for all.

Part VII:

CAUSES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND THE BEST PRACTICES FOR TACKLING IT



CAUSES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN AND THE BEST PRACTICES FOR TACKLING IT

VII.1. Introduction

Gender discrimination refers to the unfair treatment or prejudice against individuals based on their gender. It continues to be a pervasive issue with detrimental effects on individuals across various aspects of society.

Gender discrimination manifests in many forms, including unequal pay, limited career opportunities, and barriers to education, employment, and social interactions. While progress has been made in challenging discriminatory practices and promoting gender equality, the psychological impact of gender discrimination on young women remains a critical concern that requires further examination. This paper will explore the causes of discrimination against young women in Malta, Italy, the Maldives and Romania, and discuss the best practices for eliminating it. These issues not only impact young women individually but also have broader economic implications for society.

This chapter aims to examine the psychological effects of gender discrimination on young women, exploring how experiences of discrimination shape their mental health and well-being.

VII.2. Origins of Discrimination Against Young Women

Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in societal norms, stereotypes, and unequal power dynamics. It remains a significant barrier to gender equality and social justice, particularly for young women, who are often vulnerable to its harmful effects. Young women face discrimination in various aspects of their lives, including education, employment, and social interactions. Those who take on nurturing roles in society are especially prone to discrimination. A thorough examination of school textbooks reveals significant elements of gender bias, which contribute to the social conditioning of students and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes about women and girls. This cultural socialization has conditioned girls to adopt passive roles, limiting their development as independent thinkers.

This study will explore the causes of discrimination against young women in the Maldives, Italy, Malta, and Romania, and will also discuss best practices for effectively reducing and eliminating this discrimination.

Gender discrimination, rooted in societal norms and stereotypes, poses a significant barrier to equality, especially for young women. They face discrimination in education, employment, and social interactions, with those in nurturing roles being particularly affected. Gender bias in school textbooks perpetuates harmful stereotypes, conditioning girls to adopt passive roles and limiting their development as independent thinkers.

VII.3. The Significance of a Study on Gender Discrimination

A study on gender discrimination can have a profound impact in several ways. Firstly, it raises awareness about the presence, forms, and impact of discrimination in various aspects of society, such as education, employment, healthcare, and decision-making processes. This increased awareness can encourage individuals, organizations, and policymakers to take action and address these issues head-on.

Secondly, research on gender discrimination informs the development and implementation of policies and laws aimed at reducing inequalities and promoting gender equality. By providing evidence about specific areas where discrimination occurs, policymakers can design targeted interventions and advocate for necessary changes.

Furthermore, understanding the causes and consequences of gender discrimination helps us grasp its wider implications on individuals, families, and communities. This knowledge reveals the negative impact discrimination has on opportunities, self-esteem, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Armed with this understanding, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Moreover, a study on gender discrimination empowers individuals by equipping them with knowledge and tools to challenge discriminatory practices. By understanding the contributing factors, individuals can address biases both personally and within broader systems, leading to positive change.

Finally, this research promotes diversity and inclusion by highlighting how discrimination limits opportunities based on gender, hindering the progress of a diverse society. By initiating discussions on the value of diversity and the need to create inclusive environments, the study fosters an environment that embraces and respects individuals of all genders.

Overall, a study on gender discrimination plays a critical role in tackling inequalities, challenging stereotypes, and promoting gender equality in all spheres of life. Its far-reaching impact can bring about positive changes, empowering individuals and creating a more inclusive society.

A study on gender discrimination raises awareness of its impact on society, informs the development of policies to reduce inequalities, and highlights its broader effects on individuals and communities. It empowers people to challenge discriminatory practices and promotes diversity and inclusion. Overall, such research plays a key role in fostering gender equality and creating a more inclusive society.

VII.4. Research Objectives

The overall aim of this chapter is to examine gender discrimination as a barrier to inclusive leadership and explore how its elimination can lead to true inclusivity in leadership. In this regard, the research will focus on the following specific objectives:

- To explore the various forms of gender discrimination prevalent in society today;
- To identify the underlying causes and contributing factors of gender discrimination;
- To assess the impact of gender discrimination on different aspects of individuals' lives, such as education, employment, health, and well-being;
- To examine the effectiveness of current laws, policies, and initiatives aimed at addressing gender discrimination;
- To investigate the intersectionality of gender discrimination with other forms of discrimination, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status;
- To propose evidence-based strategies and interventions to effectively combat and reduce gender discrimination in different spheres of life;
- To highlight the potential consequences and long-term implications of gender discrimination on individuals, families, communities, and societies at large;

- To enhance awareness and understanding among individuals and communities about the detrimental effects of gender discrimination, fostering greater empathy and support for gender equality;
- To contribute to the existing body of knowledge on gender discrimination, aiding in the development of comprehensive policies and strategies to promote gender equality and advance inclusive leadership;
- To advocate for the implementation of gender-inclusive practices and policies in both public and private sectors, aiming for tangible change in reducing gender discrimination and achieving inclusivity.

This entire study aims to examine gender discrimination as a barrier to inclusive leadership and how its elimination can foster true inclusivity. It explores various forms of discrimination, their causes, impacts, and intersectionality with other biases. The focus is on evaluating current policies, proposing strategies to combat discrimination, and highlighting long-term implications for individuals and society. It advocates for gender-inclusive practices to promote equality and inclusive leadership in both public and private sectors.

VII.5. Literature Review

Gender equality is not just an abstract concept; it is a fundamental human right that everyone should strive for. It is crucial not only for fairness and justice but also for creating a thriving, sustainable world. Many international organizations, including the European Union and the United Nations, recognize its importance and have made gender equality a core value and goal. These organizations are committed to ensuring that women are treated equally in all aspects of life, including the workplace. Unfortunately, inequalities persist, both hidden and obvious, that continue to hinder women's progress. However, by working collectively, these barriers can be broken, leading to a more equal and inclusive world for all.

Young women worldwide continue to face various forms of discrimination due to their gender, which hampers their social, economic, personal, and professional development. According to Cohen et al. (2020), workplace discrimination negatively impacts women's professional development, limiting employment opportunities and their ability to advance to leadership positions (Johns, 2013). This literature review aims to identify the causes of discrimination against young women and explore best practices to address and combat this issue, drawing on articles that discuss young women's experiences and strategies to promote gender equality.

The review reveals multiple causes of discrimination against young women. Societal stereotypes (Dalton, 2014) and traditional gender roles perpetuate the notion of women as inferior, leading to the belief that women

are less capable than men (Eagly & Diekmann, 2018) and resulting in unequal treatment in various areas of life (Brescoll & LaFrance, 2004). Structural and cultural biases also contribute to discrimination by denying young women access to education, employment, and equal representation (World Economic Forum, 2020; Fitzpatrick & Ryan, 2019). Gender bias in policies, structures, and cultural norms creates barriers to accessing education, employment, and leadership positions (Ceci & Williams, 2011; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). Additionally, intersectional identities such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation further compound the discrimination faced by young women (Crenshaw, 1989; Carson & Boone, 2020).

Educational programs play a crucial role in raising awareness of gender discrimination, challenging stereotypes, and promoting equal opportunities for young women (Brown et al., 2016). Comprehensive sex education programs in schools are effective in combating harmful stereotypes, fostering gender equality, and empowering young women to make informed choices about their reproductive health (Baams et al., 2019).

Creating safe and supportive environments that foster inclusion and active participation is another key strategy to overcome discrimination. Empowering young women through mentorship, counseling, and peer support networks has shown positive outcomes (Revvill et al., 2018).

In the employment sector, businesses should be encouraged to adopt inclusive policies, address gender pay gaps, and implement family-friendly work practices. These measures can help remove barriers and promote equal opportunities for young women (McGregor et al., 2019).

Supporting grassroots initiatives that advocate for young women's rights, such as youth-led organizations and community-based projects, is vital in amplifying young women's voices and driving social change (Hakim & Carr, 2021). Programs focusing on empowerment and mentorship have proven effective in building self-confidence and equipping young women with the skills to overcome discrimination (Zimmerman et al., 2011).

To dismantle systemic barriers faced by young women, gender-sensitive policies and legal reforms addressing equal pay, workplace discrimination, and gender-based violence must be implemented (United Nations, 2015). Additionally, involving men and boys in discussions about gender equality and challenging traditional gender norms fosters an environment of support and inclusivity for young women (Promundo & UN Women, 2017).

The discrimination faced by young women is rooted in societal biases, systemic inequalities, and intersectionality. To combat this, comprehensive sex education, supportive environments, inclusive business practices, and grassroots activism are essential. Implementing these best practices will help create a more equitable society, where young women have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Gender equality is a fundamental right crucial for a fair and sustainable world. Despite efforts by organizations like the EU and UN, young women continue to face discrimination due to stereotypes, structural biases, and intersectionality. Key strategies to combat this include education, inclusive policies, mentorship, and grassroots activism. Addressing these barriers can promote gender equality and create opportunities for young women to succeed.

VII.6. Causes of Discrimination Against Young Women

Even today, the findings from studies conducted decades ago by Davidson and Burke (1994), Chauhan (1999), and Oakley (2000) remain relevant. These studies agreed that gender discrimination, especially within executive leadership positions, is largely driven by socio-cultural attitudes and gender-based divisions of labor. Much of the issue also revolves around perceptions of gender-specific leadership behaviors, which continue to be the subject of intense debate. However, research on gender differences in leadership remains ambiguous. Repressive attitudes and beliefs are often linked to patterns of discrimination related to stereotyping, socially prescribed norms, and subconscious bias.

Society frequently holds rigid gender stereotypes that limit the opportunities available to young women. Biases about women's abilities, leadership qualities, and suitability for certain professions reinforce the belief that women are less capable than men, hindering their progress (Johnson, 2016). These gender roles and expectations contribute significantly to the discrimination against young women (Smith, 2018).

Workplaces are often structured around male-oriented models, where "women were considered, at best, temporary participants in a male-dominated public realm of work" (Cleveland, Stockdale, and Murphy, 2000). Feminine management attributes are often undervalued, making workplaces disadvantageous and repressive to women. The underrepresentation of young

women in positions of power and influence perpetuates gender bias, limiting opportunities for them to succeed and be heard (Jones, 2020; Johnson, 2018).

Discrimination against young women is deeply rooted in systemic inequality and institutionalized practices. Structural barriers within educational institutions, workplaces, and government policies often disadvantage young women and contribute to their marginalization (Smith, 2021). Addressing these systemic issues is essential for eradicating discrimination and achieving gender equality (Brown, 2019).

Unequal power dynamics in institutions and relationships also contribute to the discrimination faced by young women. This can manifest as unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership, and limited decision-making power. Cultural and societal norms perpetuate discrimination by dictating how young women should behave and what roles they should occupy (Brown, 2019). These influences restrict the autonomy of young women, with patriarchal systems and male dominance further limiting their opportunities in decision-making processes (Davis, 2017).

In many countries, young women from marginalized communities face additional barriers to accessing quality education, healthcare, employment, and leadership opportunities. This lack of access perpetuates their marginalization and discrimination (Jones, 2020). Gender wage gaps and glass ceilings also prevent young women from reaching their full potential.

The media plays a significant role in shaping societal attitudes toward young women. Often, media portrayals focus on women's physical appearance rather than their achievements, contributing to their objectification and

sexualization (Smith, 2021). This objectification reinforces harmful stereotypes, leading to increased discrimination and harassment (Brown, 2019).

Discrimination against young women is further compounded by factors of intersectionality, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation (Garcia, 2019). These intersecting identities exacerbate discrimination and marginalization (Lee, 2018).

The traditional perception of femininity and competence, along with expectations for women to be both "tough and caring," continues to impede the career advancement of women, as highlighted by Jamieson (1995). Despite progress through sheer determination, doubts remain about whether women should advance to leadership roles (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van Engen, 2003). Research shows that when women retain and display their unique leadership styles, they are often perceived as incompetent. This results in women needing more qualifications than their male counterparts, reflecting a double standard in how men and women are evaluated. Recent evidence suggests that biased socio-cultural attitudes continue to have significant negative consequences.

Gender discrimination, especially in leadership roles, remains a significant issue rooted in socio-cultural attitudes, stereotypes, and gender-based labor divisions. These biases limit young women's opportunities, particularly in male-dominated workplaces, and reinforce beliefs that women are less capable than men. Structural barriers, unequal power dynamics, and media portrayals further contribute to the marginalization of young women, especially those from marginalized communities. Intersectionality exacerbates this discrimination, and despite progress, women often need more qualifications than men to overcome biased perceptions in leadership roles.

VII.7. Consequences of Gender Discrimination

Gender inequality impacts all aspects of society, not just women. It adversely affects individuals of all genders and the community as a whole. Women face disadvantages in many areas, including the gender pay gap, unequal distribution of unpaid care work, gender-based violence, and underrepresentation in leadership. For gender-diverse individuals, discrimination, stigma, and exclusion when expressing their gender identity lead to poorer health, economic, and social outcomes. Men and boys are also impacted by societal pressure to conform to rigid masculine stereotypes, which harm their physical and emotional well-being. Studies show a significant link between gender discrimination and emotional vulnerability (Jadhav, 2023).

In the workplace, rigid gender stereotypes affect both men and women. Women are often underrepresented in leadership roles, and workplaces tend to be structured around male-dominated models, which disadvantage women. Harmful forms of masculinity also contribute to violence against women and gender-diverse individuals, highlighting the need to involve men and boys in efforts toward achieving gender equality.

➤ *Psychological effects of gender discrimination on young women*

Gender discrimination erodes young women's self-esteem and self-worth, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt (Meenakshi, 2014). The constant invalidation and marginalization they face due to their gender undermine their confidence and well-being. This pervasive discrimination can create a sense of constant threat and insecurity, contributing to anxiety and

stress (Brown et al., 2019). Chronic exposure to discrimination also increases the risk of depression (Garcia et al., 2021). Moreover, the lack of control and limited opportunities for advancement contribute to feelings of powerlessness and frustration (Smith et al., 2019).

➤ ***Economic consequences of gender discrimination on young women***

Gender discrimination has long-standing economic impacts, with young women facing challenges such as the gender pay gap, limiting their earning potential and long-term financial security. Workplace discrimination also hinders their career advancement, restricting promotions, mentorship, and leadership roles. In some countries, gender discrimination prevents women from pursuing education and entering fields like STEM, further limiting their career opportunities and perpetuating economic inequality. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, employers, and society to promote gender equality and support young women's economic empowerment.

➤ ***Social exclusion***

Social exclusion as a result of gender discrimination is widespread, affecting education, employment, healthcare, and politics. It perpetuates inequality and marginalization, especially for women and non-binary individuals. Gender discrimination leads to unequal pay, limited career advancement, and underrepresentation in leadership positions. Societal expectations and stereotypes also restrict young women's freedom of expression, mobility, and participation in decision-making processes, further

silencing their voices and hindering their ability to advocate for their rights. This exclusion has far-reaching consequences, limiting their involvement in social change.

Gender inequality affects all aspects of society, disadvantaging women, gender-diverse individuals, and men. Women face issues like the gender pay gap, unequal care work, and underrepresentation in leadership, while societal pressures on men also impact their well-being. Gender discrimination erodes young women's confidence, leading to mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. Economically, discrimination limits their earning potential and career advancement, especially in male-dominated fields. Social exclusion resulting from gender bias restricts young women's freedom, career opportunities, and participation in decision-making, further perpetuating inequality.

VII.8. Effective Strategies for Combating Discrimination Against Young Women

Addressing social exclusion caused by gender discrimination requires a comprehensive approach. It involves challenging gender norms, empowering young women through education and skill development, and creating inclusive policies and programs to promote equality. To achieve this, it is essential to amplify young women's voices, provide them with opportunities to thrive, and dismantle systemic barriers that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. Promoting gender equality, challenging biases, and fostering supportive environments will help create a more inclusive and equitable world for all. The following actions and strategies can help achieve these goals:

➤ *Raising awareness and education*

Promoting gender equality through educational initiatives such as workshops and awareness campaigns is crucial for challenging stereotypes and biases (Robinson, 2019). Educating individuals about the forms and impacts of gender discrimination equips them to counteract these issues effectively (Smith, J. et al., 2018). Teaching young women about their rights and empowering them to challenge discriminatory practices can make a significant impact (Harris, 2016).

➤ *Reform policies and implementing gender-inclusive laws*

Organizations should develop and enforce comprehensive policies that create inclusive and equitable work environments (Campbell, S. et al., 2018).

Enforcing gender equality laws and policies, including promoting equal opportunities, pay equity, and addressing gender-based harassment, is vital (Taylor, 2017). Employers should support work-life balance initiatives and create flexible policies to benefit all genders, ensuring equal opportunities for young women in education, employment, and leadership (Anderson, 2018).

➤ ***Encouraging diversity and inclusion in leadership***

Promoting diversity in decision-making positions is crucial for reducing gender discrimination (Konrad, A. M. et al., 2018). Government, businesses, and organizations should adopt affirmative action policies to embrace diversity and encourage women's representation on boards, in political offices, and leadership positions to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

➤ ***Fostering mentorship and support networks***

Mentorship programs provide critical support to young women, helping them navigate challenges and build valuable connections (Clark, 2020). Creating supportive networks and mentorship opportunities reaffirms women's value in various industries and fosters professional growth (Ragins, B. R. et al., 2019). Safe spaces should be established where young women can share their experiences and seek guidance (Baker, 2019).

➤ ***Addressing unconscious bias***

Recognizing and addressing unconscious biases is essential to combating gender discrimination (Lai, C. K. et al., 2014). Organizations should

implement training programs to raise awareness of biases and provide tools for overcoming them.

➤ ***Encouraging female leadership***

Actively promoting women's representation in decision-making roles is one of the most effective strategies for addressing gender discrimination (Miller, 2020). Celebrating the achievements of young women in various fields can also inspire the next generation to step forward (Turner, 2019).

Addressing social exclusion caused by gender discrimination requires a comprehensive approach involving education, policy reforms, and promoting diversity. Key strategies include raising awareness through educational initiatives, implementing gender-inclusive laws, encouraging diversity in leadership, and fostering mentorship and support networks for young women. Addressing unconscious bias and actively promoting female leadership are also essential steps to dismantle systemic barriers and create a more inclusive and equitable society.

VII.9. Country Status: Malta, Italy, Maldives and Romania

The following sections will examine the status of discrimination against young women in Malta, Italy, the Maldives and Romania.

VII.9.1. Gender Discrimination in Malta

Discrimination against women remains a pervasive and significant issue in many societies worldwide, including Malta, where it affects various aspects of women's lives. Despite notable progress in promoting gender equality, particularly in education and employment, women in Malta still face multiple forms of discrimination. Rooted in prejudice and inequality, this discrimination hinders their equal participation in social, economic, and political spheres, obstructing both their personal and professional development and restricting societal progress. By addressing these issues through legislative reforms, educational initiatives, and promoting women's political participation, Malta can make significant strides towards gender equality. Only through collective efforts can a society free from discrimination be realized, where women can thrive and contribute to the nation's growth.

In the workplace, young women in Malta often experience unequal treatment, including lower salaries, limited career advancement opportunities, and biased recruitment processes. This is reinforced by traditional gender roles and societal expectations placed on women.

Gender discrimination also leads to violence against women, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault, which remains a pressing

issue in Malta. Victims may face barriers in accessing justice, support systems, and societal stigma, leading to underreporting of cases. In 2020, the Malta Police Force reported 1,763 domestic violence cases, with women accounting for the majority of victims. Many incidents go unreported due to fear, shame, or a lack of support systems.

Women are also underrepresented in Maltese politics at both the national and local levels. This gender imbalance limits women's influence in decision-making processes, resulting in policies that may not fully address their needs and perspectives.

VII.9.1.1. Causes of Gender Discrimination

➤ *Cultural factors*

Malta's culture, influenced by traditional gender roles, often perpetuates discrimination against women. Prevalent gender stereotypes shaped by cultural norms hinder women's empowerment and limit their opportunities for advancement. Traditional beliefs about women's primary roles as caregivers and homemakers restrict their full participation in the labor market and decision-making processes. Additionally, societal stigmas surrounding women's rights, sexuality, and reproductive health amplify discrimination.

Institutional discrimination occurs in employment, education, and healthcare, where women face unequal treatment and limited access to resources. Despite significant strides in education, gender-based disparities persist. Women are often guided toward traditionally female-dominated fields

and face challenges in pursuing higher education in male-dominated professions.

In the workplace, women encounter wage gaps and underrepresentation in leadership positions. Although the gender pay gap is narrowing, it remains significant in Malta. Discrimination and biases hinder women's career progression and limit their earning potential. Inadequate work-life balance policies and societal expectations place a disproportionate burden on women, further impacting their professional advancement.

Discrimination also affects women's access to healthcare, particularly in reproductive health and sexual violence support. Limited access to affordable and comprehensive reproductive health care, including family planning, contraception, and abortion, hinders women's autonomy over their bodies. Additionally, support services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence require improvement to meet the needs of women facing such abuses.

➤ ***Education and career opportunities***

Studies by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2019) found that young women in Malta face discrimination in their educational pursuits. Gender role stereotypes influence career choices, limiting access to traditionally male-dominated fields like STEM. This bias results in a lack of gender diversity in these sectors and reinforces the notion of segregated career paths.

Research by the Malta Employers' Association shows that young women encounter unequal opportunities for career advancement compared to

men. Glass ceilings continue to exist, posing significant obstacles to women's professional growth. Gender pay gaps persist, with young women earning less than their male counterparts despite similar qualifications and experience.

➤ ***Sexual and reproductive health***

Gender discrimination also affects sexual and reproductive health. According to a report by The Women's Rights Foundation (2019), societal attitudes often stigmatize young women who seek contraception and make choices about their sexual health. The stigma surrounding abortion remains strong, leaving young women without essential support and options.

VII.9.1.2. Consequences of Gender Discrimination

The implications of gender discrimination extend from economic consequences to mental health issues. Discrimination limits women's career opportunities, leading to lower wages and a widening gender pay gap. This directly impacts their financial independence, contributing to economic inequality and an increased risk of poverty, particularly for single mothers and older women.

Women who experience discrimination may suffer from increased stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem, which can hinder their personal and professional growth, negatively affecting their overall well-being and quality of life.

Various studies have explored gender as a critical factor in determining economic growth. These studies suggest both direct and indirect ways in which the status of women in society influences economic development. For instance,

the gender gap in education and literacy has adverse effects on economic growth. When women are denied equal access to education, it lowers overall human capital. Additionally, when social norms and cultural values lead families to invest more in boys than in more talented girls, resources are misallocated, further hindering economic progress. Educated women are also more likely to have fewer children, which increases female labor force participation and stimulates economic growth.

Malta recognizes the importance of gender equality and has taken significant steps to combat discrimination. The State is committed to eliminating gender discrimination in all forms, whether perpetuated by individuals, organizations, or enterprises. Civil society organizations and advocacy groups are also playing a crucial role in promoting societal change by challenging discriminatory practices and advocating for gender equality (Malta Foundation of Women's Rights, 2019; Malta Confederation of Women's Organizations, n.d.). Educational campaigns, public awareness initiatives, and policy advocacy are being used to engage the public and policymakers in dismantling gender biases.

Malta has made considerable progress in developing its legal framework to address gender discrimination. The Equality Act (2004) provides legal protection against various forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. Additionally, the National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2014-2020) outlines a comprehensive plan to promote equal opportunities and address existing inequalities.

The state is dedicated to ensuring that women workers receive not only equal rights but also equitable wages for comparable work to their male

counterparts. Legal measures such as the Gender Equality Act (2003) and various gender mainstreaming initiatives aim to challenge systemic discrimination and promote equal opportunities across different sectors. The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) works to eliminate discrimination and raise awareness about gender-based inequalities.

Gender equality is enshrined in the Maltese Constitution. Article 14 emphasizes the State's commitment to ensuring equal access to economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for both men and women (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). The Equality for Men and Women Act (2003) provides national legal measures to fight discrimination, while the NCPE, an independent body, promotes gender equality across various domains.

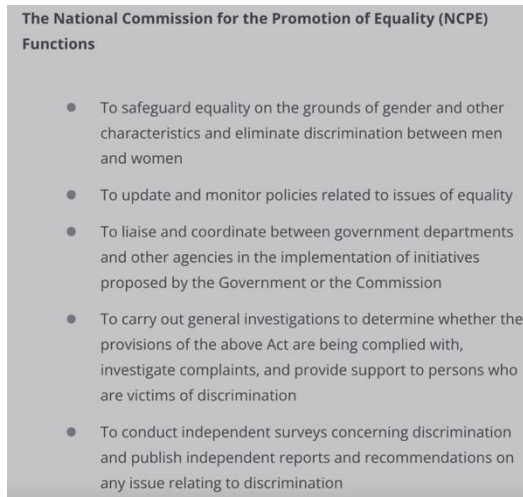


Figure 1. *The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) Functions.*

VII.9.1.3. Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination

To effectively tackle gender discrimination faced by young women in Malta, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Education plays a key role, beginning with initiatives that challenge gender stereotypes from an early age. Schools and universities should actively promote gender diversity across all fields, encouraging young women to pursue their interests without bias. Promoting gender equality in Malta can be achieved through several measures and initiatives, similar to efforts in many other countries:

Promoting gender equality through comprehensive educational programs at all levels is crucial. This includes challenging gender stereotypes, fostering respect, and instilling values of equality and empathy from early childhood.

Efforts should also focus on encouraging and supporting women's active participation in politics. This could include implementing quotas or affirmative action policies to ensure greater representation, as well as long-term mentoring and support programs to address barriers faced by women pursuing political careers.

Employers must work towards creating inclusive environments that offer equal opportunities for women to grow and advance in their careers. Addressing the gender pay gap, enabling flexible work arrangements, and actively promoting women to leadership positions are vital steps towards eliminating workplace discrimination.

Raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights is essential to combating discrimination in this area. Public campaigns and access

to comprehensive sexual education are necessary to break down societal barriers and ensure that young women can make informed decisions about their bodies.

Combatting violence against women requires ongoing efforts by authorities, civil society organizations, and the community. Strengthening support structures, ensuring effective reporting mechanisms, and providing survivors with comprehensive assistance and protection are crucial. Enforcement and enhancement of existing laws, such as the Equality Act and Domestic Violence Act, are necessary to offer stronger legal protection against discrimination and gender-based violence.

In Malta, discrimination against women persists due to cultural and institutional factors. Addressing this issue requires widespread awareness, policy changes, and proactive efforts from both the government and civil society. By promoting gender equality, challenging stereotypes, and creating inclusive environments, Malta can foster a society where women can fully participate and contribute without discrimination. Achieving equality requires collaboration between educational institutions, employers, policymakers, and society as a whole. By addressing stereotypes, promoting diversity, and creating supportive environments, Malta can make significant progress toward a more just and inclusive society for young women.

Gender discrimination remains a significant issue in Malta, affecting women's participation in social, economic, and political spheres. Rooted in cultural and institutional factors, discrimination leads to wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, and limited access to healthcare, particularly in reproductive health. Young women face barriers in education and career advancement, especially in male-dominated fields like STEM. Discrimination also impacts mental health, causing stress and reduced self-esteem. Malta has made legal strides to combat this issue, including the Equality Act and gender mainstreaming initiatives. To further address these challenges, comprehensive educational programs, inclusive workplace policies, political participation, and stronger support systems are essential for promoting gender equality.

VII.9.2. Gender Discrimination in Italy

VII.9.2.1. Causes of Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination remains a prevalent issue worldwide, including in modern Italian society. Despite notable advancements in women's rights, various social, cultural, and systemic barriers continue to impede gender equality across different aspects of Italian life. Although progress has been made in promoting gender equality, it is crucial to address the ongoing discrimination faced by young women in Italy. Considering that the female population is larger than the male population, it is critical that this valuable human resource is not wasted.

Population in Italy as of January 2024, by gender

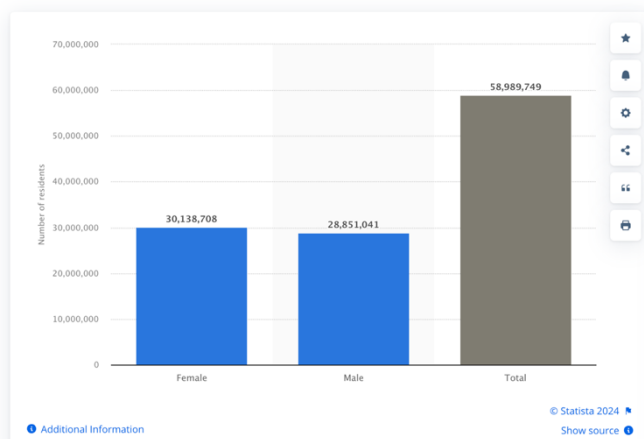


Figure 2. Population in Italy as of January 2024, by gender (Source: Statista)

According to Buswell (2024), in Italy, women enjoy rights and freedoms comparable to those in the Global North. Their gender-based rights are safeguarded by both national laws and legislation from the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN).

The Italian constitution clearly states that all citizens, regardless of gender, are considered equal under the law. Italy also adheres to various gender-based legislations set by international and EU standards.

However, despite these efforts, the implementation of women's equality in Italy does not always reflect these ideals. Compared to other countries in the region, Italy falls behind in terms of gender equality. According to the 2023 EIGE Gender Equality Index, Italy ranks 14th out of 27 EU member states, with a score of 68.2 out of 100. Additionally, the 2023 Global Gender

Gap Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) places Italy 30th out of 36 EU countries (Buswell, 2024).

It is important to work towards enhancing gender equality in Italy, recognizing the need for improvement and acknowledging that more progress is necessary.

Since World War II, the Italian government has passed several key pieces of legislation to improve women's position, including:

- 898/1970 – legalizing divorce in Italy
- 151/1975 – granting women equal economic and property rights in marriage
- 194/1978 – legalizing abortion in Italy
- 198/2006 – promoting equal opportunities and removing barriers for Italian women in the public sphere
- 120/2011 – introducing quotas for female representation on the boards of state-owned bodies and public limited companies
- 168/2023 – strengthening protection against gender-based and domestic violence (Buswell, 2024).

The 2021–2026 National Gender Equality Strategy (Strategia Nazionale per la Parità di Genere) outlines the government's current gender equality strategy, focusing on equal pay and power.

Despite this, Italy continues to struggle with persistent problems such as low employment rates and public attitudes toward women's roles in society. Recent reports by both Amnesty International (2022) and Human Rights Watch (2024) particularly highlight gender-based violence, LGBT+ discrimination,

and restrictions on women's sexual and reproductive rights. Italy is also a signatory to many other legal instruments.



Figure 3. Situation report on discrimination against women in Italy (Source: Gender Global Gap Report 2022)

Despite these legal protections, Italian society continues to grapple with pervasive gender stereotypes and sexism. Therefore, there is still progress to be made in Italy's journey toward achieving true gender equality. Research on the subject reveals numerous reasons for the discrimination faced by women, which ultimately boils down to attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs passed down through generations.

➤ **Traditional gender roles**

In the intricate fabric of Italian society, there exists a deep-rooted patriarchal culture that embeds traditional gender roles into everyday life. These roles have endured over time, with men being seen as primary providers

while women are entrusted with domestic duties and caregiving responsibilities (Di Santo, D. 2023). Unfortunately, these stereotypes remain firmly entrenched, perpetuating unequal treatment between genders. Societal expectations often compel women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over their career aspirations and personal goals. These stereotypes act as barriers, limiting opportunities for young women and reinforcing gender inequality. According to Garofalo et al. (2023), one in two women in Italy does not work, earns one euro less than a man, and holds only 32 percent of leadership positions. Italy lags behind other European countries in female employability (50.2 percent vs. a European average of 62.7 percent).

A recent survey conducted by the statistics research department (2021) found that widespread stereotypes about women persist in Italy. Approximately 42 percent of those surveyed believe that women cannot be good mothers without sacrificing their professional lives to some extent. Additionally, two out of three respondents acknowledged that women face greater challenges in pursuing successful careers, as they are compelled to sacrifice aspects of their family life. Interestingly, over half (51 percent) of the respondents in Italy feel that gender inequalities are exaggerated by society.

➤ ***Unequal employment opportunities***

According to Buglione (2019), women in Italy encounter numerous obstacles in their careers, including lower pay, fewer opportunities for advancement, and a lack of policies promoting work-life balance. The gender earnings gap remains substantial, with women earning less than men for the same work. Young women in Italy also struggle to obtain equal employment

opportunities, facing significant challenges such as gender-based discrimination during the hiring process, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields like engineering or finance. As a result, unemployment and underemployment rates tend to be higher among young women.

➤ ***Limited representation in politics and leadership***

Italian women are underrepresented in political and leadership positions, negatively impacting their ability to shape policies and make important decisions. This lack of representation means that women's voices and perspectives are not adequately heard, perpetuating gender inequality in society (Lutz, 2019).

Share of women in politics in Italy as of 2021, by position

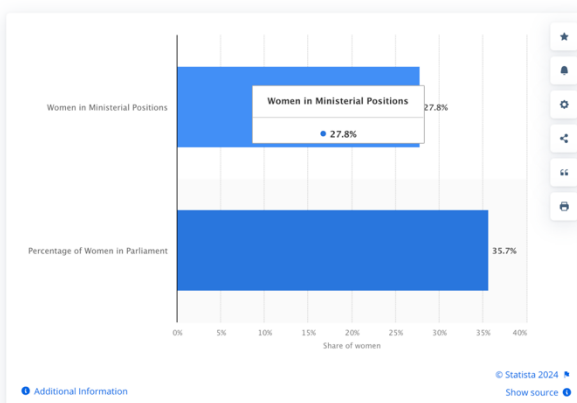


Figure 4. *Share of women in politics in Italy as of 2021, by position (Source: Statista)*

Additionally, young women are noticeably underrepresented in these positions compared to men. This disparity exacerbates the issue, as it limits young women's ability to contribute their unique perspectives to decision-making processes. Consequently, policies may overlook important issues and fail to address women's specific needs.

Lutz (2019) also notes that the absence of female role models in leadership positions can discourage young women. When they do not see other women successfully occupying leadership roles, it can make them question their potential and hinder their ambitions. This unfortunate cycle perpetuates gender disparities in political and leadership positions.

➤ ***Deep-rooted machismo culture***

In many parts of Italy, a strong machismo culture still exerts significant influence on society. This deeply rooted belief system reinforces male dominance and leads to unequal treatment between genders. It manifests in everyday situations through the use of sexist language, the objectification of women, and the unfortunate acceptance of sexual harassment as normal behavior.

To address gender discrimination faced by young Italian women, it is essential for all levels of society to work together. Challenging outdated stereotypes, offering equal job opportunities, promoting more women in leadership roles, and addressing the influence of machismo culture are crucial steps toward achieving true gender equality in Italy. A feminist approach, with collective organization, mobilization, support, and advocacy, is key to effectively bringing about positive change (Gurrieri et al., 2022). While gender

discrimination persists, its consequences have wide-ranging negative outcomes.

VII.9.2.2. Consequences of Gender Discrimination

Continued and long-standing discrimination has led to negative and harmful attitudes.

➤ *Economic inequality*

Gender discrimination in employment and wages contributes to economic inequality, creating financial challenges for women and their families and resulting in a persistent wealth gap between men and women. In Italy, discrimination against young women hinders their economic empowerment, leading to lower income levels and limited career opportunities (Rubery et al., 2013). Unfair hiring practices, gender wage gaps, and biased promotion criteria push young women into lower-paying jobs and exclude them from leadership roles.



Figure 5. Source: Gender Global Gap Report 2022

➤ ***Gender-based violence***

Despite efforts to combat gender inequality and violence, dismantling harmful preconceptions takes generations. While statistics show a decline in the number of female homicide victims and the gender pay gap, women in Italy still experience male chauvinism and gender-based violence. Cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment continue to rise, highlighting the urgent need for action (Barbagli et al., 2015).

Gender-based violence manifests in various forms, including verbal abuse, physical harm, and psychological mistreatment. Psychological violence, though less understood, is often rooted in societal expectations of women. Italy ranks low among EU countries in terms of women's economic participation, with traditional views prioritizing women as homemakers still prevailing. In domestic settings, women suffer more from abuse, stalking, and sexual harassment. Recent years have seen an increase in reported sexual violence and femicides, with former partners often responsible for these crimes.

To effectively combat gender-based violence, Italy must prioritize prevention, protection, and the investigation and punishment of offenders, following guidelines set by the Council of Europe Expert Group on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). Anti-violence centers and shelters should be supported through long-term financing to ensure consistent services for survivors. Italian legislation should also consider incidents of violence when determining custody and visitation rights for children.

➤ ***Psychological and health impact***

Gender discrimination severely affects women's well-being, leading to stress, anxiety, and mental health challenges, and it can also impact their physical health. Discrimination restricts access to essential healthcare services and reproductive rights, exacerbating negative outcomes.

➤ ***Mental and physical health***

Young women bear the burden of gender-based discrimination, which damages their self-esteem and increases depression and stress levels. Limited access to healthcare, including reproductive rights, worsens these effects (Parmer, 2020).

➤ ***Education and skills development***

Discrimination can significantly hinder young women's access to quality education and skills development, limiting their personal and professional growth. Gender biases in educational institutions and hiring processes discourage women from pursuing higher education or entering male-dominated fields. For example, while women dominate fields like teaching and psychology, they are underrepresented in STEM, where they make up only 27% of students. This gender gap in STEM is linked to disparities in employment and pay, as these fields offer the best remuneration in the labor market (National Strategy for Gender Equality, 2021).

➤ ***Social and cultural limitations***

Discrimination reinforces harmful societal norms and gender stereotypes, restricting young women's freedom to pursue their aspirations. Social pressures related to traditional gender roles and societal expectations around marriage and family limit their personal and professional opportunities. A recent survey found that 42% of respondents believe women cannot be good mothers without sacrificing some professional success, and two out of three respondents agreed that women face greater challenges in balancing career and family life. Furthermore, 51% of respondents in Italy believed that gender inequalities are exaggerate (Statista, 2024).

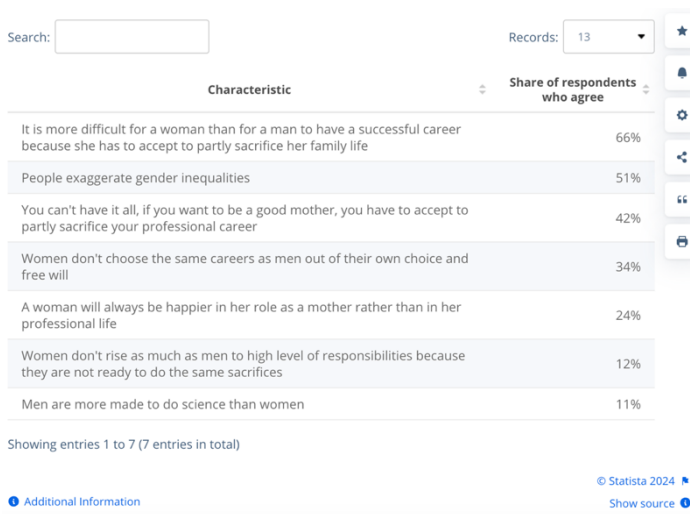


Figure 6. *Stereotypes about women in Italy 2023 (Source: Statista, 2024)*

VII.9.2.3. Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination

The far-reaching effects of discrimination on young women in Italy are profound, impacting their economic potential, educational opportunities, mental and physical health, and overall participation in society. Recognizing these impacts is essential for developing strategies to combat discrimination and create an inclusive and fair society. Below are potential solutions to address gender discrimination in Italy.

➤ *Legislative support*

To effectively combat discrimination, it is crucial to establish and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. These laws should address various areas, such as promoting equal pay, encouraging work-life balance, and implementing gender quotas in politics and corporate leadership. By legislating and enforcing these measures, Italy can move toward a fair and equitable society that fosters gender equality (Lombardo et al., 2009).

➤ *Education and awareness*

Advancing gender equality requires promoting inclusive education, raising awareness through campaigns, and launching media initiatives that challenge conventional gender stereotypes while showcasing positive role models. Roseneil (2012) suggested that integrating these strategies fosters a society that embraces equality and empowers individuals to break free from limitations imposed by traditional gender norms.

➤ ***Empowerment and support networks***

According to a UNESCO report (2011), investing in programs that enhance women's skills, provide mentorship, and establish support networks is essential. These programs can help women overcome barriers and encourage their active participation in various sectors. By implementing these measures, Italy can create a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing violence against women effectively.

In summary, gender discrimination remains a significant issue in Italy, leading to socio-economic inequalities and limiting women's opportunities for social and political engagement. To address this issue effectively, Italy must undergo a comprehensive transformation across legal, social, and cultural spheres. Enacting supportive legislation, promoting education and awareness, and empowering women are essential steps toward achieving gender equality and building a fair and equitable society for all.

Gender discrimination in Italy persists despite advancements in women's rights. Systemic barriers, traditional gender roles, and cultural stereotypes hinder women's economic potential, access to education, mental and physical health, and representation in leadership. While Italy has made legislative efforts to promote gender equality, it ranks lower than many EU countries in terms of progress. Women continue to face wage gaps, limited career opportunities, gender-based violence, and underrepresentation in politics. To combat these issues, Italy needs comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, education and awareness campaigns, and empowerment programs to support women's participation in all sectors.

VII.9.3. Gender Discrimination in the Maldives

As one of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Maldives faces a unique set of challenges. With a small population, geographical dispersion, and isolation, the nation is economically, socially, and environmentally vulnerable. The effects of climate change and extreme weather events, such as coastal erosion, flooding, and rising sea levels, pose significant threats. However, despite these challenges, the Maldives has experienced strong economic growth, primarily due to its successful tourism industry, robust fisheries, and services sectors. In fact, the GDP per capita was \$11,890 in 2018.

This economic growth has also led to positive improvements in the well-being of the population. Life expectancy has increased for both men and women, and the total fertility rate has decreased over the past decade. Child survival rates have significantly improved, and maternal mortality has declined since 1997. Additionally, primary school enrollment rates are almost universal, with 96.6% of girls and 97.3% of boys enrolled in school as of 2017.

Maldivian women are considered among the most emancipated in South Asia and the Islamic world. There is no institutional discrimination along gender lines in access to education, health services, or public sector jobs. School enrollment rates for girls and boys are almost the same and very high (94% for primary and 55% for secondary school), as are adult literacy rates (98%). The Maldives is also a country that does not lack laws pertaining to gender equality. The constitution itself prevents discrimination (Maldives Gender Family and Social Services, 2020).

The Maldives has made remarkable strides in advancing gender equality over the past three decades. It has taken significant steps to align its legal framework with international standards, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which it ratified in 1993.

In 2008, the President ratified a constitution that grants all citizens of the Maldives equal rights and freedoms without any form of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. The constitution also removed provisions that prohibited women from being elected as President or Vice-President. The Maldives has further demonstrated its commitment to gender equality through legislative reforms. In 2014, it enacted laws addressing sexual offenses, sexual harassment, abuse prevention, and human trafficking. The adoption of the Penal Code in 2015, which includes a definition of rape, was also a significant milestone.

The country has made institutional and policy improvements to accelerate the elimination of discrimination against women and promote gender equality. It established the Family Protection Authority in 2012 and adopted the Domestic Violence Prevention National Strategy (2014-2016) (CEDAW, 2015). These efforts have contributed to creating a safer environment for women. However, a gender equality diagnostic in 2014 identified challenges such as limited government capacity and resources to fully implement the National Gender Equality Policy. The policy's comprehensive scope has been hindered by budget constraints and staffing shortages.

In line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Maldives has taken various actions to achieve these targets. In

2016, the government established the SDG Division and the National Ministerial Coordination Committee to facilitate the coordination and implementation of the SDGs. These initiatives aim to address diverse issues, including gender equality.

Recognizing the importance of eradicating discrimination based on sex or gender, the Maldives enacted numerous laws.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Ratification: 1-Jul-1993 Upon signature: Reservations: Maldives made reservations to sub-paragraphs (a), (c), (d) and (f) of paragraph 1 of Article 16.
Gender Equality Act	The Gender equality Bill, passed by the People's Majlis on 16th August 2016. The president of Maldives ratified the Bill on 23rd August 2016. Upon ratification, the Act has been published in the Government Gazette.
Prevention of Sexual abuse and Harassment Act16-2014_dh	Prevention of Sexual abuse and Harassment Bill, passed by the People's Majlis on 27th April 2014. The president of Maldives ratified the Bill on 13th May 2014. Upon ratification, the Act has been published in the Government Gazette.
Sexual Offences Act	Prevention of Sexual abuse and Harassment Bill, passed by the People's Majlis on 27th April 2014. The president of Maldives ratified the Bill on 13th May 2014. Upon ratification, the Act has been published in the Government Gazette.
Domestic Violence Act (Unofficial Translation)	In accordance with Article 92 of the Constitution, the "Domestic Violence Bill" passed in the 5th sitting of the 1st session of the People's Majlis held on Monday the 9th of April 2012, has become law and has been published in the Government Gazette upon its ratification by the President on Monday the 23rd of April 2012 (2 Juma'd'al Akhir 1433).
Family Act -4/2000 (Unofficial Translation)	This Act makes provision in respect of the principles to be followed in the Maldives with regard to marriage, divorce, payment of maintenance, custody, guardianship, scription of legitimacy, proof of paternity and certain other matters of family life in the Maldives.

Figure 7. Source - Human Rights Commission of The Maldives

One of the most important actions was the adoption of the Gender Equality Act in 2016. This legislation, which came into force in 2017, promotes gender equality in public and family life while also providing remedies for gender-based discrimination. In 2017, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) was developed with input from UN Agencies, outlining gender-responsive actions.

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY GOALS



Figure 8. Source – Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, Republic of Maldives

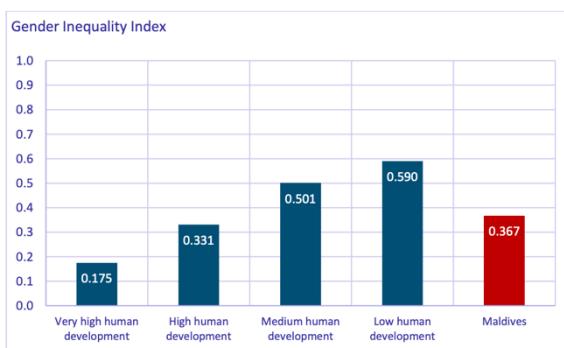
The GAP serves as a guide for inclusive projects, including those focused on managing climate change-induced water shortages. However, progress on its adoption has unfortunately stalled (Rogers, 2018).

The Maldivian Constitution explicitly guarantees equal rights for all citizens. Additionally, the Gender Equality Act of 2016 prohibits gender-based discrimination in various aspects of life, including employment and education. There are also many other laws and regulations pertaining to the protection of women. The Maldives is taking transformative steps, such as the groundbreaking initiative "Gender Equality Seal," to be awarded to government agencies, private businesses, and companies that actively promote efforts to remove gender-based obstacles.

Overall, the Maldives has shown a strong commitment to gender equality through legal reforms, institutional improvements, and policy initiatives. While challenges remain, the country continues to work towards creating a more equitable society for all.

Despite these advancements in human capital development, and despite the fact that women in the Maldives do not face particular discrimination in education, health, and survival, gender discrimination exists to varying degrees at all levels and in many fields.

Recently, there have been setbacks in gender equality rankings. In 2020, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report placed the Maldives at 123 out of 153 countries, a ten-place decrease from 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2020). The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 also ranked the Maldives at 119 out of 153 countries in terms of gender economic participation and opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2020). This indicates a significant gap that hinders women's financial independence and negatively impacts their overall well-being.



Source: (UNDP, 2019^[18])

Figure 9. Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2019

Some attribute this decline to increasing conservatism within the country.

In terms of political gender representation, the political participation of women in the Maldives remains considerably low and has regressed since 2018. In 2018, 24 out of 99 political appointees (24%) and 38 out of 633 Local Councillors (6%) were women. There were four seats (out of 87) held by women in the 19th parliament. Finally, in 2019, 35% of the President's office staff were women, which was significantly higher compared to previous periods (Government of the Maldives, 2020). The gender gap in political participation manifests in the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, leading to a lack of inclusive policies and perspectives. Recent parliamentary elections, which concluded in April 2024, reduced women's parliamentary representation to 3.5% from the previous 7.5%, as reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), highlighting a significant disparity in political representation (IPU, 2021).

According to the Government of Maldives, Gender Family, and Social Services (2020), in 2008, the prohibition against women running for president was eliminated from the constitution. While there are no specific requirements for female representation in local or national governments, various efforts and strategies exist to promote greater involvement of women in politics. An example is the Decentralization Act of 2010, which stipulates that Island Women Development Committees (WDCs) must be established as an essential component of local governance (El-Horr et al., 2016).

Although women's presence in the political sphere is increasing at lower political tiers, the numbers do not reflect positive outcomes. While

progress has been made with the introduction of gender quotas for political parties in 2009, commitment to international conventions and treaties, and women's representation in political decision-making processes in the Maldives remain significantly low. Women continue to face barriers in accessing leadership positions and actively contributing to policymaking.

Gender-based domestic violence and sexual harassment are widespread and remain critical issues affecting women and girls across the country. According to the report Gender-Based Violence & Social Norm Change (UNFPA Maldives), in their lifetime, 1 in 3 women in the Maldives experiences violence, with 1 in 4 women subjected to intimate partner violence. Additionally, 26% of women (aged 15-49) believe that certain circumstances can justify a partner's violent actions.

According to a review by UN Human Rights (2020), the Maldives is currently at a crucial stage in its journey towards democracy, facing challenges due to the increasing presence of religious fundamentalism. This situation is hindering the progress of women and girls, preventing them from achieving gender equality. The UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls recently concluded a 12-day visit to the Maldives and issued a statement emphasizing the nation's need to embrace the potential of women and girls. They stressed that for the Maldives to flourish and thrive, it must break free from societal perceptions and rules that confine women and girls to subordinate roles. It is crucial to evaluate the causes of gender discrimination and address them with strategies that do not infringe upon the laws and regulations.

VII.9.3.1. Causes of Gender Discrimination

➤ *Social norms and cultural factors*

One of the main factors contributing to gender discrimination in the Maldives is deeply rooted in societal and cultural norms. These entrenched cultural beliefs and societal norms perpetuate discrimination against young women, reinforcing gender inequalities (Brown, 2019). Patriarchal systems and male dominance in decision-making processes further restrict the agency and opportunities available to young women (Davis, 2017).

Although there are no legal barriers to accessing education or explicit forms of discrimination, socially prescribed norms, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and traditional gender roles often limit women's access to quality education, employment opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes. Socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and expectations reinforce gender inequality, creating significant barriers to progress. Certain conservative narratives question women's competence to participate in public life and limit their roles to family care and procreation (United Nations Human Rights Special Resources). The recent spread of fundamentalist interpretations of Islam poses a strong barrier to gender equality, standing in contrast to the moderate teachings of Islam that the country has followed for decades. These traditional gender roles and stereotypes limit the opportunities and choices available to young women in the Maldives. Societal expectations often dictate that women should prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over education and career development.

➤ ***Geographical isolation challenges***

The geographical constraints of the Maldives as a dispersed island nation, coupled with patriarchal norms and biases against women leaving their homes to move away from their families, limit women's opportunities to access quality education and jobs. As a result, women from distant islands often have no choice but to engage in jobs deemed suitable for females, such as administrative, teaching, or health sector roles.

Traditional gender norms and patriarchal attitudes also play a significant role in perpetuating violence against women in the Maldives, and this remains a grave concern in the country. Research conducted by the Gender Equality Network Maldives (2020) indicates that societal norms often reinforce unequal power dynamics, leading to domestic violence and limiting women's access to justice. The nature of offenses reflects deeply entrenched gender inequalities and a lack of effective and timely legal protection. Fear of social stigma, lack of legal protection, and limited access to support services often prevent victims from seeking justice.

The Maldives Police Service (2021) reported 728 cases of gender-based violence in 2020, including instances of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment. These numbers underscore the urgent need to address this issue and create a safer society for all Maldivians. Recognizing the importance of combating gender-based violence, the Maldivian government has taken some crucial steps. The Domestic Violence Act (Law No. 3/2012) serves as a legal framework that criminalizes domestic violence and provides protection and assistance to survivors. Additionally, the Sexual Offences Act (Law No. 20/2017) addresses sexual harassment and assault, emphasizing the

importance of consent. Initiatives by the government, civil society organizations, and educational programs are working towards creating a society free from violence.

Research conducted by the Gender Equality Network Maldives (2020) also highlights how societal norms often reinforce unequal power dynamics, leading to domestic violence and limiting women's access to justice. Traditionally, sexual violence has been considered a “private matter” in the Maldives, one that shouldn’t be openly discussed. Sexual violence, especially in the context of domestic abuse, was seen as an issue between individuals that required a personal resolution rather than societal intervention. Furthermore, economic disparities, limited education, and lack of awareness exacerbate the problem.

➤ ***Early marriages***

In the outer islands, it is common for young women to be forced into early marriages. This disrupts their education and limits their opportunities for personal and professional growth.

➤ ***Implementation of laws and policies***

While the Maldives has enacted several laws in favor of gender equality, gaps in enforcement and challenges in ensuring compliance limit their effectiveness in combating gender discrimination, further aggravating gender inequality. Although strides have been made in implementing these laws, enforcement remains a major challenge. Discriminatory practices related to inheritance, divorce, child custody, and gender-based violent crimes persist due

to gaps in legislation and lack of enforcement (United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF, 2021). Strengthening the legal framework and ensuring its implementation are crucial steps toward tackling gender discrimination.

VII.9.3.2. Consequences of Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination remains a pervasive issue in the Maldives, where cultural biases and traditional beliefs continue to hinder gender equality. This article aims to shed light on the multifaceted consequences that arise from such discrimination, impacting various aspects of society and development.

➤ *Impacts on education*

Although there are no policy differences in terms of access to education, and constitutional provisions prohibit gender-based discrimination, gender discrimination still exists. This restricts educational opportunities for girls in the Maldives, leading to lower literacy rates, limited career prospects, and the perpetuation of gender-based stereotypes. Girls and women from the islands face additional barriers to accessing education, resulting in reduced economic productivity and hindering societal progress (UNDP Maldives).

➤ *Effects on employment and economic development*

Gender discrimination in the workplace limits women's access to equal employment opportunities, fair wages, and promotions. This leads to unjust income disparities, economic inequality, and reduced overall productivity. Moreover, these limitations impede the country's ability to achieve sustainable economic development and hinder progress toward the United Nations'

Sustainable Development Goals (Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Services, 2020).

➤ ***Health and well-being***

Gender discrimination negatively affects the health and well-being of women in the Maldives. Limited access to healthcare services, inadequate gender-sensitive health policies, and traditional gender roles contribute to higher mortality rates, poor mental health outcomes, and limited reproductive rights. These consequences not only impact individual well-being but also hinder socioeconomic development.

➤ ***Social and cultural implications***

Gender discrimination perpetuates harmful gender norms and contributes to a patriarchal society where women's voices are often marginalized. Gender-based violence, early marriage, and limited political representation are direct consequences of these discriminatory attitudes. This perpetuates a cycle of inequality, hindering the nation's social progress and sustainable development.

VII.9.3.3. Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination

Addressing gender discrimination necessitates closing gaps in education, which is of utmost importance. It is crucial to revise repressive and harmful elements in curricula and cultivate a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum. Textbooks and educational materials should be made gender-sensitive. From infancy through adulthood, schools should conduct awareness

programs and gender sensitization activities to facilitate the necessary mental transformation regarding gender. Education and awareness programs play a vital role in combating gender-based discrimination and violence by imparting knowledge on gender equality, consent, and healthy relationship dynamics to challenge societal norms.

While there may not be discriminatory policies in education, women still encounter challenges in accessing higher education, employment, and career advancement opportunities due to patriarchal beliefs and conservative influences. The gender disparities in the workforce and economic opportunities further marginalize women in the Maldives. To eliminate gender discrimination, it is essential to encourage greater involvement of women in decision-making roles to disrupt existing power dynamics and foster positive transformation. Recognizing and applauding the achievements of young women in diverse fields will also inspire future generations and defy societal expectations.

Efficient implementation of the Gender Action Plan is crucial, along with the establishment of regular monitoring mechanisms. Promoting awareness of gender equality laws and the Gender Action Plan is essential, as is educating law enforcement officers and other stakeholders to enhance response mechanisms and support services for survivors of gender-based violence and discrimination. Further efforts are needed to ensure proper implementation, awareness, and comprehensive support services.

Establishing a dedicated ministry or department for gender is also recommended to effectively address gender issues and ensure their integration across all sectors and ministries. Additionally, enhancing the capacity of government staff in mainstreaming gender concerns is advisable. Frequent name changes and combining mandates within the ministry addressing gender discrimination may inadvertently convey a message that the issue is not considered equally important by everyone. Thus, maintaining stability and continuity can help demonstrate the significance of gender equality.

Name of Ministry	Name of Minister	Duration
Ministry of Youth Women's Affairs and Sports	Rashida Yoosuf	11 November 1993 – 6 November 1996
Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare		6 November 1996 – 11 November 1998
Ministry of Women's and Social Security		11 November 1998 – 9 October 2002
Ministry of Women's and Social Security	Aneesa Ahmed	9 October 2002 – 11 November 2003
Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security		11 November 2003 – 13 September 2004
Ministry of Gender and Family	Aishath Mohamed Didi	July 2005 – November 2008
Ministry of Health and Gender	Aminath Jameel	November 2008 – February 2012
Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights	Uza Aishath Dhiyana Saeed	7 May 2012 – 19 November 2012
Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights	Uza Aishath Azima Shakoor	10 April 2013 – 01 July 2013
Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights	Dr. Amaal Ali	09 July 2013 – 17 November 2013
Ministry of Health and Gender	Dr. Mariyam Shakeela	21 November 2013 to 01 July 2014
Ministry of Law and Gender	Uz Mohamed Anil	1 July 2014 – 22 June 2016
Ministry of Gender and Family	Aminath Zenysa Shaheed Zaki	22 June 2016 to date

Figure 10. Changes to the name of the Ministry responsible for addressing gender issues (Source: Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, Republic of Maldives)

It is strongly encouraged to prioritize the empowerment of women and their active involvement in political matters. This will ensure their voices are heard in policy and decision-making processes, leading to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

To achieve this, it is important to focus on removing barriers that hinder women's mobility, limit their property ownership, and restrict their access to credit. By addressing these challenges, we can create greater economic and social opportunities for women.

It is also crucial to involve young women in awareness and skill-building programs. These programs should focus on building confidence, self-esteem, and assertiveness while educating them about the importance of including women in all aspects of society. Creating a safe space for young women to share experiences, seek advice, and build supportive networks is vital in eliminating gender discrimination. Mentorship programs should be designed to guide and support young women in overcoming challenges and developing confidence. Additionally, leadership training and entrepreneurship opportunities are essential for young women to thrive and contribute to society.

Efforts should also be made to promote economic opportunities for young women through vocational training, job placement programs, and support for entrepreneurship. Encouraging private sector companies to adopt gender-responsive policies and practices that provide equal opportunities and fair treatment for young women will further enhance their economic empowerment and societal development.

While the Maldives already has laws and regulations in place, it is crucial to focus on implementing gender equality policies that guarantee equal opportunities in education, employment, and leadership positions for young women. This should be accompanied by active measures to prevent and address gender-based violence, ensuring the safety and well-being of women.

Enforcing laws, regulations, and policies is essential to create an inclusive environment that dismantles systemic barriers to young women's progress.

Supporting the work of civil society organizations is also important in combating gender-based violence. These organizations provide emergency assistance, shelter, counseling, and advocacy for legal reforms and awareness campaigns. However, there is a need for comprehensive measures across all sectors and institutions to effectively address violence against women.

Access to comprehensive healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health, is crucial in promoting gender inclusivity. Promoting awareness about reproductive rights, family planning, and enabling young women to make informed decisions about their bodies and future is of utmost importance.

To address the consequences of gender discrimination, comprehensive policy reforms and awareness campaigns are necessary in the Maldives. This should include gender-responsive education, legal frameworks to protect women's rights, improved healthcare access and services, and ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Addressing the consequences of gender discrimination requires collective efforts from policymakers, civil society organizations, and individuals. Achieving gender equality is not just about human rights; it is also crucial for the sustainable development and prosperity of the Maldives.

In summary, despite having laws and policies, gender discrimination remains a persistent challenge in the Maldives. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives. Empowering and including

women in decision-making processes, particularly in politics and the economy, is essential for sustainable progress.

Promoting gender-responsive education, providing support services for survivors of gender-based violence, and fostering inclusivity are necessary steps toward achieving true gender equality in the Maldives. Concerted efforts are needed at multiple levels to raise awareness, strengthen legal protections, provide support services, and promote women's empowerment through education and employment opportunities in order to combat gender discrimination and create a safe and equitable future for all Maldivians.

The Maldives faces significant challenges as a Small Island Developing State, including climate change, geographic isolation, and gender discrimination. Despite economic growth driven by tourism, fisheries, and services, gender inequality persists in various areas. While legal reforms and policies have promoted gender equality, cultural norms and patriarchal systems limit women's access to education, employment, and decision-making roles. Gender-based violence remains widespread, and political representation of women is low. Efforts to combat these issues include implementing gender-sensitive education, improving enforcement of gender equality laws, and supporting women's empowerment through education, healthcare, and leadership opportunities. Addressing these issues is essential for sustainable development and gender equality in the Maldives.

VII.9.4. Gender Discrimination in Romania

Romania's dynamic economy presents a unique landscape regarding gender biases and disparities (Fargalla et al., 2020). According to Curseu (2011), as an Eastern European nation with a communist past, the promotion of gender equality and women's liberation was significant, with the "heroic working mother" serving as a prominent symbol in political ideology. However, despite changes post-communism, Romanian society remains largely patriarchal, with women facing challenges and being perceived as less capable than men in leadership roles.

Despite global advocacy for gender equality within organizations, the persistence of gender-discriminatory practices remains a significant issue, affecting countries worldwide, including Romania. Although Romania has made progress in addressing gender discrimination, the country continues to struggle with challenges related to the discrimination of women across various aspects of social, economic, and political life. Unfortunately, many women still experience gender discrimination and face obstacles in advancing their careers (Cohen et al., 2020), often being relegated to lower positions within organizational hierarchies, which hinders their personal and professional growth (Johns, 2013). This multifaceted problem is a troubling reality and poses significant challenges for a nation that has made commitments under the European Union's directives to promote gender equality. Discrimination against young women in Romania is an issue that requires urgent attention.

VII.9.4.1. Causes of Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination in Romania is a deeply rooted issue stemming from traditional norms and stereotypes that dictate the roles of men and women, leading to discrimination across all professions (Brown, 2013). The country's cultural landscape often reflects patriarchal attitudes, creating an environment where discriminatory practices thrive both in the workplace and at home. Society continues to embrace established gender roles, placing women in less authoritative positions and limiting their educational and career prospects. According to a report by Robayo et al. (2023), more than 80% of Romanians believe that a woman's primary role is to manage household and family responsibilities. This deep-seated perspective on gender roles poses a significant barrier to achieving gender equality and impedes progress in this area. Consequently, Romanian women are often steered toward professions traditionally dominated by women, such as healthcare and teaching, which restricts their opportunities for education, career advancement, and earning potential.

Biases and stereotypes deeply ingrained in the educational system also discourage young girls from pursuing advanced education or venturing into fields considered unconventional for women. Education plays a critical role in either perpetuating or dismantling gender stereotypes. A study conducted by the United Nations in Romania reveals that although educational opportunities for young girls have increased, the curriculum and teaching methods sometimes reinforce gender biases, limiting prospects for women. The report by Robayo et al. (2023) also states that the education sector is a key area where gender

gaps must be addressed for both girls and boys to achieve gender equality. In Romania, enrollment rates in early childhood education and care services are very low for both genders, particularly for children aged zero to two years. Additionally, there is a concerning trend of early school leaving among both girls and boys, with Roma communities and low-income households being especially affected.

In rural areas, societal norms related to gender can pressure boys to leave school early. On the other hand, teenage pregnancy may be one reason girls drop out of school. It is crucial that everyone, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge, and capabilities. Therefore, decision-makers should work on a comprehensive agenda that focuses on improving access to equal opportunities and achieving positive outcomes for all.

Economically, women face significant challenges, including the gender pay gap and underrepresentation in leadership roles. The gender pay gap remains a pressing issue, with Eurostat data indicating that women earn an average of 3-5% less than men for the same work. Moreover, women are noticeably underrepresented in leadership positions within companies. The National Institute of Statistics reports that only a small percentage of managerial roles are held by women, reflecting a clear gender imbalance in decision-making across various sectors.

Political empowerment for women in Romania remains limited, with low representation in the national parliament. Although Romania has made strides, such as appointing its first female prime minister in 2017, overall female participation in politics remains insufficient. The Inter-Parliamentary

Union ranks Romania as having fewer women in national parliaments compared to other European countries, underscoring the need for greater political inclusion.

Inadequate legal protection and weak enforcement mechanisms exacerbate gender discrimination, perpetuating inequalities. Although laws exist to combat discrimination, their implementation and enforcement are often insufficient, allowing discriminatory practices to persist. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that not only challenges traditional beliefs, stereotypes, and practices but also ensures the effective implementation and enforcement of robust legal protections against discrimination.

Economic factors, such as unequal pay and underrepresentation in higher-paying industries, also perpetuate gender discrimination in Romania. Closing the economic disparity between genders is vital for breaking the cycle of inequality. Additionally, the persistence of traditional gender roles and stereotypes limits women's access to education, employment, and leadership positions.

Romania's progress in gender equality remains limited. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (2023), Romania ranks last in the EU on the Gender Equality Index, with a score of 56.1 out of 100 points, 14.1 points below the EU average, highlighting significant disparities and the need for continued efforts to advance gender equality in the country.



Figure 11. Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023

Addressing the longstanding and deep-rooted attitudes and causes of gender discrimination in Romania's patriarchal society, which promotes male superiority, requires a deep understanding of its complexities and a comprehensive, multifaceted approach. This approach should challenge traditional beliefs, stereotypes, and practices deeply intertwined with societal structures and norms, while ensuring the implementation and enforcement of strong legal protections against discrimination.

VII.9.4.2. Consequences of Gender Discrimination

The discrimination experienced by young women is a key factor contributing to unequal pay and the obstacles they face when trying to enter high-earning professions. This financial inequality exacerbates the poverty rate among women, hindering their efforts to achieve economic independence.

Women's progression in the workforce, including promotions and leadership opportunities, is hindered by entrenched barriers, which perpetuate an uneven distribution of power in the workplace.

This prejudiced behavior not only creates a structural imbalance but also severely impacts the mental well-being of these young women, leading to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. These psychological consequences can suppress personal growth and limit their contributions to societal advancement.

In Romania, the repercussions of gender discrimination are significant. Wage gaps result in elevated poverty levels among the female population, particularly affecting elderly women and those living in rural areas, as reported by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men.

Gender-based violence is a major concern, serving both as a cause and consequence of gender discrimination, with detrimental effects on mental health, including increased anxiety and heightened stress.

Hidden in plain sight: gender-based violence is underreported, underfunded and invisible in the public agenda

Various forms of violence persist:

- **Domestic violence:** 30% of women in Romania have experienced physical and/or social violence since the age of 15
- **Sexual violence:** 32% of women in Romania have experienced sexual harassment.
- **Child marriage:** highest national incidence in EU
- **Trafficking:** Romania is a primary source country for sex trafficking and forced labor in Europe, mostly women & Children
- **LGBTI:** Highest rate of physical or sexual attacks in EU (along with Poland)

Data and Knowledge Gaps:

- No recent data on prevalence since 2014 EU-Wide Survey on Violence Against Women
- Administrative data is incomparable: inconsistencies in tabulation, unharmonized cross-institutional frameworks for data
- Only two comprehensive perception surveys have been conducted on GBV

Response Gaps:

- Based on 2020 administrative data: 45,405 cases of domestic violence reported to the police, only 3.3% had legal remedy and only 4.4% received services from public and NGO-based providers

Source: FRA (2014), (IPU, 2021) and GSNI by UNDP 2014, 2019 EU Fundamental Rights Report, (EIGE, 2021)

Figure 12. Source: FRA (2014), IPU (2021) and GSNI by UNDP 2014, 2019 EU Fundamental Rights Report (EIGE, 2021)

The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities highlights the harmful effects of gender discrimination and gender-based violence, which lead to heightened stress and reduced overall life satisfaction.

The various forms of gender discrimination, apparent across all sectors and in varying degrees, are detrimental to the country's growth and its economy (Robayo et al., 2023).

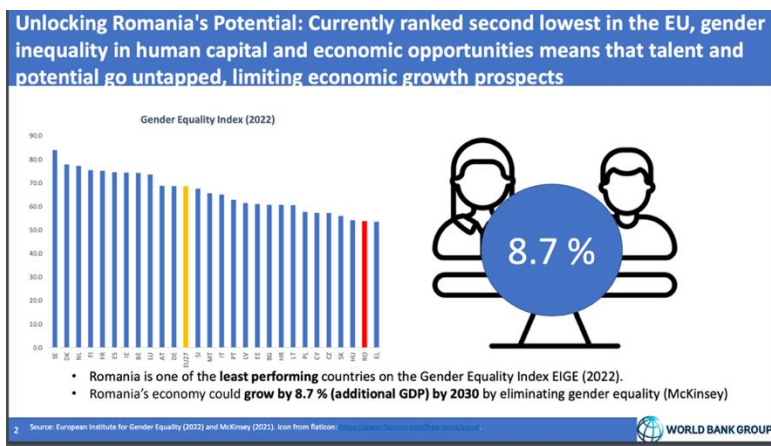


Figure 13. Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022

A report by Robayo-Abril (2023) highlights significant gender inequalities that persist across various dimensions in Romania, posing challenges to achieving important development goals such as poverty reduction, human capital improvement, and equal economic opportunities for all. These findings are especially relevant for Romania, given its high levels of poverty and inequality within the European Union (EU).

VII.9.4.3. Strategies to Combat Gender Discrimination

One of the most important areas to address gender discrimination is the education system. Revamping the educational system is crucial to abolishing sexist stereotypes from curricula and teaching. By providing gender-sensitive training for educators, we can create an environment that promotes equality from a young age. Implementing comprehensive educational reform focused on promoting gender equality, challenging traditional gender roles, and encouraging girls to pursue a wide range of academic and career paths is essential to eliminating gender bias.

It is imperative to introduce awareness campaigns designed to challenge societal biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes against young women. Utilizing media, social networks, and community engagement, these programs can help change cultural perceptions of gender roles.

Enhancing and enforcing current laws that uphold gender equality and counteract discrimination is also fundamental. This involves imposing more robust penalties for gender-based discrimination in the workplace and ensuring fair and equal access to employment opportunities. Achieving this goal may require introducing transparency in compensation across industries, supporting female entrepreneurship through grants and education, and ensuring equal opportunities for career advancement. Legal reforms can also enhance women's participation in politics. Boosting women's political participation is essential for achieving gender balance in decision-making processes. Initiatives like gender quotas for political parties and leadership training programs specifically for women can significantly contribute to narrowing this gap.

Creating mentorship programs and highlighting accomplished women across various fields will serve as powerful inspiration for young women, empowering them to break free from traditional gender roles and pursue their dreams.

Building robust support networks is also important. Collaboration among civil society organizations, non-profits, and government entities will provide young women with resources, support, and networking opportunities. These initiatives will foster personal growth and a sense of community among them.

Raising awareness about gender discrimination through campaigns and workshops by civil society organizations is vital to educating the public on the significance of gender equality and challenging long-held cultural norms.

Gender discrimination remains a prevalent challenge across various countries, including Romania. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive reforms in each nation, encompassing legal, social, and cultural dimensions to effectively combat gender discrimination and promote equality.

In summary, gender discrimination remains a significant challenge in Romania. To achieve gender equality and ensure equal opportunities, it is crucial to address discrimination against young women. Implementing educational reforms, launching awareness programs, enacting legislative changes, and establishing mentorship and support networks are vital steps in combating discrimination and promoting gender equality. Empowering young women will unlock their potential and contribute to a more prosperous and equitable society. It is essential for the government, civil society, and the public

to collaborate in fostering meaningful change by addressing root causes and implementing strategic solutions for women's rights and societal development.

Gender discrimination in Romania is a deeply rooted issue, influenced by traditional norms and a patriarchal culture, which limits women's opportunities in education, employment, and leadership. Despite progress, women face significant challenges, including wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and societal biases that hinder their advancement. The consequences of discrimination lead to increased poverty, mental health issues, and reduced overall life satisfaction among women. Comprehensive reforms are needed, focusing on education, awareness campaigns, legal protections, and mentorship programs, to promote gender equality and empower young women. Addressing these issues collaboratively is essential for fostering a more equitable society.

VII.9. Conclusions

Discrimination against young women is a complex and deeply ingrained issue in society, influenced by gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs, which pose significant challenges in our efforts to combat discrimination. These attitudes lead to marginalization, social exclusion, and ongoing discrimination.

To address this issue effectively, we need to take active measures and implement best practices. Strategies such as education, empowerment, and policy reforms are crucial for dismantling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. It is important for us—teachers, parents, peers, and society as a whole—to nurture values of equality and begin transforming mindsets from an early age.

Continuous evaluation and improvement, based on research and data collection, are essential in our journey toward eliminating gender discrimination. By actively implementing best practices rooted in education, policy changes, inclusion, supportive networks, and addressing unconscious biases, we can contribute to a more equitable society.

Eliminating gender discrimination is not only a matter of fairness and equality but also a strategic imperative for organizations and countries to thrive and remain competitive. By creating an environment that promotes gender equality and supports individuals based on their abilities, we can unlock the full potential of talent, foster innovation and collaboration, and cultivate a culture of inclusivity and excellence.

Together, we can shape a future where everyone has equal opportunities to lead and contribute to the success of organizations and society as a whole. Change starts with each one of us as we work toward building a world free from gender discrimination.

Part VIII:

PUBLIC POLICY TO SUPPORT YOUNG LEADERS, INCLUDING THOSE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND



PUBLIC POLICY TO SUPPORT YOUNG LEADERS, INCLUDING THOSE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND

VIII.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the role of public policy in supporting young leaders, with a particular focus on those from migrant backgrounds. Young leadership is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of innovation, social change, and economic development. However, young leaders, especially those with migrant backgrounds, often face unique challenges that hinder their potential, including systemic barriers in education, limited access to networks and resources, and difficulties with cultural integration.

The study addresses key objectives: first, to identify the current landscape of public policies that support young leaders globally; second, to analyze the specific challenges faced by young leaders with migrant backgrounds; and third, to propose policy recommendations that could better foster their leadership potential. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) What existing public policies support young leaders, particularly those with a migrant background? (2) What challenges do young migrant leaders face in accessing leadership opportunities? (3) What public policy interventions can be recommended to support and enhance the leadership potential of young migrants?

Findings reveal that while several countries have implemented policies promoting youth leadership, these often fail to adequately address the unique

needs of young leaders with migrant backgrounds. The study concludes with recommendations for more inclusive and targeted policies, such as mentorship programs, culturally sensitive leadership training, and improved access to educational and professional resources. These recommendations aim to create an enabling environment where young migrant leaders can thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities and society.

Public policy plays a fundamental role in creating an environment that supports the development of young leaders. Through education, employment, and social inclusion policies, governments can provide the necessary tools and opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills and take on leadership roles (OECD, 2018). For example, policies that promote access to quality education and training equip young people with the skills needed to succeed in leadership positions. Policies encouraging youth participation in governance and civic engagement also help ensure young leaders have a voice in decision-making processes.

However, the effectiveness of public policy in supporting young leaders often varies across different contexts. In some countries, youth leadership policies are well-developed and integrated into broader national social and economic development strategies, while young leaders in other contexts may face significant barriers due to a lack of targeted policies, systemic inequalities, or political instability (Curtis, 2016). Therefore, understanding the specific policy landscape and identifying gaps is crucial for developing effective strategies to support young leaders.

Young leaders with migrant backgrounds face unique challenges that can hinder their ability to access leadership opportunities. These challenges

include cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination, and limited access to social networks and resources (Berry, 2005). Migrant youth often struggle with dual identities, navigating between their cultural heritage and the norms of their host society, complicating their leadership journey (Phinney, 1990). Systemic barriers, such as unequal access to education and employment opportunities, can also exacerbate these challenges.

Given the increasing number of young people with migrant backgrounds, especially in diverse societies, public policies must be designed to address their specific needs. This includes policies that promote inclusion and integration, provide targeted support for leadership development, and ensure that young migrant leaders have equal access to opportunities. Such policies are crucial for the personal development of these young leaders and the broader social and economic integration of migrant communities (OECD, 2018).

This chapter argues that while existing public policies provide some support for young leaders, they often fall short of addressing the specific needs of those with migrant backgrounds. To fully harness the potential of young migrant leaders, there is a need for more inclusive and targeted public policies that address the unique challenges they face. The following sections will explore these challenges in detail and offer policy recommendations to create an enabling environment for young leaders from migrant backgrounds to thrive.

VIII.2. Theoretical Framework

Definition of Public Policy in the Context of Youth Leadership

Public policy refers to the laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities promulgated by a government or its representatives. When applied to youth leadership, public policy encompasses the strategies and initiatives that governments implement to encourage, support, and develop leadership skills among young people. These policies may include education reforms, youth employment initiatives, mentorship programs, and platforms for civic engagement. The goal is to equip young people with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to assume leadership roles within their communities and beyond (Howlett & Cashore, 2014).

In the context of youth leadership, public policy serves as both a facilitator and a regulator. It facilitates by providing the resources and opportunities that young leaders need to grow, such as leadership training programs, scholarships, and platforms for participation in governance. It regulates by establishing guidelines and standards for youth involvement in leadership roles, ensuring that such involvement is inclusive, equitable, and effective (Peters & Pierre, 2016). Public policy, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping the leadership landscape for young people, determining who has access to leadership opportunities and under what conditions.

Discussion on the Intersectionality of Migration and Youth Leadership

Intersectionality is a critical concept in understanding the unique experiences of young leaders with migrant backgrounds. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). In the context of youth leadership, intersectionality highlights how factors like migration status, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background interact to shape the opportunities and challenges that young leaders face.

Young migrants often navigate multiple identities, balancing their cultural heritage with the norms and expectations of their host society. This duality can impact their leadership potential, as they may experience both the advantages of a broader cultural perspective and the disadvantages of social exclusion or discrimination (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Moreover, systemic barriers such as limited access to education, employment, and social networks can further hinder their leadership development.

Therefore, public policies that support young leaders must consider the intersectional nature of these challenges. This requires a holistic approach that addresses not only the leadership skills of young migrants but also the broader social, economic, and cultural factors that influence their ability to lead. Such policies should promote inclusivity and equity, ensuring that all young people, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to develop and exercise leadership (Hankivsky, 2014).

Policy Frameworks Supporting Young Leaders Globally

Globally, several policy frameworks have been established to support young leaders. The United Nations Youth2030 strategy is one such initiative, aiming to ensure that young people are empowered to contribute to global development and peace. This strategy emphasizes the need for inclusive policies that address the challenges of marginalized youth, including migrants (United Nations, 2018).

The European Union's Youth Strategy (2019-2027) promotes youth engagement and leadership through education, employment, and social inclusion policies. It highlights the importance of creating opportunities for young people to participate in democratic processes and decision-making at all levels (European Commission, 2018).

Similarly, the African Youth Charter, adopted by the African Union, outlines the rights and responsibilities of young people, including their right to participate in leadership and governance. The Charter calls for member states to implement policies that promote youth leadership and participation, particularly for marginalized groups such as young migrants and refugees (African Union, 2006).

These global frameworks provide a foundation for national and regional policies that support young leaders. They underscore the importance of creating inclusive, supportive environments where young people can develop their leadership potential and contribute to their communities and society.

Public policy encompasses laws and initiatives designed to foster youth leadership through education reforms, mentorship, and civic engagement, acting as both a facilitator and regulator of inclusive participation. The concept of intersectionality reveals the unique challenges faced by young leaders with migrant backgrounds, underscoring the need for policies that address these complexities while promoting inclusivity. Global frameworks, such as the UN Youth2030 strategy and the EU's Youth Strategy, highlight the importance of inclusive policies that empower marginalized youth, enabling them to realize their leadership potential and make meaningful contributions to society.

VIII.3. Current Landscape of Public Policy for Young Leaders

Overview of Existing Policies Targeting Young Leaders

Many countries have implemented policies to foster youth leadership, recognizing the importance of empowering young people as future leaders. These policies focus on education, employment, civic engagement, and social inclusion. For example, in the United States, the YouthBuild program provides education and job training to low-income young people, helping them develop leadership skills while contributing to their communities through construction and other projects (YouthBuild USA, 2020).

Several European countries have adopted policies to promote youth leadership within the framework of the European Union's Youth Strategy. These initiatives often include support for youth entrepreneurship, political participation, and leadership development through education and training programs (European Commission, 2018). Similarly, Australia's National Strategy for Young Australians includes measures to promote youth leadership and civic participation, focusing on fostering inclusivity and diversity (Australian Government, 2010).

Comparative Analysis of Policies Across Different Countries

A comparative analysis of youth leadership policies across different countries reveals both commonalities and differences in approach. In Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Norway, youth leadership is promoted through comprehensive welfare policies that ensure access to education, healthcare, and social services. These countries also emphasize the importance

of youth participation in democratic processes, with young people actively involved in political decision-making at local and national levels (Johansson & Hvinden, 2007).

In contrast, countries in the Global South, such as India and Kenya, often face challenges in implementing youth leadership policies due to resource constraints and systemic inequalities. However, these countries have developed innovative approaches to youth leadership, such as India's National Youth Policy, which focuses on education, skill development, and entrepreneurship as key pillars of youth empowerment (Government of India, 2014). Kenya's Youth Enterprise Development Fund provides financial support to young entrepreneurs, fostering leadership through economic empowerment (Government of Kenya, 2006).

Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain in how these policies address the needs of young leaders with migrant backgrounds. In many cases, migrant youth are either excluded from policy benefits or face additional barriers to accessing them due to legal status, language barriers, or discrimination (OECD, 2018). This underscores the need for more inclusive policies specifically targeting the unique challenges faced by young migrant leaders.

Case Studies of Successful Public Policies

One notable example of a successful public policy supporting young leaders is Germany's Integration Act, which includes provisions for integrating young migrants into the education system and labor market. The Act also

supports civic engagement among young migrants, allowing them to participate in local governance and community initiatives (Bundesregierung, 2016).

Another example is Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, which offers tailored support for young people facing barriers to employment, including those with migrant backgrounds. The strategy includes mentorship programs, leadership training, and support for entrepreneurship, helping young people develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in leadership roles (Government of Canada, 2019).

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Youth Development's Leadership and Development program provides young people with opportunities to develop leadership skills through community projects, volunteering, and participation in local government. The program particularly includes Māori and Pasifika youth and young migrants, ensuring that leadership development opportunities are accessible to all (Ministry of Youth Development, 2020).

These case studies highlight the potential of well-designed public policies to support young leaders, including those with migrant backgrounds, and underscore the importance of tailoring policies to address the specific needs and challenges of different groups.

Gaps in Current Public Policies for Young Leaders, Particularly Those with Migrant Backgrounds

While many policies support young leaders, significant gaps remain, particularly in addressing the needs of young people with migrant backgrounds. One key challenge is the lack of targeted support for migrant youth in leadership development programs. Many existing policies do not adequately

address the unique barriers that migrant youth face, such as language difficulties, discrimination, and limited access to social networks and resources (OECD, 2018).

Another gap is the limited representation of migrant youth in leadership positions within youth organizations and broader society. This lack of representation can perpetuate a cycle of exclusion, where the voices and perspectives of young migrants are not adequately reflected in policy and decision-making processes (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Additionally, more research and data on the experiences of young migrant leaders are needed to inform policy development and ensure that policies are evidence-based and responsive to their needs.

Addressing these gaps requires a more inclusive approach to public policy that recognizes the diverse experiences and challenges of young leaders with migrant backgrounds. This includes creating targeted programs and initiatives that provide the support and resources young migrants need to overcome barriers and succeed in leadership roles. It also involves promoting greater diversity and inclusion in leadership positions, ensuring that young migrants have a voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

Countries are implementing policies to enhance youth leadership through education, employment, and civic engagement. Programs like YouthBuild in the U.S. and the EU Youth Strategy support skill development and participation. Scandinavian nations emphasize welfare and democracy, while Global South countries like India and Kenya face challenges but create innovative solutions. Successful examples include Germany's Integration Act and Canada's Youth Employment Strategy. However, gaps still remain for young migrants.

VIII.4. Challenges Faced by Young Leaders with Migrant Background

➤ *Socio-economic challenges*

Young leaders with migrant backgrounds in Europe often face significant socioeconomic challenges that hinder their leadership development. These challenges primarily stem from poverty, unemployment, and precarious living conditions. Many migrant families experience financial instability, limiting their access to resources such as quality education, extracurricular activities, and leadership development programs (OECD, 2018).

Additionally, migrant youth are often overrepresented in low-income neighborhoods where schools and community resources may be underfunded. This lack of access to quality educational resources and support services restricts their opportunities to acquire the skills and experiences necessary for leadership roles (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). Socioeconomic marginalization further exacerbates their exclusion from broader social and professional networks, diminishing their leadership prospects.

Moreover, migrant youth frequently encounter discrimination in the labor market, with employers hesitant to hire them due to biases related to ethnicity, language proficiency, or perceived cultural differences (Heath & Cheung, 2007). This discrimination limits employment opportunities and discourages migrant youth from aspiring to leadership roles, perpetuating a cycle of socioeconomic disadvantage.

➤ ***Cultural integration and identity issues***

Cultural integration poses another significant challenge for young leaders with migrant backgrounds. These individuals often navigate complex identities, trying to balance the cultural expectations of their families with the norms of the broader society. This duality can create identity conflicts, leading young migrants to struggle with reconciling their heritage and their desire to fit in and succeed (Phinney, 1990).

The integration process can also be complicated by experiences of racism and xenophobia, which contribute to feelings of alienation. Negative societal attitudes toward migrants can undermine young people's confidence and sense of belonging (Berry, 2005). Such identity struggles hinder the development of leadership qualities, as self-assuredness and a strong sense of identity are crucial for effective leadership.

Furthermore, young leaders with migrant backgrounds may feel pressured to conform to the dominant culture to gain acceptance and succeed. This pressure can suppress their cultural identity, eroding the unique perspectives and insights valuable in leadership (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). Thus, cultural integration involves both adapting to a new environment and maintaining cultural integrity while navigating leadership expectations.

➤ ***Systemic barriers within educational and professional institutions***

Educational and professional institutions in Europe often present systemic barriers that disadvantage young leaders with migrant backgrounds. In education, barriers include language difficulties, biased curricula, and unequal access to academic resources. Migrant youth may struggle with the

language of instruction, especially if they arrive later in life, leading to lower academic performance and limited access to higher education (Eurostat, 2017).

Moreover, educational institutions may lack cultural competence, failing to recognize and accommodate the diverse needs of migrant students. This can result in a lack of support for these youth, who may feel marginalized and disengaged from the educational system (Crul & Schneider, 2010). The underrepresentation of migrant students in higher education further limits their leadership development opportunities.

In the professional sphere, young leaders with migrant backgrounds often face systemic discrimination and bias. This can manifest in hiring practices favoring native candidates or in workplace environments where migrant workers encounter microaggressions and are overlooked for promotions (OECD, 2018). These barriers hinder many young migrants from advancing in their careers and taking on leadership roles, reinforcing existing inequalities.

➤ ***Lack of representation in leadership roles***

A significant challenge for young leaders with migrant backgrounds is the lack of representation in leadership roles across various sectors in Europe. Despite increasing diversity, leadership positions in politics, business, and civil society are still predominantly occupied by individuals from native backgrounds (Erel & Ryan, 2019). This lack of representation limits the visibility and influence of migrant communities and perpetuates the exclusion of their perspectives from decision-making processes.

The absence of role models from similar backgrounds can discourage young migrants from aspiring to leadership positions. Without visible examples of successful leaders who share their experiences, young migrants may feel that such roles are unattainable (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2017). This can create a self-perpetuating cycle of underrepresentation, where the lack of migrant leaders today contributes to the absence of future leaders.

Furthermore, the limited representation of young leaders with migrant backgrounds contributes to a narrow definition of leadership, often excluding the diverse experiences and perspectives they can offer. This diminishes the potential for innovative and inclusive leadership and reinforces existing power dynamics that marginalize migrant communities (Ryan, 2011).

Young leaders with migrant backgrounds face significant challenges that impede their development. Socio-economic barriers, such as poverty and unemployment, limit access to quality education and resources, while discrimination in the labor market discourages leadership aspirations. Cultural integration issues create identity conflicts, exacerbated by racism and societal pressures to conform. Systemic barriers in educational and professional institutions, including language difficulties and bias, further hinder their opportunities. Additionally, a lack of representation in leadership roles diminishes visibility for migrant communities, perpetuating cycles of underrepresentation and reinforcing existing power dynamics.

VIII.5. Policy Recommendations

➤ *Framework for inclusive leadership policies*

To address the challenges faced by young leaders with migrant backgrounds, it is essential to develop a comprehensive policy framework that promotes inclusive leadership. This framework should be grounded in principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, recognizing the unique challenges and contributions of migrant youth. Policies should be designed to remove barriers to leadership and create pathways for all young people to access leadership opportunities, regardless of their background (European Commission, 2018).

A key component of this framework is the inclusion of migrant perspectives in policy development and implementation. This can be achieved by engaging young leaders with migrant backgrounds in policymaking, ensuring that their voices are heard and their experiences are reflected in the policies that affect them. Additionally, the framework should promote cross-sector collaboration, bringing together government, NGOs, the private sector, and migrant communities to create holistic solutions that address the multifaceted challenges faced by young migrant leaders (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2018).

➤ *Education and training programs*

Education and training are critical for developing the leadership potential of young people, particularly those with migrant backgrounds. To ensure migrant youth have equal access to leadership development

opportunities, targeted education and training programs must be implemented that address their specific needs. These programs should include language support, academic tutoring, and culturally responsive curricula that reflect the diverse experiences of migrant students (Heckmann, 2008).

In addition to academic support, leadership training programs should focus on developing the skills and competencies that young people need to succeed in leadership roles. This includes communication skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and intercultural competence. Such programs should be accessible at all levels of education, from primary school to university, and available through both formal and informal education channels (Eurydice, 2019).

Moreover, education and training programs should emphasize the value of diversity and the importance of inclusive leadership. This can be achieved by integrating discussions on cultural identity, migration, and social justice into the curriculum, encouraging students to think critically about these issues and their relevance to leadership (Balfour, 2013). By fostering an understanding of the complexities of migration and the importance of diversity, these programs can help prepare young leaders to navigate the challenges of a multicultural society.

➤ ***Mentorship and networking opportunities***

Mentorship and networking are vital for supporting the leadership development of young people, especially those with migrant backgrounds who may lack access to established social and professional networks. Public policies should promote the creation of mentorship programs that connect young

migrant leaders with experienced mentors who can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for professional growth (Krebs, 2009).

Mentorship programs should be designed to address the specific needs and challenges of migrant youth, including cultural integration, identity development, and career advancement. Mentors should be trained to provide culturally responsive support, helping mentees navigate the complexities of leadership in a multicultural context. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, these programs can include peer mentoring, where young leaders support and learn from each other, fostering a sense of community and shared experience (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Angel, 2020).

Networking opportunities are also crucial for young leaders with migrant backgrounds. Public policies should facilitate the creation of networks and platforms where young migrant leaders can connect with peers, mentors, and potential collaborators. These networks can provide valuable resources, such as access to leadership opportunities, professional development workshops, and conferences. They can also serve as spaces for advocacy and collective action, where young migrant leaders can organize and advocate for policies that reflect their interests and concerns (European Commission, 2020).

➤ ***Funding and grants for leadership initiatives***

Access to funding is a significant barrier for many young leaders with migrant backgrounds, particularly those who wish to start their own initiatives or organizations. To address this issue, public policies should establish funding programs and grants specifically designed to support leadership initiatives led by migrant youth. These funding opportunities should be accessible,

transparent, and tailored to the unique needs of young migrant leaders (OECD, 2018).

Funding programs should prioritize initiatives that promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice, recognizing the potential of young migrant leaders to drive positive change in their communities. Grants can be provided for various purposes, including project development, capacity building, and leadership training. Additionally, funding programs should include support for the sustainability of initiatives, ensuring that young leaders have the resources they need to maintain and grow their projects over time (DeSilver, 2019).

To maximize the impact of funding, public policies should encourage partnerships between government, NGOs, and the private sector. By leveraging resources and expertise from different sectors, these partnerships can create more comprehensive and effective funding programs that reach a broader range of young migrant leaders (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018).

➤ ***Legal and institutional reforms to promote diversity and inclusion***

Legal and institutional reforms are essential for creating an environment that supports the leadership development of young people with migrant backgrounds. Public policies should focus on reforming laws and institutions that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion, ensuring all young people have equal access to leadership opportunities (Berry, 2011).

Reforms should include anti-discrimination laws that protect migrant youth from bias and prejudice in educational and professional settings. These laws should be enforced through robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms, ensuring institutions comply with diversity and inclusion

standards. Additionally, public policies should promote the representation of migrant youth in leadership roles within institutions, encouraging the appointment and election of young migrant leaders to positions of power and influence (Vermeulen & Sluiter, 2009).

Institutional reforms should also focus on creating inclusive environments within schools, universities, and workplaces. This can be achieved by implementing diversity training programs, promoting culturally responsive practices, and establishing support systems for migrant youth. By fostering inclusive institutional cultures, public policies can create spaces where young migrant leaders feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents (Khan, 2020).

➤ ***Tailored policies for young leaders with migrant backgrounds***

While general policies to support young leaders are important, there is also a need for tailored policies that specifically address the challenges and needs of young leaders with migrant backgrounds. These policies should be based on a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences of migrant youth, recognizing that different groups may face different challenges depending on factors such as ethnicity, gender, and migration history (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Tailored policies should include targeted support for young migrant leaders in areas such as education, employment, and civic engagement. For example, public policies can provide language training and academic support for migrant students, mentorship and career counseling for young migrant professionals, and leadership development programs for migrant youth involved in community organizations. These policies should also address the

specific barriers faced by young women with migrant backgrounds, who may encounter additional challenges related to gender and cultural expectations (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018).

➤ ***Support systems for cultural integration***

Supporting the cultural integration of young leaders with migrant backgrounds is crucial for their success in leadership roles. Public policies should promote the development of support systems that help migrant youth navigate cultural integration challenges. These support systems can include cultural orientation programs, intercultural dialogue initiatives, and community-based integration services.

Cultural orientation programs can provide young migrants with the information and resources they need to understand and adapt to their new environment. These programs can cover language, education, employment, and social norms, helping young migrants feel more confident and prepared to succeed in their host country. Intercultural dialogue initiatives can create opportunities for young migrants and native-born youth to engage in meaningful conversations about culture, identity, and shared values, fostering mutual understanding and respect (Modood & Salt, 2010).

Community-based integration services can play a vital role in supporting the cultural integration of young migrants. These services can provide a range of resources, including language classes, legal assistance, and mental health support, helping young migrants navigate the challenges of integration while maintaining their cultural identity. By promoting inclusive and supportive communities, public policies can create environments where

young migrant leaders feel empowered to contribute to society and take on leadership roles (Erel & Ryan, 2019).

➤ ***Collaboration between government, NGOs, and the private sector***

Collaboration between government, NGOs, and the private sector is essential for creating effective policies and programs that support young leaders with migrant backgrounds. Public policies should encourage and facilitate partnerships between these sectors, recognizing that each has a unique role to play in supporting the leadership development of young people (Sponsler & Hartley, 2013).

Government agencies can provide funding, policy support, and regulatory oversight, ensuring that programs and initiatives align with national and regional goals for diversity and inclusion. NGOs can offer expertise in community engagement, advocacy, and service delivery, reaching migrant youth whom government programs may underserve. The private sector can contribute resources, mentorship, and employment opportunities, helping to bridge the gap between education and the labor market (European Commission, 2020).

By working together, these sectors can create comprehensive and sustainable support systems for young leaders with migrant backgrounds, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. Collaboration can also promote innovation and best practices, as different sectors share their knowledge and experience to develop more effective solutions to the challenges faced by young migrant leaders (United Nations, 2018).

To effectively support young leaders with migrant backgrounds, a comprehensive policy framework is essential, emphasizing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Key recommendations include developing targeted education and training programs, establishing mentorship and networking opportunities, providing accessible funding for initiatives, implementing legal reforms to combat discrimination, and creating tailored policies that address specific challenges faced by these youth. Additionally, support systems for cultural integration and collaboration between government, NGOs, and the private sector are crucial for fostering environments where young migrant leaders can thrive and actively contribute to their communities.

VIII.6. Case Studies

In this subchapter, we explore successful public policies and initiatives from Malta, Italy, and the Maldives, focusing on youth leadership and the inclusion of migrants. These examples demonstrate effective strategies for fostering young leaders, particularly those with a migrant background, and provide valuable lessons for future policy development.

Youth Leadership Initiatives in Malta, Italy, and the Maldives

Malta, Italy, and the Maldives have implemented various initiatives to promote youth leadership. Malta, through its National Youth Policy Framework, emphasizes youth participation in decision-making processes at the national level. This initiative focuses on creating avenues for young people to engage in policymaking, thus empowering them to become community leaders. Conversely, Italy has integrated youth leadership development into its educational curriculum, encouraging leadership skills from an early age. The Maldives, recognizing the unique challenges young leaders face in a small island nation, has focused on community-based leadership programs that aim to nurture leadership skills within local contexts. These initiatives highlight the importance of contextualized approaches to youth leadership. Malta's policy framework demonstrates how creating structured opportunities for youth participation can lead to greater civic engagement. Italy's integration of leadership into education underscores the value of early intervention in leadership development. The Maldives' focus on community-based leadership reflects the need for adaptable strategies in different socio-cultural contexts.

Migrant Leadership Programs in Malta, Italy, and the Maldives

Migrant leadership programs in these countries have been essential in addressing the specific needs of young migrants. Malta has implemented programs to empower young migrants by providing leadership training and mentorship. This initiative also focuses on building networks between migrant and native youth to foster mutual understanding and collaboration. In Italy, the Integrazione Giovani initiative seeks to integrate migrant youth into leadership roles within local communities by offering tailored educational and vocational training programs. The Maldives, though relatively new to migrant issues, has initiated the Inclusive Leadership Program, which aims to involve young migrants in community leadership activities, promoting social cohesion. These programs illustrate the critical role of targeted support in fostering leadership among migrant youth. Malta's TAMA Program showcases the effectiveness of mentorship and network-building in enhancing migrant leadership. Italy's focus on education and vocational training highlights the importance of skill development in empowering migrant youth. The Maldives' Inclusive Leadership Program emphasizes the value of inclusive community engagement in fostering leadership among migrants.

Integration and Leadership Strategies in Malta, Italy, and the Maldives

Integration and leadership strategies in these countries have aimed at creating an inclusive environment where young leaders, including those from migrant backgrounds, can thrive.

Malta's Integration and Diversity Strategy has been instrumental in promoting cultural diversity and inclusion at all levels of society. This strategy

includes leadership programs that specifically target underrepresented groups, including migrants. Italy has adopted a comprehensive approach through its National Integration Plan, which integrates leadership development with broader social integration efforts. In its Youth Leadership and Integration Strategy, the Maldives has focused on promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding as a foundation for leadership development. These strategies demonstrate the importance of holistic approaches to leadership and integration. Malta's strategy highlights the need for inclusive policies that promote diversity at all levels. Italy's comprehensive approach underscores the importance of integrating leadership development into broader social policies. The Maldives' focus on intercultural dialogue reflects the importance of fostering mutual understanding in diverse societies.

Lessons Learned from These Case Studies

The case studies from Malta, Italy, and the Maldives offer several key lessons for future public policy development:

- ***Contextualized approaches:*** Effective youth leadership initiatives must be tailored to each country's specific socio-cultural and political contexts;
- ***Targeted support for migrants:*** Programs that provide targeted support, such as mentorship and vocational training, are crucial for empowering migrant youth;
- ***Holistic strategies:*** Integration and leadership strategies should be part of broader social policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and mutual understanding;

- **Collaboration and network-building:** Building networks between migrants and native populations is essential for fostering collaboration and reducing social barriers;
- **Early intervention:** Incorporating leadership development into educational systems early is vital for nurturing future leaders.

This subchapter examines successful public policies and initiatives from Malta, Italy, and the Maldives that promote youth leadership and the inclusion of migrants. Malta emphasizes youth participation in decision-making through its National Youth Policy Framework, while Italy integrates leadership development into its educational curriculum. The Maldives focuses on community-based programs to nurture local leadership skills. Migrant leadership programs in these countries provide targeted support, mentorship, and vocational training to empower young migrants and foster social cohesion. Overall, these case studies highlight the importance of contextualized approaches, collaboration, and early intervention in developing effective policies that support diverse youth leadership.

VIII.7. Future Directions for Public Policy

As the youth leadership and migration landscape evolves, public policies must adapt to emerging trends and challenges. This chapter outlines key areas where future policy efforts should focus.

➤ *Emerging trends in youth leadership and migration*

Globalization and increased mobility have led to greater diversity within youth populations, making it essential for public policies to address the unique needs of young leaders from various backgrounds. There is a growing recognition of the importance of intersectionality in leadership development, acknowledging how factors such as race, gender, and migration status intersect to influence leadership opportunities. Policies must, therefore, be designed to be inclusive and adaptable to these diverse needs.

➤ *The impact of globalization on young leaders*

Globalization has created both opportunities and challenges for young leaders. On one hand, it has facilitated the exchange of ideas and best practices across borders, enabling young leaders to learn from global experiences. On the other hand, it has also led to increased competition and the marginalization of certain groups. Public policies must, therefore, balance embracing the opportunities of globalization with addressing its challenges. This includes supporting young leaders in accessing global networks and resources and protecting them from the negative impacts of global competition.

➤ ***The role of digital platforms and technology in supporting young leaders***

The rise of digital platforms and technology has transformed the landscape of leadership. Young leaders can now access various tools to help them mobilize communities, share their ideas, and connect with others worldwide. Public policies must support the development and use of these digital tools, ensuring that all young leaders, regardless of their background, can leverage technology in their leadership roles. This includes providing training in digital literacy, supporting access to technology, and creating online platforms for leadership development.

➤ ***Long-term strategies for sustainable leadership development***

For leadership development to be sustainable, it must be embedded in long-term strategies beyond short-term initiatives. Public policies should focus on creating sustainable frameworks for leadership development, including continuous education and training programs, mentorship opportunities, and ongoing support for young leaders. This also involves fostering a culture of community leadership, where young people are encouraged and supported to take on leadership roles from an early age.

As the landscape of youth leadership and migration changes, public policies need to adapt by addressing the diverse needs of young leaders through inclusive approaches. This includes recognizing intersectionality, balancing the opportunities and challenges of globalization, leveraging digital platforms for community mobilization, and establishing sustainable frameworks for ongoing leadership development that foster a culture of early engagement in leadership roles.

VIII.8. Conclusions

This chapter has explored the role of public policy in supporting young leaders, particularly those with a migrant background, in Europe and the Maldives. Through detailed case studies, we have seen how different countries have successfully implemented initiatives that promote youth leadership and integration. Key findings include the importance of contextualised approaches, targeted support for migrant youth, and the need for holistic and inclusive strategies.

Targeted public policies are essential for fostering the next generation of leaders, particularly those from migrant backgrounds. Public policies can help young leaders overcome the unique challenges they face and contribute meaningfully to society by providing the necessary support and opportunities. This includes addressing barriers to leadership, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting the development of leadership skills from an early age.

Integrating young leaders with migrant backgrounds into mainstream leadership roles is not just a matter of equity but also of tapping into the full potential of society's talent. By ensuring that young leaders from all backgrounds have the opportunity to lead, we can create a more inclusive and just society. Public policies must continue to evolve to support this goal, recognising the value of diversity in leadership and the need for inclusive, adaptable, and sustainable approaches to leadership development.

Part IX:

A PROJECT OF THE SOUL, FOR THE SOUL: INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP FOR ETHICAL AND MULTICULTURAL FUTURE YOUTH LEADERS



A PROJECT OF THE SOUL, FOR THE SOUL: INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP FOR ETHICAL AND MULTICULTURAL FUTURE YOUTH LEADERS

As we come to the close of this guide, we find ourselves reflecting on the profound journey we've undertaken together. This Erasmus+ project is not just about imparting knowledge or laying out strategies—it is a project born of the heart, one driven by the deep belief that inclusive leadership is not merely a concept, but a calling for every ethical and multicultural future youth leader.

The world today demands leaders who embrace diversity, fairness, and innovation. It requires leaders who, with courage and empathy, transcend barriers of culture, race, gender, and background. The future of leadership, as we have explored throughout this guide, lies in creating spaces where all voices are heard, all talents are nurtured, and all individuals feel they belong. Inclusive leadership is not only a means to achieve organizational success but a framework for building stronger, more just societies.

This guide is the result of the dedication, expertise, and close collaboration of the project team, comprising The Ministry for Gozo (Malta), Igor Vitale International srl (Italy), Addu Women's Association (Maldives), and the Diplomacy, Security, and Defense Research Organization (Romania). We are also deeply grateful for the constant support from the Erasmus+ National Agencies, whose backing is essential to the project's success.

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leadership and migration. Notably, Mrs. Dr. Alexandra Bucur-Ioan, director of the Bucharest Regional Center for Procedures and Accommodation of Asylum Seekers, and Mr. Preda Eugen-Bogdan, national coordinator of the Department of Integration within the Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR), offered key insights that enriched the depth and accuracy of this guide.

We also want to express heartfelt thanks to you, the reader. By taking the time to explore the pages of this guide, you have shown a commitment to the values of ethical and inclusive leadership. You are the future leaders who will take these concepts forward and turn them into action. It is our sincerest hope that the ideas, strategies, and reflections presented in this guide have sparked inspiration, and that you feel empowered to carry this work into your own communities and organizations.

As this project continues to evolve, we invite you to stay connected. Follow the future activities, contribute to the ongoing dialogue, and most importantly, share your own experiences of leading inclusively. Together, we can create ripples of change that will resonate far beyond the confines of this guide.

This is more than just a conclusion—it is an invitation. An invitation to lead with empathy, to act with integrity, and to embrace the beautiful diversity of the human experience. This, truly, is a project of the soul, for the soul. May you carry its message with you and inspire others to join in this vital mission.

With immense gratitude and hope,

The Project Team

Transnational Visit to Bucharest (Romania)

January 2024



Workshops on Inclusive Leadership



Transnational Visit to Male (Maldives)

October 2024

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