

Estado da Questão

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European Network of Migrant Women



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In 2010, several migrant and refugee women's organizations came together in Brussels with the support of the European Women's Lobby, recognizing the need for a feminist structure led by the women most affected by Europe's migration policies. From the beginning, these organizations were clear that they did not want to remain a temporary initiative. It was important to create a permanent, autonomous network that would give lasting organizational strength to the work migrant women had been carrying out for decades. This became the starting point for the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW).

Since then, the network has grown into the largest migrant- and refugee-women-led feminist organization in Europe, with members in more than twenty countries. Most are small grassroots groups working directly with migrant and refugee women. Others are national umbrella platforms representing wider networks of migrant women's organizations. Some combine frontline support with research, reporting (European Network of Migrant Women, s.d.-b), and advocacy at national, European, and international levels.

Portugal has played an important role in the life of the European Network of Migrant Women. The network counts three member organizations in the country — *Mén Non*, *Associação Mulheres Sem Fronteiras*, and *P. de Potência* — each bringing vital experience from the Portuguese context and the daily realities of migrant women. This connection is

long-standing: in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, ENoMW held its General Assembly in Lisbon. The event was hosted by the main governmental center for migrant integration – ACM, today part of AIMA. Meeting there gave the network direct insight into Portugal’s migration policies and institutional frameworks.

The Lisbon General Assembly remains one of the network’s most memorable gatherings — not only because it preceded the long interruption of in-person meetings during the pandemic, but also thanks to the generosity of ENoMW’s Portuguese members, *Associação Mulheres Sem Fronteiras* organized a feminist walk through the city; members shared meals, explored Lisbon’s neighborhoods, and deepened their understanding of the Portuguese women’s movement through exchanges with the *Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres*, the largest umbrella of feminist organizations in the country.



Lisbon General Assembly – 2019

Across the network, ENoMW members support migrant and refugee women and girls, including those in vulnerable situations: survivors of male violence; undocumented women; those in precarious or unsafe labor sectors; survivors of trafficking, prostitution, and sexual exploitation; women whose qualifications are dismissed; single mothers; refugee women rebuilding their lives; and young migrant feminists shaping civic and democratic spaces.

What brings the network together is a shared commitment to improving the conditions of migrant and refugee women in Europe. ENoMW works from lived experience and feminist analysis, addressing discrimination, male violence, exploitation, and the structural barriers women face across borders. The network sees itself as part of the wider women's movement and contributes to it by bringing forward the knowledge and priorities of migrant and refugee women. Across its work, ENoMW challenges the stereotypes that often surround migrant women and rejects approaches that treat them as mere recipients of help, emphasizing instead their agency, expertise, and leadership.

As the network grew, its activities developed into cross-border collaborations, joint programs, shared practices, annual meetings, and continuous work with members on national and local challenges. ENoMW contributes to European and international discussions, ensuring that policies affecting migrant and refugee women are informed by feminist analysis and grounded in real lived experience.

Throughout its years of work, ENoMW has produced a wide range of resources, toolkits, and awareness-raising materials (European Network of Migrant Women, s.d.-c) designed to support migrant and refugee women and strengthen institutional understanding of the challenges they face in Europe. These materials reflect the network's sustained effort to improve conditions for migrant women by equipping organizations, practitioners, and policymakers with feminist, experience-based knowledge.

One of the network's most significant recent initiatives is FULFILL, the first Europe-wide database of legal cases documenting violations of the fundamental rights of migrant women (European Network of Migrant Women, s.d.-a). Through this project, ENoMW trained more than 500 legal practitioners — including judges — and produced the first feminist analysis of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights focused specifically on migrant and refugee women (European Network of Migrant Women, 2024).

In 2024, the network coordinated AGENCY: VOTE WITH HER, a mobilization project that trained more than sixty migrant women — in collaboration with FemLens — to produce photographic advocacy campaigns ahead of the European Parliament elections. As a result of this initiative and its outreach impact, ENoMW was recognized as an official communication partner of the European Parliament during the 2024 election cycle (Vote with her, s.d.).

ENoMW also collaborates with municipalities. Notably, in the most recent initiative CONSOLIDATE, where it partners with Eurocities, a major network of municipalities, the network works closely with twelve municipalities in twelve European states to improve local integration policies for migrant and refugee women and their families.

Another major initiative is RIZA, a four-year project implemented with three member organizations: Melissa Network (Greece), Pangea Foundation (Italy), and MONIKA (Finland). Through RIZA, ENoMW will provide sub-grants to 99 grassroots organizations supporting migrant and refugee women across Europe, alongside capacity building in fundamental rights, administration, management, community organizing, and other areas of organizational development (European Network of Migrant Women, s.d.-d).

ENoMW is currently involved in another important program, MOTERIS, working alongside the women's lobbies of Sweden, France, Lithuania, and Hungary. This program examines the growing attacks on women's rights across different political contexts and their impact on women's democratic participation. It focuses on strengthening women's organizations — including migrant women's groups — and safeguarding civic space.

Alongside these EU co-funded initiatives, ENoMW's own advocacy has always been a central part of its work. The network engages regularly with Members of the European Parliament, relevant departments of the European Commission, and several units of the Council of Europe. It holds consultative status with the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission and contributes to the work of the UN CEDAW Committee and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

ENoMW's advocacy is grounded in clear feminist principles. The network works for equality between women and men, defends sex-based rights, and upholds women's right to single-sex spaces. It supports the

right of migrant and refugee women to self-organize and places protection from male violence at the center of its work. As a longstanding member of the European Coalition “The Brussels Call”, ENoMW also maintains a longstanding abolitionist position on prostitution, viewing it as a patriarchal, colonial, and racist system that disproportionately harms migrant and refugee women (Brussels’ Call, s.d.). The abolitionist, also known as Nordic or Equality model on prostitution is therefore a key part of the network’s approach to safeguarding women’s rights.

The network also participates in emergency responses. It contributed to the evacuations of Afghan women in 2021 and has been actively supporting Ukrainian women since 2022, with many member organizations among the first to provide assistance.

ENoMW is explicitly a feminist organization. Its work is grounded in the conviction that any movement advocating for the rights of vulnerable populations must include a feminist analysis of power, inequality, and sex-based oppression. These principles guide all aspects of its work, from political analysis to community-level support.

ENoMW’s work has always been guided by clear feminist principles and by an unwavering commitment to migrant and refugee women. At a time when many organizations adjust their positions to shifting political trends or funder expectations, the network has remained consistent in its analysis and purpose. Its motivation has never been the number of projects it manages or the level of funding it secures, but the substance and integrity of the work and the connection with the women it represents. ENoMW moves with a long-term vision, advancing change incrementally and collectively, without rushing after institutional fashions or temporary slogans. Its strength lies in holding a principled line over time and in building a feminist movement that is coherent, durable, and deeply rooted in the lived realities of migrant women.

ENoMW’s long-term aim is to dismantle the roots of discrimination and inequality that shape the lives of migrant and refugee women in Europe. The network works with a clear and sustained vision, understanding that deep social change requires time, persistence, and collective effort. It is committed to building durable structures and strengthening the feminist organizations that carry this work forward across borders and generations.

Ultimately, ENoMW strives to ensure that migrant and refugee women can live free from male violence and discrimination, and that they can participate fully and equally in democratic European life. This long-term vision guides every aspect of the network's work and remains at the core of its feminist mission.

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