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STORYLIGHT

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Summary of the
Comprehensive Report

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Introduction

This comprehensive report provides a summary of the realities, challenges, and aspirations of migrant women in five European countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, and Germany. This summary is based on the national reports of the participating countries that are described in the Comprehensive Report of the Storylight project in more detail. Based on desktop research, focus group discussions, and individual interviews, the report highlights demographic trends, barriers to integration and employment, the role of education and digital competence, and the impact of legal frameworks.

Demographic Overview and Migration Patterns

Migrant women represent a significant and growing segment of the population in all five countries. In Austria, they account for over a fifth of all women, while in Brussels, Belgium, more than a third of residents are non-Belgian. Cyprus, historically a country of emigration, now sees nearly 10% of its population as third-country nationals. Denmark's immigrant population is increasingly diverse, and Germany counts nearly 11 million women with migration backgrounds.

Migration patterns are shaped by diverse factors: family reunification (especially among women), educational and employment opportunities, and, in the case of Cyprus and Germany, rising numbers of asylum seekers and refugees. Despite differences in size and historical context, all countries face common challenges regarding integration, social inclusion, and equitable access to opportunities for migrant women.

Labor Market Participation

Across all countries, migrant women face persistent disadvantages in the labour market. In Austria and Belgium, they are highly represented in low-wage sectors such as cleaning and hospitality, often working below their qualifications. Language barriers, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and insufficient support with childcare and training limit their access to suitable employment.

In Cyprus, non-EU migrant women are predominantly employed in domestic and care work, irrespective of their educational background. Overqualification and informal employment are

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widespread issues. Denmark's labor market is marked by significant disparities: immigrant women face "double discrimination" on the basis of both gender and migration background, with underrepresentation in paid work and challenges such as institutional racism and undervalued skills. In Germany, visible markers of origin or religion (e.g., headscarves, non-German names) increase the risk of discrimination, especially in skilled positions.

Education and Digital Competence

Migrant women's access to education is plagued by common obstacles: language difficulties, non-recognition of qualifications, and the challenge of balancing family responsibilities with participation in educational programs. While national educational systems and initiatives vary, language acquisition and digital competency are universally recognized as critical tools for integration.

Digital literacy, in particular, is increasingly essential—not only for employability but also for participation in public services and civic life. However, a significant digital divide persists. Many migrant women, especially older ones, lack access to digital devices and training. NGOs and educators across all countries are working to bridge this gap, but resources and opportunities remain unevenly distributed.

Legal Frameworks and Policy Analysis

Legal frameworks in all five countries distinguish sharply between EU/EEA/Swiss citizens and third-country nationals. Conditions for residence, work, and family reunification are generally stricter for non-EU migrants. Naturalization processes are often lengthy and demanding, with Austria and Cyprus having the strictest requirements. Asylum seekers and refugees face prolonged uncertainty, limited access to employment, and delays in family reunification.

Despite some progressive policies—such as Belgium's relatively accessible nationality process and Germany's "right of opportunity residence"—bureaucratic hurdles and restrictive rules can hinder integration, especially for women. Access to social rights, political participation, and public services remains limited for many, particularly those with insecure status.

Social Inclusion and Experiences of Discrimination

Migrant women's experiences of social inclusion are shaped by multiple, intersecting factors: legal



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status, language proficiency, educational background, and urban versus rural location. In Austria, Belgium, and Germany, spatial segregation and discrimination reinforce social inequalities. In Cyprus, integration policy is a recent development, and public ambivalence remains. In Denmark, systemic racism and an economic focus in integration policy overshadow broader social inclusion. Participation in civil society and local networks, as well as access to language courses and childcare, are vital for integration. Nevertheless, political participation is generally limited for third-country nationals, and discrimination, especially in housing, education, and public services, remains a significant barrier.

Qualitative Insights: Lived Experiences of Migrant Women

Focus groups and individual interviews reveal the nuanced realities faced by migrant women. Many struggle with social isolation, cultural adaptation, and non-recognition of their skills and qualifications. Personal stories highlight the importance of supportive networks, local associations, and mentors in overcoming bureaucratic and social obstacles.

Digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for empowerment, enabling women to share their experiences, build confidence, and foster inclusion. However, engagement is uneven, depending on individual digital skills, access to technology, and support from educators or NGOs. Many women express strong aspirations for economic independence, further education, and contributing to their new societies, especially through work or volunteering.

Adult Educators' Perspectives

Educators across all five countries emphasize the importance of accessible, learner-centered programs tailored to migrant women's needs. Barriers such as language, lack of information, traditional gender roles, and childcare responsibilities must be addressed through innovative, low-threshold initiatives. Digital storytelling and peer-led activities are seen as effective methods to encourage participation and self-expression, though they require investment in training, technology, and supportive environments.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- **Persistent Barriers:** Migrant women across Europe face similar obstacles—discrimination, insecure status, limited recognition of qualifications, and challenges in language and digital education.
- **Importance of Networks:** Social networks, peer support, and grassroots initiatives play a crucial role in fostering inclusion and building self-confidence.
- **Digital Literacy:** Bridging the digital divide is essential for empowerment, labor market participation, and access to services.
- **Tailored Support:** Policies and programs must be responsive to the specific needs of migrant women, offering flexible education, accessible childcare, and recognition of prior learning.
- **Holistic Approaches:** Successful integration requires more than economic participation, it demands strategies that promote social bonds, cultural exchange, and anti-discrimination.

Conclusion from Primary and Secondary

Research

The integration of migrant women is a multifaceted process shaped by legal, economic, social, and personal dynamics. Effective inclusion depends on equitable policies, responsive support systems, and the recognition of migrant women's skills, aspirations, and resilience. By prioritizing language acquisition, digital competence, and targeted support—while challenging discrimination and exclusion, European societies can better harness the talents and potential of all their members. This summary underscores the value of intersectional, life-oriented approaches and the importance of ongoing investment in education, social participation, and policy reform. The experiences and stories of migrant women are not just case studies—they are calls to action for more inclusive, dynamic, and just societies.



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From Evidence to Practice: WP2 Guide and General Conclusions

Based on the findings from Sections A-C in the Comprehensive report from cross country analysis, the WP2 Guide for Inclusive Digital Storytelling in Adult Education applies the outcome of the research into a structured framework for practitioners working in adult education to help migrant women.

The Guide directly addresses the structural, linguistic, digital, and psychosocial challenges that have been identified in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, and Germany. It offers digital storytelling as a relationship-based and rights-based education practice that is focused on empowerment rather than mere technical knowledge.

Key Contributions of the WP2 Guide

The Guide promotes a common understanding on inclusive digital storytelling, with safety, accessibility, language considerations, and learner empowerment. In this regard, there is clarity on the fact that storytelling must be optional, trauma-informed, and participant-controlled to offer narratives based on personal, collective, symbolic, or fictional stories. Accessibility is catered to by mobile-first design, flexible pacing, and low-threshold technology. This has been reflected in the level of digital literacy found in this research.

Most importantly, the Guide aligns digital storytelling practice with DigComp 3.0 and LifeComp by rethinking digital competence not as tool skills but as situated digital agency. Connections made in the Guide include the awareness of data, communication as a form of participation, authorship, wellness, adaptive learning, and personal and social growth. This holistic approach recognizes the demands for confidence, visibility on their own terms, safety, and full participation made by the migrant women.

Implications For Practitioners of Adult Education

The Guide emphasizes the critical importance of adult educators acting as agents in mediating between technology and lived experience in the process of social inclusion. Educators are



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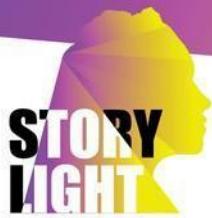
conceptualized here as facilitators and partners rather than traditional teachers. Their effectiveness in using digital storytelling in adult literacy would thus lie in their relationship-building and institutional support rather than in their technical abilities.

Adult learning institutions are encouraged to incorporate storytelling into language learning, digital literacy skills, empowerment sessions, and community learning programs. Time and training for the learning facilitators are important considerations. The migrant women are acknowledged as active digital citizens and cultural contributors and not mere recipients of integration strategies.

Overall Conclusions

The results of WP2 indicate that the women migrant experience a set of intersecting barriers related to their status, the labor market, the validation of their qualifications, childcare, language learning, and the digital divide, while, on the other hand, they display high levels of motivation, resilience, and desire for empowerment, learning, and contribution.

Digital storytelling emerges here as an important methodological connector between inclusion, digital literacy, and empowerment. As a practice conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the WP2 Guide, digital storytelling can strengthen confidence, social engagement, and lifelong learning skills, respecting dignity, consent, and diversity. In summary, the WP2 guide is an excellent foundation for the rest of the work packages for the STORYLIGHT project and represents the integration of scientific literature with real-world implementation. It is an effective guide for adult education providers on how to promote the voice and agency of migrant women through competency-based methodologies that are pertinent to the ever-increasing digitization of society.



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