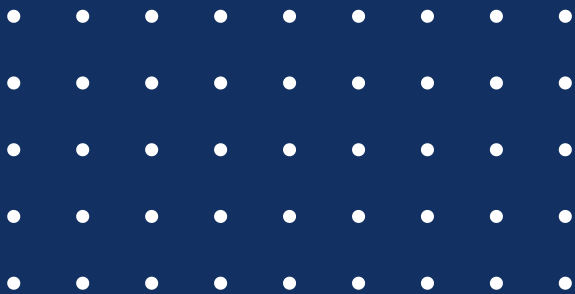


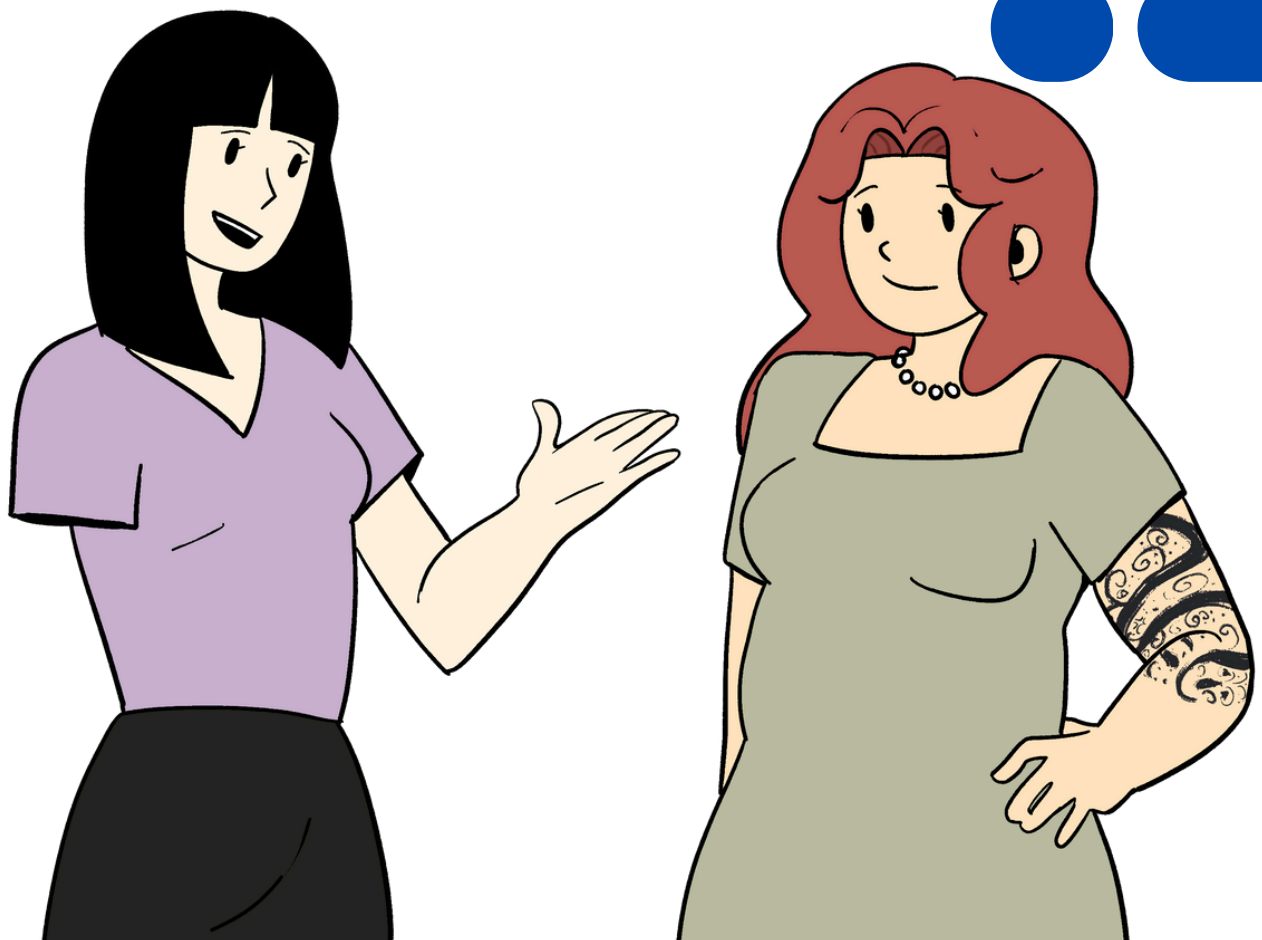
# Intercultural Onboarding & Retention



# Onboarding and Retention

This mini guide offers concrete action points for improving onboarding and retention practices aimed at highly skilled women with migrant and refugee backgrounds in the Nordic Labor market. While designed to address the specific barriers faced by the target group, the recommendations are broadly applicable and can enhance the onboarding experience for a wide range of candidates.

The guide is the result of a collaboration between four Nordic civil society organizations, The Association Equal Access (Foreningen Lige Adgang, Denmark), Startup Refugees (Finland), W.O.M.E.N. (Iceland) and Diversify (Norway), each bringing extensive expertise in supporting the labor market integration of highly skilled immigrant and refugee women. It has been developed as part of the project Advancing Migrant and Refugee Women's Access to the Nordic Labor Market Focusing on Entry-Level Jobs (AMARA), financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.



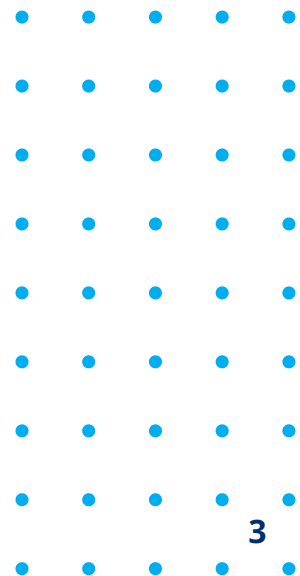
# Intercultural Onboarding

- **Inclusive onboarding** – Go beyond formal procedures by including workplace culture, unwritten rules, available support systems, and diversity and inclusion policies as well as report mechanisms.
- **Communicate employment terms clearly** – Explain contract details step by step, including trial periods, performance expectations, and how feedback will be given. Be mindful to ask about prior knowledge with local labor practices.
- **Provide guidance on rights and benefits** – Many may be unfamiliar with unions, unemployment insurance funds, or pension schemes. Offer introductions to relevant representatives and explain options in accessible language to support informed decision-making.



# Mentorship and Workplace Networks

- **Assign cultural mentors or buddies** – Support new employees in navigating expectations and building a sense of belonging.
- **Provide structured mentoring programs** – Offer training and clear guidance to ensure mentors are well equipped to fulfill their role effectively.
- **Establish peer support and community networks** – Create workplace-based networks that strengthen inclusion, foster connections, and support long-term retention.



# Policies and Report Mechanisms

- **Establish a clear language policy** – Define whether the workplace will operate as multilingual or primarily local-language speaking and provide structured support for learners. Ensure expectations for both practical and social language use are consistent, transparent, and communicated across the team.
- **Broaden Diversity & Inclusion policies** – Extend beyond gender to explicitly include race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, ensuring international employees also feel represented and included.
- **Adapt reporting mechanisms with intercultural sensitivity** – Clearly explain that procedures are anonymous, safe, and cannot lead to dismissal, to build trust and encourage employees from diverse backgrounds to use them.



# Intercultural Understanding and DEIB training



- **Train leaders** - Equip managers with skills in culturally sensitive leadership and bias aware inclusive management.
- **Invest in inclusion training** – Provide all staff with training on DEIB, intercultural communication, and other key aspects of inclusive workplaces.
- **Facilitate intercultural team-building** – Offer optional formats such as cultural storytelling sessions, shared lunches, or themed team dialogues where employees can share elements of their background if they feel comfortable. These activities promote mutual understanding, create shared responsibility for inclusion, and supplement DEI-focused initiatives with everyday connection.
- **Address key inclusion topics** – Cover areas such as unconscious bias, inclusive communication, power dynamics, privilege, microaggressions, and intersectional experiences to build awareness and improve everyday workplace practices.
- **Adopt an intersectional approach** – Ensure potential blind spots affecting women with migrant or refugee backgrounds are identified and addressed.

# Workplace Accommodations and Support

- **Provide workplace accommodations** – Support employees with caregiving and family responsibilities through flexible policies and practices.
- **Offer mental health support** – Recognize that employees, particularly those with a refugee background, may have specific needs related to trauma or the stress of temporary residency.
- **Establish employee resource groups and networks** – Create dedicated spaces, including international women-focused networks, to support connection, representation, and professional growth.
- **Support integration initiatives** – Engage in spouse and community-based programs that build networks and skills for women with migrant or refugee background, supporting both professional and personal integration.



# Celebrating Diversity

- **Recognize cultural and religious events** – Establish inclusive holiday policies, and where possible, allow employees to take time off for holidays linked to their faith or cultural traditions.
- **Create spaces for mutual learning** – Encourage sharing, storytelling, and dialogue to foster understanding across diverse backgrounds.
- **Actively celebrate diversity** – Use initiatives like shared meals and a diversity calendar to honor important dates and identities throughout the year.



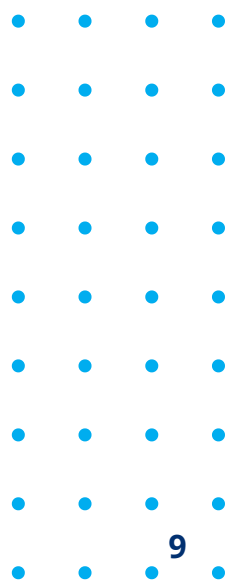
# Data and Accountability

- **Collect data on well-being and inclusion** – Track outcomes by gender, ethnicity, and migration background to identify disparities and areas for improvement.
- **Use neutral third parties when needed** – If direct data collection is restricted by national legislation, engage independent organizations to collect and analyze information, providing anonymized reports that protect employee privacy.
- **Gather regular employee feedback** – Collect anonymous feedback on inclusion and psychological safety, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and migration background.
- **Act on insights and track progress** – Use findings to inform policies, leadership practices, and team dynamics, and repeat the process routinely to measure impact and adjust strategies.



# Exit Interviews

- **Conduct culturally sensitive exit interviews** – Capture feedback from women with migrant and refugee background to understand their reasons for leaving and identify gaps in inclusion.
- **Analyze and act on trends** – Use exit interview data over time to adapt policies, strengthen retention strategies, and improve workplace well-being.



# Developed By



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