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## Gender and Mobility across Southern and Eastern European Borders: "Double Standards" and the Ambiguities of European Neighbourhood Policy

by Sabrina Marchetti and Ruba Salih



### ABSTRACT

This article proposes a gendered critique of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), a policy framework that, amongst other things, aims to facilitate the mobility of migrants to the EU from the bordering countries. We highlight the ambivalences of European regimes of gender and migration, and we take issue with the celebration of the "feminisation of migration." The former fails to offer opportunities to women to safely embark on autonomous migratory projects, the latter contributes to reproduce traditional gender biases in the countries of origin as well as of destination. We conclude by suggesting that the EU critique to emigration countries for failing to tackle women's discrimination falls short of persuasiveness when confronted with the curtailment on women's independent mobility within the ENP framework.

*Migration | Women | Labour market | France | Spain | Poland | Italy | European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)*

keywords

## Gender and Mobility across Southern and Eastern European Borders: “Double Standards” and the Ambiguities of European Neighbourhood Policy

by Sabrina Marchetti and Ruba Salih\*

### Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the gendered nature of migration flows has become the object of growing attention among scholars, policy makers and practitioners. This growing body of scholarship has crucially shed light on the gendered dynamics of mobility and explored the relationship between the feminization of migration and the development of migrant women’s societies of origin.<sup>1</sup> Naila Kabeer suggests that empowerment could be defined as the capability of living the life one wants, whereby access to resources represents a crucial element for exercising choice.<sup>2</sup> A gendered analysis, however, reveals that resources are often distributed through institutions, families and communities according to asymmetric power relationships. Therefore, agency in relations to empowerment implies not only actively exercising choices but also “doing this in ways that challenge power relations”.<sup>3</sup>

It is in this perspective that this article examines the gendered patterns and dynamics of migration across the southern and eastern Mediterranean and Europe. In particular, we aim to highlight how the traditional organisation of

<sup>1</sup> Nicola Piper (ed.), *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration. Livelihood, Rights and Entitlements*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008; Laura Oso and Natalia Ribas Mateos (eds.), *The International Handbook on Gender, Migration and Transnationalism. Global and Development Perspectives*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Naila Kabeer, *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals. A Handbook for Policy-makers and Other Stakeholders*, London and Ottawa, Commonwealth Secretariat and International Development Research Centre (IDRC), 2003, <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Publications/Pages/IDRCBookDetails.aspx?PublicationID=229>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

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gender roles in countries of origin as well as of destination impinge upon female migration to Europe from its southern and eastern neighbours and whether and how these mobilities bring about challenges to them. We will also show how the mere celebration of the quantitative increase of female migrants, labelled under the slogan “feminisation of migration,” conceals complex and ambivalent dynamics and does not necessarily translate into concrete and clear opportunities for autonomous mobility for women.

Our focus is the area involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that is, a EU policy framework that entails different modes of interactions between the EU and its border countries,<sup>4</sup> ranging from the support to ENP countries’ political, economic and social development, to the strengthening of economic relationships between ENP countries and EU country members. Importantly, the ENP framework foresees agreements that facilitate the mobility of migrants from the ENP areas to the EU. However, we highlight the “gender ambiguities” or the double standards of the European Neighbourhood Policy that underlie the discrepancies in the proportion of female vs. male migration from the ENP area to the European Union.

In the following, we argue that the ENP’s policies carry an ambiguous bias in relation to gender. While a strong gender sensitivity permeates the analysis produced by the European Union External Action<sup>5</sup> on the impact of political and socio-economic reforms on women living in ENP countries,<sup>6</sup> the policy documents on the mobility between the ENP countries and the EU remain astonishingly gender blind.<sup>7</sup> In the latter there is no mention of which specific measures enhance or curtail mobility in gendered ways, nor there is any assessment of the ways in which the ENP framework channels and reproduces specific gender regimes and gendered mobilities. For example, the framework reproduces gender ideologies when it restricts women’s access to mobility for family reunification and participation in feminised labour sectors (e.g. domestic work). Whether this reflects an unawareness of gender dynamics within migration flows by the EU, or whether it is the result of an ad hoc political-economic and demographic strategy, we argue that the ENP mobility framework fails to support the transformation of gender roles in the countries of

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, the countries involved in the ENP framework (henceforth “ENP countries”) are: Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. For updates on the status of the negotiations between these countries and the EU, see <http://eeas.europa.eu/enp>.

<sup>5</sup> See reports published at <http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/documents/progress-reports>.

<sup>6</sup> For a critique of the gender mainstreaming approach in these interventions, see Petra Debusscher, “Mainstreaming Gender in European Union development policy in the European Neighborhood”, in *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2012), p. 322-344.

<sup>7</sup> See European Commission, *A Wider Europe. Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* (COM(2003)104), 11 March 2003, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52003DC0104>; European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper* (COM(2004)373), 12 May 2004, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52004DC0373>; *Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument*, 24 October 2006, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32006R1638>.

origin, or in the migratory contexts, by failing to enhance opportunities for women to safely embark on autonomous migratory projects. The limitations on women's autonomous mobility in the ENP mobility framework stand in striking contradiction with the overall declared and public aim of ENP to promote the general socio-economic improvement of the neighbouring area. While readily blaming female women's countries of origin for institutionalising gender discrimination in their laws and practices, the EU is short of measures aiming at promoting the conditions for autonomous female mobility and incorporation in a fair labour market.

The article starts with an overview of the literature that argues for the relevance of a gender perspective in migration studies. Thus, working on United Nations' data on migration, we discuss the dynamics of women's regular migration from countries on the eastern and southern borders of Europe to the EU. Data on ENP countries will be cross-examined and compared with those on selected EU countries (the EU15 countries, plus Poland) in order to identify the main corridors for female migration to the EU. The article then analyses four specific groups of female migrants from ENP countries to the EU, and compares personal reasons for migrating (family, labour, study, etc.), mobility patterns (permanent vs. temporary), and the cultural and socio-economic forces that shape their experiences. We will look at women migrating from a) Algeria to France, b) Morocco to Spain, c) Ukraine to Poland, and finally d) Moldova to Italy. These groups have been selected for the numerical relevance of female migrants from these emigration countries and also because they shed interesting light on the different kind of forces at work in shaping women's movements.

By drawing on these four case studies, we try to assess the ways in which gendered socio-economic and cultural specificities in different ENP countries impact on women's mobility between the EU and its neighbouring countries. In so doing, we hope to contribute to the aims of this special issue by providing a much needed gendered critique to the construction of EU neighbourhood policies.

### 1. Gender and migration

The number of women migrating under various forms has been increasing across the world, rising from 75 million in 1990 to 111 million in 2013.<sup>8</sup> However, the types and patterns of women's migration are extremely heterogeneous. Women migrate under family reunion schemes, as single migrants, to pursue studies or as active agents of trade and as labour migrants, but women are also increasingly trafficked to work in the sex industry, exported as suitable wives under arranged marriage schemes and exploited as undocumented domestic workers with no legal or social

<sup>8</sup> UN Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision - Migrants by Age and Sex* (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013), United Nations, December 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/migration/migrant-stock-age-2013.shtml>.

protection.<sup>9</sup> They also flee from wars, violence and conflicts as refugees<sup>10</sup> often crossing the EU borders in life-threatening conditions, which are fatal for many of them.<sup>11</sup> This heterogeneity, among other factors, makes it very difficult to reach uniform or monolithic conclusions on the empowering or disempowering nature of migration for women.

In understanding gendered mobility, mainstream approaches to migration present limitations in that they either concentrate exclusively on push and pull factors understood as resulting from structural frameworks, such as relations of production and new systems of accumulations under neo-liberal market arrangements, or they focus predominantly on individuals' agency and reasons for migrating. A gender approach shows the inadequacy of the "push and pull factors" model. The difference between male and female migratory patterns cannot be seen as the result of an individual choice resulting from a rational economic calculation, taking place independently from structural factors. Gendered norms, international regulations, cultural and religious pressures shape, hinder or prevent individuals' subjectivities and ability to exercise their choices. Nor can migration be understood solely from within a political economy approach whereby migrants are the inevitable outcome of an unequal distribution of economic and political power on a worldwide basis. Against this background, Sylvia Chant and Sarah Radcliffe, for example, propose a household strategy approach in order to understand gender selectivity in migration patterns, which focuses both on economic factors such as the gender division of labour and of relations of production, and on the reproductive roles and hierarchies within the household.<sup>12</sup>

In that light, and as previously argued in Salih, in order to fully understand contemporary forms of women's migration and their gendered nature, there is a need for a meso-level of analysis where migration is analysed as the result of a dialectic relation between structures and agency.<sup>13</sup> Three levels have to be unfolded to understand the gendered dynamics of contemporary migration: 1) the migratory regime that includes the relations between countries of residence and of origins and the conditions of entry and residence; 2) the migratory institutions, both the formal and informal institutions and networks through which individuals negotiate migratory regimes; and 3) individual migrants whose migration choices

<sup>9</sup> See Eleonore Kofman et al., *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Franz, "Bosnian Refugee Women in (Re)Settlement: Gender Relations and Social Mobility", in *Feminist Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2003), p. 86-103.

<sup>11</sup> Here again, although we are aware that women (and children) are amongst the many who die in crossing the Mediterranean and eastern borders of the EU, no comprehensive data are available on their numbers. See <http://frontex.europa.eu/publications>.

<sup>12</sup> Sylvia Chant and Sarah A. Radcliffe, "Migration and development: the importance of gender", in Sylvia Chant (ed.), *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, London and New York, Belhaven Press, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Ruba Salih, "The Relevance of Gender in/and Migration", in *CARIM Research Reports*, No. 2011/06 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/18958>.

are influenced by their personal histories and households.

By adopting such a framework it becomes clear how migrant women are increasingly filling the gaps left by the crisis of the welfare state in post-industrial societies through their (often irregular) jobs in the domestic sector and in care-related occupations. This is a consequence of the fact that, especially in the southern Mediterranean countries of the EU, the increasing participation of women in the labour market has not brought about changes in the traditional division of roles within their families. Migrant women seem to substitute for European women in their reproductive roles. An old system of gender division of labour has been simply maintained or reproduced through a new supply of labour along racialised lines.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, since the new migratory flows happen in the context of increasingly fortified boundaries, this also means that, in some contexts, sex work or domestic work are becoming the few possible channels for migrant women's employment.

## 2. Women migrants to the EU from the East and South

This article elaborates on the dataset released by the United Nations in 2013 on migration in order to assess the amount and the shape of female migration from countries of the Eastern and Southern Partnerships to the European Union. As mentioned already, we focus on the European countries of the EU15 group, with the addition of Poland. Poland represents a very telling case of the East to West migration of women, being a transit point to Germany, or representing a destination of circular movement of women workers across the Ukraine-Poland border, as we will further illustrate.

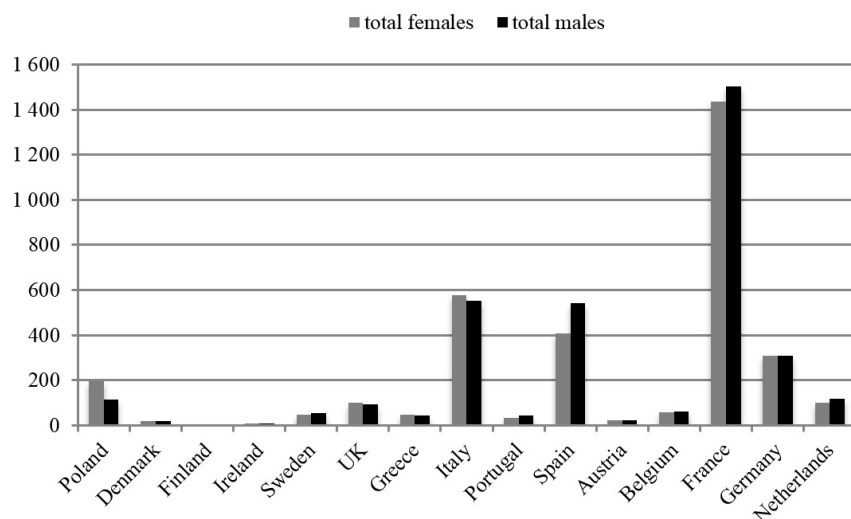
As a premise it is important to mention that our data is based on the UN definition of "migrant," namely a person who resides in a country that is different from the country of his/her birth for more than a year. In some exceptional cases, the UN also counts as "migrants" those who stay abroad for a period shorter than a year (e.g. seasonal workers). However, the data accounts only for official migrants, excluding all those who, for different reasons, are in the European Union without having a regular residence permit.

The first data we discuss concerns the official number of men and women who live in the EU, for each nationality, and are born in the ENP countries (Figure 1). Data from 2013 show that the number of migrant men is still predominant in all countries of destination (3,492,037 men vs. 3,358,480 women). France, in particular, is the country where official presences from ENP countries are most numerous (1,503,377 men and 1,436,160 women). Following France, Germany, Italy and Spain are the countries that in 2013 received most ENP regular migrants. In all cases, the number of men surpasses the number of women. Poland and Italy are an exceptional case,

<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service. The Politics of Black Women in Italy*, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate, 2000.

receiving more women than men, for reasons that, as we will further explain, have to do with easy border crossing and employment opportunities in the domestic sector.

**Figure 1** | Men and women migrating from the ENP area to the EU15 and Poland (2013)



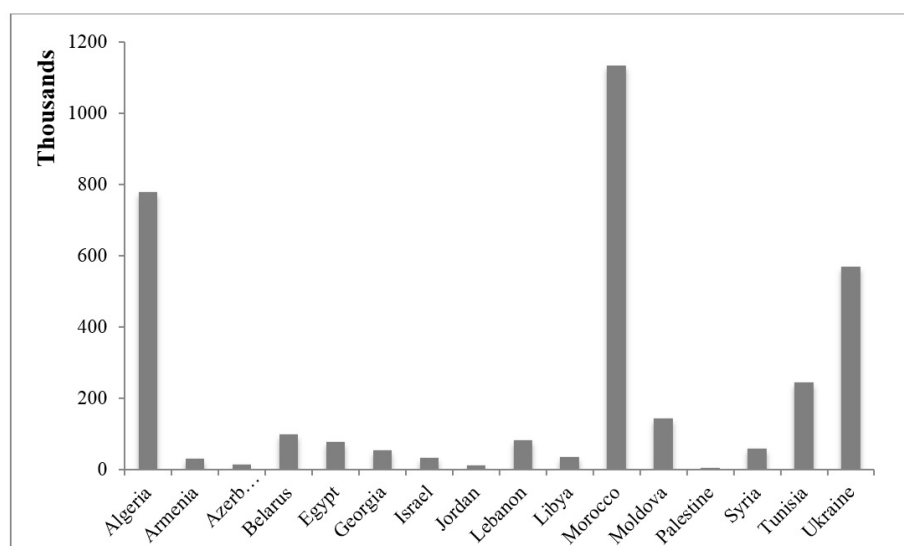
Source: UNDESA, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*, 2013.

It is important to highlight that not all EU countries are relevant destinations for migrant women. Only France, Germany and Spain receive significant numbers of women – and Poland and Italy actually receive more women than men. Thus a gap in the official numbers of men and living in the EU is recognisable in all the destination countries of Figure 1, which suggests that EU-ENP mobility does not represent a framework that offers equal opportunities for regular migration to women and men. This imbalance might be explained by the different access to residence permits for women in the country of destination. Women are inserted into strongly gendered labour sectors such as home care and domestic work, sex work, nursing and agriculture, which are regulated differently in each EU country. For example, the feminisation of migration is predominant in Italy where paid domestic work is a preferential channel for obtaining a residence permit, whereas it is a far more limited phenomenon in countries such as the Netherlands where this opportunity is precluded since these jobs do not entitle workers with a permit to stay.<sup>15</sup> This issue will be further discussed when illustrating the case of Moldovans in Italy and Ukrainians in Poland.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah van Walsum, "Regulating Migrant Domestic Work in the Netherlands: Opportunities and Pitfalls", in *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 2011), p. 141-165.

If we move our focus to the countries of origin of the women officially migrating to Europe (Figure 2), Morocco comes into sight as a very important country of departure with 1,133,634 Moroccan women residing in the EU. It is followed, although with fewer numbers, by Algeria (778,713), Ukraine (567,706), Tunisia (243,630) and Moldova (141,644): all these figures are based on data from the UN Population Division. Other countries from the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood show significantly fewer numbers. In short, on the basis of UN data, female mobility from the ENP area to the EU primarily concerns women from the Maghreb and, to a lesser extent, women from Ukraine and Moldova. Great differences, however, exists between these groups as we discuss in the third part of this article.

**Figure 2** | Women migrating from the ENP area to the EU15 and Poland (2013)



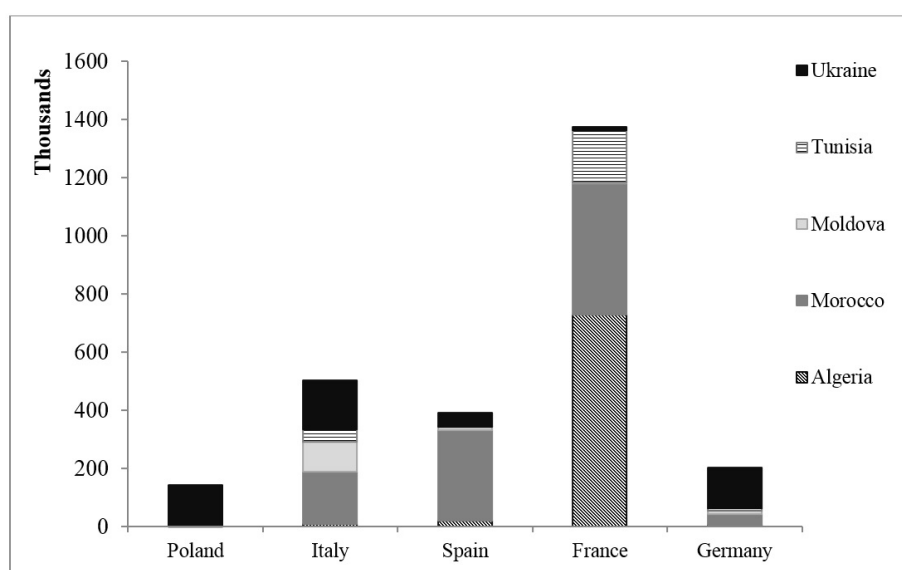
Source: UNDESA, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*, 2013.

Let us thus focus on a selection of countries to sharpen the analysis and explore the case studies. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the five women's national groups that are predominant in Europe (Moroccans, Tunisians, Algerians, Ukrainians and Moldovans) in the five EU countries which are in general the most common destinations of women from the ENP area (i.e. France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland). From this figure, we see that these groups are not equally distributed across the five destinations. France, the larger recipient of ENP women, shows very high numbers of, first, Algerian and then of Moroccan women. Interestingly, Algerian women do not migrate to European destinations other than France, while Moroccans are more widespread, with big numbers also in Italy and Spain. Equally, the distribution of Ukrainian women is widespread; there are large numbers in Italy, Poland and Germany but also smaller numbers in France and Spain. It is also worth pointing out that Ukrainians almost make up the total number of women arriving in Poland from the five selected countries of departure. In this scenario, Italy stands out as the country that receives good numbers from all the selected national groups, with the exception of Algerians. This is partly in line with the



diverse types of flow that have characterised migration to Italy since the country became an immigration country in the 1980s. France, on the other hand, has traditionally been a destination predominantly for former colonial populations. Lastly, it can be noted that Moldovan women are present only in Italy – for reasons that will come clear in Section 6 below.

**Figure 3** | Women migrating from the ENP area to Europe (selected countries, 2013)



Source: UNDESA, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*, 2013.

In the light of the distribution shown in Figure 3, we develop the following four case studies:

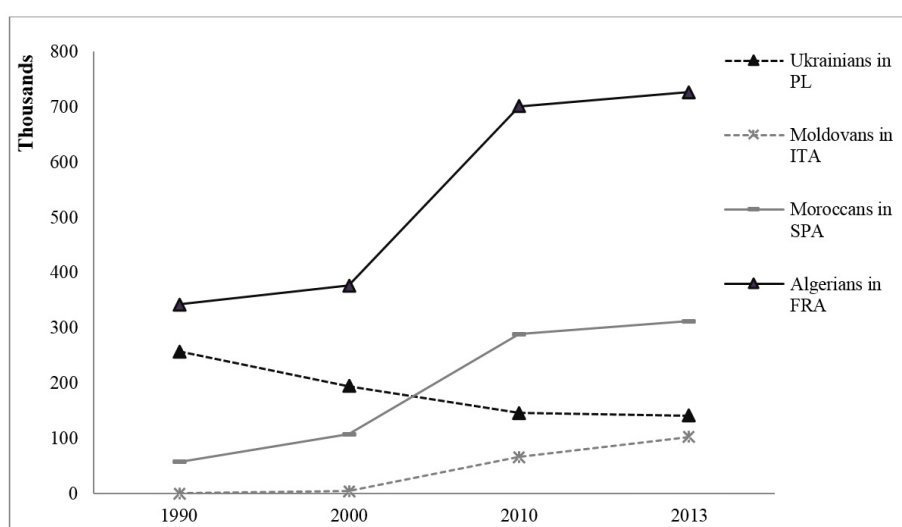
1. Algerian-born women living in France, given their very high numbers and their exclusive relationship with France as a destination;
2. Moroccan women in Spain, for their prominent role in the national context since they are the 4/5 of the total number of women who reside in Spain from the selected countries of origin;
3. Ukrainians to Poland, in the light of the astonishing central position that they seem to have, in comparison with the other four groups, in this country; and finally
4. Moldovans in Italy, in order to understand what are the specific reasons of their almost exclusive relationship with Italy as their western European destination.

As will become clear, these four case studies are relevant to our overall argument for different reasons: numerical (given their growing visibility in official numbers during recent years), but also on the basis of the specific gendered normative and socio-economic opportunities or limitations that affect migratory paths therein.

Figure 4 compares UN data from 1990 and 2013. This further confirms the high number of Algerian women present in France: although being already the most numerous group of women amongst the four in 1990, their number steadily

increased over time. Likewise, the number of Moroccan women in Spain has increased. In fact, just as Morocco and Algeria have long-standing histories of emigration, so France and Spain have been receiving consistent numbers of migrants since the mid-1990s. This is different from the case of Moldovans in Italy: there were almost none in 1990 and immigration has started to increase only during the 2000s. This is line with the periodization of the arrivals from countries of the former Soviet Union to Italy that have developed during the 1990s to become visible in the 2000s, and also due to specific migratory policies, as we will further elaborate. Finally, the presence of Ukrainian women in Poland has a very special feature: it was quite consistent in 1990, but decreased in the following years until today. This striking data is due to the fact that, for historical reasons, many of those counted today as Ukrainian migrants are actually people that until 1991 were counted as Polish because they were born in territories that in 1991 passed from the Polish to the Ukrainian government. The actual migration of Ukrainians to Poland started only in the mid-1990s.

**Figure 4** | Selected cases, 1990-2013



Source: UNDESA, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin*, 2013.

In what follows, we elaborate on these four cases on the basis of secondary literature and the authors' original research. We examine the extent to which the figures above described reflect the ENP-EU relationships or are a consequence of the migration regimes in place across the Mediterranean. In particular, we compare the patterns of female mobility from the most relevant sending countries in the south (Morocco and Algeria) and from the east (Ukraine and Moldova) of Europe. The gender geography of the neighbourhood is also of some importance: Italy, France, Spain and Poland are differently positioned at the borders of the EU (Italy and Spain facing south, and Poland facing east), France is located in the heart of Europe and yet is destination to the highest figure of female migrants arriving from the neighbourhood. Thus, while migration from Morocco to Spain and Ukraine to Poland happens between two geographically close areas, movements from

Moldova to Italy and Algeria to France show that factors other than proximity enter into the picture.

### 3. Algerian women in France

Since the year 2000, the pattern of Algerian emigration as a whole has changed.<sup>16</sup> Along with the traditional emigration of intellectuals and students, there is now increasing emigration of women: women represent 42 percent of the 4.5 million people who were born in Algeria and are today resident in France. As Figure 4 shows, Algerian women in France outnumber other female presences from the ENP area in the EU, with a sharp increase in numbers from the year 2000. This feminisation of migration in the Algerian context can be explained in the face of the changing configuration of mobility, which is no longer driven by strictly economic reasons but that is also a reflection of the desire to pursue other goals, within a context of social mobility and cultural and economic transnational interconnections. Reasons for migrating may go beyond the simple need for work, but reflect the need to fulfil a variety of projects. Examples include university students who increasingly participate in scientific networks, members of civil society associations taking part into Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, but also women engaged with transnational trade circuits, such as *trabendo*, popularly called the "*biznasiates*," that is the "business women".<sup>17</sup>

Hocine Labdelaoui shows how Algerian women in France are increasingly taking on the role of reproducers of the Algerian national community living outside the national territory.<sup>18</sup> This is part of a wider political attempt to promote a moral discourse that encourages the incorporation of the diaspora into the homeland and, thus, to increase their investments back home. Migrant women therefore have a pivotal role in the symbolic and physical reproduction of the nation's identity and collectivity abroad. The reproduction of certain gender ideologies, and the perpetuation of specific gendered roles within the communities abroad, are then also part and parcel of keeping diasporas linked to their communities of origin and explain the contradictory gendered laws enacted by the Algerian government. For example, the government has eased patriarchal control over the migration of women by, for example, making sure that women no longer require the authorisation of their male guardian to leave the country. However, at the same time the Algerian state has kept the clause that fathers, not mothers, have to authorise a child's passport registration, thus perpetuating the principle that citizenship rights are predominantly male prerogatives and enhancing the cultural construction of women as legal minors.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Hocine Labdelaoui, "Genre et migration, en Algérie", in *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2011/12 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15597>.

<sup>17</sup> Ruba Salih, "The Relevance of Gender in/and Migration", cit.

<sup>18</sup> Hocine Labdelaoui, "Genre et migration, en Algérie", cit.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Mebroukine, "Migrations, genre et relations international. Le cas d'Algérie", in *CARIM Notes*

The large number of Algerian women in France also reflects a dynamic and complex situation. On the one hand, it results from the classic pattern of reunification with a spouse who migrated earlier; on the other, this data reflects the increasing erosion of the patriarchal orders that limit women's ability to exercise their desires and choices.

### 4. Moroccan women in Spain

Moroccan women are by far the largest number of female migrants from the ENP area to the EU (Figure 2), residing mainly in France, Italy and Spain (Figure 3). In particular, the numbers of women born in Morocco and who live in Spain has significantly increased from the year 2000, accounting today for 312,000 women, compared with only 57,000 in 1990 (see Figure 4). This tendency can be inscribed in a more general feminisation of the long history of international migration among the Moroccan population. While in the 1950s and 1960s Moroccan migration was predominantly a male experience, the economic crisis of the mid-1970s and the closing of borders brought a structural change in migratory flows and in the composition of the Moroccan "communities" abroad. Already in the year 2000, a survey by the Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains résidant à l'étranger revealed that about 65 percent of Moroccan men abroad lived with their spouses and children, which is strikingly different from the situation in the 1970s when 90 percent of Moroccan migrants were men living alone.<sup>20</sup>

If marriage reunification is one reason for the increased feminisation of Moroccan migration to Spain, other factors relate to the changing realities of women's life in Morocco. On the one hand, women are facing increasing levels of poverty and are often the solely responsible for supporting their children and households,<sup>21</sup> with migration becoming one of the few available solutions. On the other, due to their higher levels of education and the improvement of their legal status, Moroccan women are less tolerant towards gender discrimination and see migration as a viable and possible exit. Moroccan women in Spain find employment primarily in the paid domestic and service sectors, in hotels or restaurants.<sup>22</sup> Next to these is employment in the agricultural sector.

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*d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2011/07 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15592>; Rafik Bouklla-Hassane, "La feminisation de l'immigration d'origine algérienne: Un état de lieux", in *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2011/20 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15617>.

<sup>20</sup> Abdelkrim Belguendouz, "Maroc: genre et migrations entre hier et aujourd'hui", in *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2010/67 (2010), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15286>.

<sup>21</sup> Khadija Elmadmad, "Femmes, migrations et droits au Maroc", in *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2011/01 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15586>.

<sup>22</sup> Mohamed Khachani, "Genre et migration au Maroc", in *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse*, No. 2011/12 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/15616>.

Since 2006, in a scheme promoted by a mobility partnership between the Morocco and Spain, women have been able to undertake seasonal work as fruit pickers.<sup>23</sup> Moroccan women are recruited in the areas of Fès, Mohammedia, Agadir and Dakhla; they have to be between 18 and 40 years of age, and have young children – which in theory means they will wish to return home at the end of season. The number of women joining this scheme has grown from 1,800 in 2006 to 17,000 in 2009. In the Spanish province of Huelva, where the cultivation of strawberries is concentrated, Moroccan women represent 60 percent of all pickers. Employers seem to prefer Moroccans to other foreigners because they are “docile, good workers and submissive,” in the words of the coordinator of the employment scheme.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, this mobility scheme only partially satisfies the needs of migrants households (given the temporariness and the low pay that characterised seasonal pickers’ employment). Moroccan women who wish to find more permanent and remunerative jobs in Spain are still predominantly directed towards the domestic and service sector, where exploitation tied to and reinforced by undocumented migration is very widespread.

The previous example clearly shows that bilateral arrangements do little to enhance women’s autonomous mobility between ENP countries and the EU. Rather, the promotion of this type of circular migration contributes to perpetuate a process of racialising and gendering, where migrant women can easily turn into an exploitable workforce, whilst these forces them into a transnational market of care and cheap flexible work. Although seasonal work and domestic/service work may represent new opportunities in comparison with the traditional scheme of family reunification, they still do not offer an empowering alternative for working women.

### 5. Ukrainian women in Poland

While Algerian and Moroccan migrant women live mostly in a few EU countries – France, Spain and, in the case of Moroccans, also Italy – Ukrainian women are present in a wider spectrum of destinations in the European Union (see Figure 3). Their numbers are particularly high in Italy (168,000 in 2013) as well as in Germany and Poland (about 140,000 in each country). However, we decided to take the case of Ukrainians in Poland as to allow for comparisons with the other three cases under study. The long tradition of migration of Ukrainian women to Poland must be understood against the background of the economic decline of the country, since the 1990s. In this context, women have taken the role of breadwinners required to support often unemployed husbands and school-age children.<sup>25</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> Chadia Arab, “La migración circular femenina marroquí en Huelva: impacto y cambio”, in *OBETS. Revista de ciencias sociales*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2010), p. 165-174, <http://hdl.handle.net/10045/16095>.

<sup>24</sup> Abdelkrim Belguendouz, “Maroc: genre et migrations entre hier et aujourd’hui”, cit.

<sup>25</sup> Suzanne LaFont, “One step forward, two steps back: women in the post-communist states”, in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 2001), p. 203-220; Jacqui True,

mobility between Ukraine and Poland has very often taken the shape of temporary migration, facilitated by historical ties, geographical proximity and favourable policies for border crossing.<sup>26</sup>

From the policy point of view, the present situation is the last stage in a complex evolution of different arrangements. Flows between 1945 and 1989 were entirely regulated by state apparatuses, were mutual agreements and the result of diverse mobility programmes within the COMECON framework (e.g. tourism, student exchanges, cross-border employment, military dislocations, etc.) During the 1990s, and especially after the non-visa agreement of 1996, increasing mobility between Ukraine and Poland developed.<sup>27</sup> This is also the time of the so-called suitcase traders who were very active across the Ukraine-Poland border from the mid-1950s.<sup>28</sup> This regular movement between the two countries was virtually halted in 2003, when Polish migration policy had to adjust to the standards of the European Union, which required the introduction of visa requirements for non-EU nationals.

At present, the legal framework for the entrance of Ukrainians is relatively liberalised: in 2006 Poland decided to gradually liberalise the legislation on employment of third country nationals. This was achieved, on the one hand, by facilitating the issuing of work permits, and, on the other hand, by expanding the catalogue of nationalities who, under certain conditions, are allowed to take employment in Poland without necessarily holding a permit, as in the case of EU eastern neighbours including Russia. In 2008, the Agreement on the Local Border Traffic with Ukraine was concluded, which facilitated the mobility of people living on the Ukrainian border, including the many women who were seeking employment in the expanding domestic and care sector of Polish cities. The reduction in the number of those counted as Ukrainians (although born in what was formerly Poland), together with the fact that the entrance of these Ukrainian workers was not registered after 2008, might explain why the official number of Ukrainian women migrants is decreasing (see Figure 4). Yet it is a matter of fact that their presence in the domestic and care sectors, as well as in Polish society more generally, has increased.

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*Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism. The Czech Republic after Communism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska and Marek Okólski, "Influx and Integration of Migrants in Poland in the Early XXI Century", in *CMR Working Papers*, No. 50 (November 2003), <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publ/233>; Agata Górny et al., *Immigration to Poland. Policy, Employment, Integration*, Warsaw, Scholar, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Krystyna Iglicka and Agnieszka Weinar, "Ukrainian Migration in Poland from the Perspective of Polish Policies and Systems' Theory", in *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2008), p. 356-365.

<sup>28</sup> Dariusz Stola, "Two Kinds of Quasi-Migration in the Middle Zone: Central Europe as a Space for Transit Migration and Mobility for Profit", in Claire Wallace and Dariusz Stola (eds.), *Patterns of Migration in Central Europe*, London and New York, Palgrave, 2001, p. 84-104, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2292616>.

In relation to the temporary migration, which characterised the mobility pattern of this group, scholars have argued that migrants from Ukraine have little interest in, or the possibility of, settling in Poland because of economic, legal and cultural constraints. Their aim is, rather, to improve their living conditions at home. For this reason, Ukrainian migrants perceive their migration as a temporary activity, additional to their work at home. This has resulted in a lasting phenomenon of temporary trips and repeated mobility. Some of the Ukrainian domestic workers circulating to and from Poland make use of tourist visas in order to enter the country and work irregularly.<sup>29</sup> They are generally live out and do cleaning jobs. Polish scholars point to the risks related to the undeclared character of this work, the structural conditions of the sector and the limited opportunities for mobility within it.<sup>30</sup> Ukrainian circular migration has been defined as "incomplete migration," characterised by short-termism and the unstructured departure of individuals in search of immediate profit rather than being a structured project.<sup>31</sup> Along the same lines, Marta Kindler and Monika Szulecka have emphasised the importance assigned by Ukrainians to the ties with their country of origin as a result of the obstacles that they face in the host country.<sup>32</sup>

Thus we believe that the case of Ukrainian women in Poland is an example of the negotiations taking place around women's work on the borders of the EU, with the formation of a gendered and ethnicised labour force to be employed in the lowest strata of the European labour market. While Polish women still engage in temporary and permanent migration to Germany, the United Kingdom and other western European countries where they mainly take up domestic and care work in private households, Ukrainian women are doing the same in Poland.<sup>33</sup> The overlapping of these different circuits of women's mobilities denotes the increasing stratification of labour markets opportunities for migrant women. If gendered occupations such as domestic work still play a major role, this is however split into jobs with different entitlements from the point of view of rights and labour conditions. Women on the borders of the EU, as in the case of the Ukrainians, are included in a hierarchical way in this market compared with women holding citizenship from a member country, by being allowed to enter into it only in the most precarious and invisible way, namely as flexible, undocumented privately hired service workers.

<sup>29</sup> Krystyna Iglicka, Katarzyna Gmaj and Wojciech Borodzicz-Smoliński, *Circular Migration Patterns. Migration between Ukraine and Poland*, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute, 2011, <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/19720>.

<sup>30</sup> Marta Kindler, "The relationship to the employer in migrant's eyes: the domestic work Ukrainian migrant women in Warsaw", in *Cahiers de l'Urmis*, No. 12 (June 2009), <https://urmis.revues.org/853>.

<sup>31</sup> Marek Okólski, "Recent Trends in International Migration. Poland 1997", in *CMR Working Papers*, No. 19 (October 1998), <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publ/329>.

<sup>32</sup> Marta Kindler and Monika Szulecka, "The Economic Integration of Ukrainian and Vietnamese Migrant Women in the Polish Labour Market", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2013), p. 649-671.

<sup>33</sup> Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, "Care Chains in Eastern and Central Europe: Male and Female Domestic Work at the Intersections of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity", in *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2013), p. 364-383.

## 6. Moldovan women in Italy

Figures 3 and 4 show how Moldovan women's presence in Italy, although not being the most significant in terms of numbers (fewer than Ukrainians or Moroccans), offers some interesting elements in support of the argument of this article. In 2010 Moldovan emigrants were estimated at 21 percent of the country's population, with about 20 percent of them in Italy.<sup>34</sup> Italy is today the most important destination for women from Moldova: since the early 2000s their numbers have steadily grown, reaching today the 100,000 mark (see Figure 4). This is an interesting case of highly gendered migration which, contrary to the example above of Ukrainians in Poland, is mainly based on permanent migratory projects and the opportunity for formal access to the labour market. The permanent character of this migration finds evidence in the work of Pia Pinger who emphasised how the persistent poverty of Moldovan families is a deterrent for migrant women who want to return, given the lack of opportunities open to them back home.<sup>35</sup> For Pinger, it is important to consider that Moldovan women migrating to countries such as Italy need longer periods of work before they are able to compensate for the economic efforts that have served to finance their initial emigration.<sup>36</sup>

It goes without saying that the expansion of the private market for home care service has had a deep impact on labour opportunities for Moldovan women in Italy and so on the level of immigration.<sup>37</sup> Italy is one of the European countries where the private market of home-based elderly care provided by migrant women has been established for the longest time – since the end of the 1970s – and where it has grown extensively: today, 88.6 percent of the Italian private service sector is made up of women and 81 percent by migrants.<sup>38</sup> It is relatively easy for foreigners to access this job sector, in comparison with what happens in other countries. Regularisations are the main gate of access in the context of Italian migration policy, and indeed domestic and care workers have received special treatment in the regularisation of 2002, with the extension of the applications deadline. In 2009 the government took further special measures to favour these workers with an ad hoc regularisation. This has resulted in a general increase in the official numbers

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 2nd ed., Washington, World Bank, 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/QGUCPJTOR0>; Ummuhan Bardak (ed.), *Labour Markets and Employability. Trends and Challenges in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2816/14590>.

<sup>35</sup> Pia Pinger, "Come Back or Stay? Spend Here or There? Return and Remittances: The Case of Moldova", in *International Migration*, Vol. 48, No. 5 (October 2010), p. 142-173, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00562.x>.

<sup>36</sup> See Dennis Görlich and Christoph Trebesch, "Mass Migration and Seasonality: Evidence on Moldova's Labour Exodus", in *Kiel Advanced Studies Working Papers*, No. 435 (May 2006), <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/4012>.

<sup>37</sup> Sabrina Marchetti and Alessandra Venturini, "Mothers and Grandmothers on the Move: Labour Mobility and the Household Strategies of Moldovan and Ukrainian Migrant Women in Italy", in *International Migration*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (October 2014), p. 111-126.

<sup>38</sup> Italian Ministry of Labour, *Secondo rapporto annuale sul mercato del lavoro degli immigrati*, July 2012, <http://www.governo.it/backoffice/allegati/68685-7839.pdf>.



of foreigner workers in this sector. Finally, it is important to consider that, in the yearly allocation of quotas for migrants, the government always assigns a relatively high number of permits to prospective care and domestic workers from specific countries of origin, included Moldova.

More generally, the arrival of Moldovan women in Italy has been clearly facilitated by specific government provisions. Indeed, official data on Moldovans' presence in Italy have boomed after the government's launch of a regularisation process for undocumented migrant workers in 2002: with 29,471 applications, their (official) presence in Italy has multiplied five times.<sup>39</sup> Again in 2009, at the time of a regularisation directed only to undocumented workers in the care and domestic sector, Moldovans have been incredibly active by submitting 26,605 applications.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Moldova and Italy have established a bilateral agreement for workers' recruitment, which was signed in 2003 and renewed in 2011.<sup>41</sup> There is therefore an *ad hoc* quota for Moldovans in the yearly state decree which regulates the quotas for new foreign workers in Italy. Between 2002 and 2010, more than 27,000 Moldovans entered Italy through these quotas, without counting those that, as domestic workers, could also apply for the 290,000 vacancies in the quotas for this sector.<sup>42</sup> More recently, in 2008, Moldova signed a visa facilitation agreement with the whole European Union which was followed by a visa exemption for Moldovans entering the Schengen area for short stays, starting from 28 April 2014. It is thus an open question as to how this last facilitation will affect the movement of Moldovan women to the EU and Italy in particular.

The case of women's migration from Moldova and Italy thus stands in opposition to the three cases that we have previously illustrated. Without forgetting the ample margins of undocumented migration that still persist between Moldova and Italy, as well as the difficult conditions in which regular migrants perform their jobs in the home care and domestic sectors, it is nevertheless important to reflect upon the way this case can serve as an example for other countries. There is no doubt that the legal and permanent employment in the domestic sector offers women the opportunity for an autonomous type of mobility, in which they can potentially engage in an activity independently from their husbands or fathers' will. It allows them to earn a living and take on the role of breadwinner for their transnational

<sup>39</sup> ISTAT, *Permessi di regolarizzazione concessi in base alle leggi n. 189/2002 e n. 222/2002 per area geografica e principali paesi di cittadinanza, per sesso al 1° gennaio 2004*, 2004, <http://demo.istat.it/altridati/permessi/2004/tav4.13.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Italian Ministry of Interiors, *Colf e badanti, i dati riepilogativi al 5 luglio*, 12 July 2010, [http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala\\_stamp/notizie/immigrazione/0076\\_2010\\_07\\_12\\_colf\\_badanti.html\\_1728265669.html](http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stamp/notizie/immigrazione/0076_2010_07_12_colf_badanti.html_1728265669.html).

<sup>41</sup> Marta Giuliani, Franco Pittau and Antonio Ricci (eds.), *Visa Policy as Migration Channel in Italy*, Rome, EMN Italy and IDOS, 2012, <http://www.emnitaly.cnr.it/eng/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Visa-Policy-as-Migration-Channel-2012-.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Sabrina Marchetti, Daniela Piazzalunga and Alessandra Venturini, "Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Countries Country Study: Italy", in *IZA Discussion Papers*, No. 7635 (September 2013), p. 67, [http://www.iza.org/en/webcontent/publications/papers/viewAbstract?dp\\_id=7635](http://www.iza.org/en/webcontent/publications/papers/viewAbstract?dp_id=7635).

households, which they are often able to reunify in Italy. The less precarious legal conditions allow for better conditions of employment, and, under these conditions, domestic work may provide a working and living space that can be relatively safer for women than the conditions they face in factories or agriculture. However, the field of domestic work in Italy is still often low paid, with precarious working conditions, a lack of rights and, in some cases, subject to sexual and physical abuse. Moreover, workers complain that such work does not allow them to climb the social ladder towards more rewarding occupations, more in line with their educational backgrounds.

### Conclusions

After this excursion through different models of gendered mobility between ENP countries and the EU, we now come back to our initial question. What are the limits of ENP policies regarding female migration across the eastern and southern Mediterranean? To date the ENP framework does not seem to have taken significant steps to promote a safe and autonomous migration specifically for women from the ENP to the EU. The cases of Moroccan fruit pickers in Spain and Ukrainian domestic workers in Poland show how women's labour opportunities are predominantly characterised by temporariness, difficult working conditions and poor legal protection. There is a transnational hierarchy that confines women to care and domestic work, or to the seasonal agricultural sectors, which are all variably located across a continuum of illegality, exploitation and invisibility. In both the countries of origin and destination women suffer from economic and structural disadvantages. Migrant women come into sight as transnational figures more suitable to find work in flexible (agriculture) or gender-biased (domestic and care) labour markets. At the same time, they are far from being prospective full citizens in the countries of destination; on the contrary, they are destined to short periods of stay, invisibility and to being on the margins of social and civil entitlements. The type of circular migration they are embedded in, moreover, allows for the welfare costs to be totally upheld by the country of origin.

From the perspective of ENP frameworks and categorisations, migrant women do not seem to fall into the category of the economically rewarding working migrant "who sends remittances," nor into that of the entrepreneur who facilitates trade across the borders, nor finally into that of the cultural mediators that spurs innovation amongst his/her diaspora fellow members.

The case of Moldovans in Italy might be seen as the exception to this overall view, but the specific connotation of the employment available to these working women in the Italian home care sector (thus very isolated, badly remunerated and socially stigmatised) prevents them from becoming transformative social actors, either in the country of origin or of destination. It is also a sector where migrant women cannot generally fulfil their aspirations by capitalising on their education and the work experience they have accumulated in the country of origin, resulting in their

gradual deskilling. Domestic work, in general, comes into sight as a significantly double-edged job opportunity for migrants, as far as it offers employment on the fringes of an EU labour market, in a sector characterised by lack of rights and by a scarce economic and social mobility.

It is on these grounds that we formulate the following policy recommendations to improve conditions for migrant women in the ENP area:

1. Enhance mobility partnerships for *permanent* work (i.e. along the lines of the Moldova-Italy agreement, not the Morocco-Spain agreement) between all countries of the European Neighbourhood and the EU member states;
2. Avoid limitations to the employment of migrant women in which their *family situation* is used as a parameter for assessing their suitability for the work (as happens in the case of the Spain-Morocco agreement);
3. Promote the entrance of women in *non*-traditionally precarious and flexible labour sectors. This can be done, for example, by facilitating the recognition of their previous study and work careers in the countries of origin;
4. Facilitate labour employment for those who have arrived in Europe as *family migrants* and who also have an interest in being economically active, which can also favour their integration into the country more generally;
5. Finally, promote the active role of women as transnational actors between ENP countries and the European Union, by designing specific policy tools for gender mainstreaming in this field.

Such provisions would help the EU to meet its proclaimed interest in enhancing gender equality in neighbouring countries. At present, the EU is not always critical of the gender biases of migrants' countries of origin, but, rather, reproduces strong gender stratifications and inequalities in its ENP approach to migration. To embrace the recommendations above would help to overcome the current gender blindness in ENP migration policies which seem to position migrant women along a geographical and gendered hierarchy of care and domestic work, or low paid and gendered and racially constructed seasonal agricultural work, which reifies their roles as "carers with extra work burdens" rather than as workers. This could be a first step to dismantle the gendered (and racialised) material and discursive devices that structure women's mobility across the eastern and southern Mediterranean.

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