

# **Women Migrants In Management Positions**

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**Influencing factors for women migrants to achieve successful careers.  
A comparison between employed and self-employed women migrants in Austria.**

Master Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the MBA Degree  
in Sustainable Development and Management

Submitted to Sabine Sedlacek, Associate Professor at the  
Department of Public Governance and Sustainable Development  
at The Modul University Vienna.

Alexandra-Elena Slaats  
Student ID 1302012

Vienna, May 17th, 2016

## **Affidavit**

I hereby affirm that this Master's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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Date

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## Abstract

Currently 49% of the people in Vienna have a migration background; the figure is 20% at the national level (Statistics Austria) with numbers growing every year. With a constant increase in the migrating population, discrimination based on ethnicity in the labor market has also increased. Studies show strong evidence that migrants encounter discrimination before and upon entering the labor market. Migrants have to send more job applications than the average Austrian citizen and are mostly overqualified for their positions while at the same time being underpaid in comparison to the wages of people without a migration background. The reason for choosing this topic for my master thesis is, on the one hand, due to the field I work in - migration-integration, as well as my personal interest in understanding more about how the Austrian labor market works and how migrants, in particular women, are generally perceived by the host society and how migrants themselves see the Austrian market. On the other hand, my personal experience as a woman migrant striving for a successful career, coupled with the many hardships migrants encounter in the labor market, hardships so often mentioned by other migrants during many networking events, has piqued my curiosity into finding out more about the causes of these realities. I wanted to understand more about the reasons why migrants are faced with such challenges and find out what programs are available, in particular what measures are being taken to fight prejudice on the labor market. During my own difficulties to find a job after my sabbatical year in 2012, I chose entrepreneurship as a path to show my potential and abilities, but as well to be part of the solution when it comes to promoting migration as an asset to a society and economy. That is why the following thesis focuses on two groups of women migrants, those who are employed and those self-employed, making a comparison between them.

Initially, my intention was to interview women migrants at the very top levels of management found in board of directors and senior executive positions within Austrian companies; however, finding them proved to be quite a challenge, therefore I decided to look for them at middle management levels. Having completed the interviews, one aspect that stood out to me, was that all the women had worked in international companies. I had hoped to find someone working in a private Austrian company, which traded locally. However, after studying the available research on migration and the labor market, I realized that such companies mostly either do not hire foreigners or foreigners do not commonly apply for jobs in such companies.

The objective of the empirical research was firstly to identify the influencing factors that have led to their successful careers and secondly, to find the similarities and/or differences in the

challenges experienced by the two groups of women. An adjacent finding that I expected to derive from the interviews, was to be able to describe the reasons for which the self-employed women migrants wanted to become independent and to find out what the influencing factors were for choosing that path.

It is important to note that the interviews in this paper reflect only the personal opinion of these migrant women and do not reflect that of the entire society. The results from the interviews have shown little discrepancy between the influencing factors of the two groups of women migrants to achieve successful careers. Additionally, resulting from the interviews with the women in the self-employed group, was the realization that they became independent not by force, but by their own desire to manage their time and level of income as they preferred, while doing what they were best at. Only one entrepreneur found herself pushed to establish her own company due to the fact that she was unable to find a job even though she had an excellent education and the right set of skills to become an aspiring manager. She did however also mention that at this point she would not consider going back into an employment position, even though she now had the network and had built a name for herself in the real-estate industry arguing that salaries are too low on the Austrian market and migrants are most often underpaid even though they are as qualified as Austrians.

The measure the interviewees most referred to as being a solution for women to advance in their careers, was the need for a female quota in the private sector, this being the number one reason for which they are disadvantaged on the job market when it comes to high-level positions. The results from the interviews also revealed the fact that the migration background was not so much of an issue within the job market, being rather perceived as an asset at middle management levels, but it was rather an issue within society and outside of the work place. The predominant influencing factors most often mentioned by women migrants as fundamental for career advancement were **networking** and **mentoring**, coupled with a particular set of soft skills that women needed in order to cope with the work environments, such as **resilience**, **performance** and **adaptability** to the Austrian mindset which is rather conservative and traditional.

Whether from the perspective of an independent migrant woman or that of a migrant woman employed in a company, both groups have experienced similar challenges on their career path. However, one could say that as an employed woman migrant, it is much harder to acquire senior management positions than it would be for a self-employed one. Once you have a company of your own, you are already senior. You are your own boss. Needless to say, there are also differences between a nominated CEO of a corporation and a CEO of one's own company with

two employees. Success in a career is defined by the individual perception of success and what a person associates with it: money, power, authority, self-accomplishment, “being my own boss”, career-life balance, self-fulfillment, etc. Success is so to say in the eye of the beholder. Although the two types of migrant women groups are different in form, they both follow the same goal: to achieve a successful and meaningful career. But on their career path for self-accomplishment, both groups of women migrants pointed to one predominant obstacle when it came to advancing in their careers: that of their gender, and not, as my initial assumption was, because of their migration background.

The experiences of these women are not only remarkable but at the same time raise the issue of the lack of action to thin out the glass ceiling at the private sector level.

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## List of Figures.

Figure 1. Top 10 countries with the largest amounts of migrants in 2013 (in millions-)	
Source: United Nations, 2013 _____	14
Figure 2. Top 5 Immigration Countries in the EU in 2013, Source: Eurostat 2015 _____	15
Figure 3 Migration within the EU. Source: Eurostat Info graphic 2015, p8 _____	16
Figure 4 Employees without Austrian Citizenship 1961-1998 (Biffl et al 1997, p22) _____	19
Figure 5 Percentage of migrants residing in Austria.Top 10 minorities. Source: Statistics Austria, 2002 _____	21
Figure 6 Top 10 migrant countries in Austria, in percentage. Source: Statistics Austria, 2014 _____	21
Figure 7 Top 10 migrant countries based on female gender. Source: Statistics Austria, 2014 _____	22
Figure 8 Parallel between men and women divided by reason for migration, Statistics Austria 2009 _____	24
Figure 9. Fields of employment in which women migrant most work in. Source: ÖIF 2014 & OIF 2015 _____	25
Figure 10 Comparison between first and second generation migrants in management positions in Austria; AK 2015 _____	28
Figure 11. Female population based on country of birth and citizenship. Source ÖIF, 2015 _____	29
Figure 12 Why diversity matters. Effects of diversity (Hunt et al, 2015) _____	41
Figure 13 Overview of data on interview respondents _____	52
Figure 14. Respondents by age within the employed group of migrant women. _____	104
Figure 15. References made on discrimination within both groups _____	109
Figure 16 Visualization of word frequency in Nvivo _____	117
Figure 17 Most used attributes when asked to give an advice _____	119
Figure 18 Visualization of the influencing factors for a successful career and of the attributes referred to when giving advice _____	121

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Affidavit.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Presentation of the Problem.....	1
1.2 Aims of the Master Thesis.....	2
1.3 Definition of Management Position.....	2
1.4 Analytical Procedure .....	3
<b>2 International migration.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Definition.....	5
2.2 Why do people migrate? Theories and perspectives. ....	6
2.2.1 Migration from an economic perspective .....	7
2.2.2 The assimilation theory.....	8
2.2.3 The transnational theory. ....	9
2.2.4 Female Migration. ....	11
2.2.5 Conclusions.....	12
2.3 Top 10 biggest migration cultures. An overview.....	14
2.4 Migration inside the European Union .....	15
2.5 Migration of non-EU nationals.....	15
<b>3 Austria.....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 History of migration.....	17
3.2 The guest workers' period .....	17
3.3 Facts and Figures.....	19
3.4 Demographics.....	20
3.5 Education.....	22
3.6 Reasons for migration .....	23
3.7 Women migrants in Austria. Facts and Figures.....	24
3.7.1 Industries women migrants work in.....	25
<b>4 The labor market in Austria.....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1 Discrimination of migrants on the labour market.....	27
4.1.1 Definition. Forms of Discrimination.....	27
4.1.2 Income inequality and over qualification in the labour market.....	27
4.1.3 Inside the labour market.....	30
4.2 Career women in the Austrian labour market. ....	32
4.3 The glass ceiling effect. ....	34
4.3.1 Definition and Origin .....	34
4.3.2 The Glass Ceiling Index.....	35
4.4 Criteria for successful employment of migrants.....	36
4.5 Corporate Governance Code.....	38
4.6 Entrepreneurship as a career path. Migrant entrepreneurs.....	39
<b>5 Diversity management.....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1.1 Definition.....	40
5.1.2 Advantages of diverse companies .....	41
5.2 The Diversity Charter .....	41



5.3	Diversity in Austria- A women's perspective .....	42
5.4	The Effects of Migration in Austria. ....	44
<b>6</b>	<b>Observations based on the theoretical findings.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>50</b>
7.1	Research Topic.....	51
7.2	Questions.....	51
7.3	Description of the research group .....	51
7.4	Interview guideline .....	53
7.5	Framework: .....	53
<b>8</b>	<b>Case studies.....</b>	<b>54</b>
8.1	Case Study 1_ Elena R., Italian.....	54
8.2	Case Study 2_ Alecsandra G, Serbian.....	59
8.3	Case Study 3_ Michelle D., American.....	62
8.4	Case Study 4_ Mary N, American.....	66
8.5	Case Study 5_ Laima S., Latvian.....	70
8.6	Case Study_6 Corrine G, American .....	75
8.7	Case Study 7_ Laura C., Romanian.....	81
8.8	Case Study 8_ Natalia V., Entrepreneur, Russian.....	84
8.9	Case Study 9_ Ioana S. Entrepreneur, Romanian .....	89
8.10	Case Study 10_ Cristina S., Entrepreneur, Romanian.....	93
8.11	Case Study 11_ Emma R, Entrepreneur, Austrian with Indian origins.....	97
<b>9</b>	<b>Research results and interpretations .....</b>	<b>102</b>
9.1	Education and Background.....	102
9.1.1	Languages.....	104
9.1.2	Age.....	104
9.1.3	Citizenship.....	105
9.2	Career path .....	105
9.3	Challenges .....	107
9.4	Social environment & Integration.....	112
9.5	Vitamin B references .....	114
9.6	Perception of the word "migrant".....	115
9.7	Key factors for a successful career.....	117
9.8	Advice for women migrants to reach successful careers .....	119
9.9	Career-Life Balance .....	122
9.10	Future trends.....	123
<b>10</b>	<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>128</b>
10.1	Summary .....	128
10.2	Observations.....	130
10.3	Recommendations.....	135
<b>11</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>140</b>

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Presentation of the Problem**

In 2014 the population of Austria was recorded at approximately 8.54 million (BMBF, 2015). On average, in 2014 there were 4,367,382 women and 4,176,550 men. A total of 17.9% of women aged between 25-64, with and without a migration background, had an academic education degree whereas men recorded a quota of 15.8%. Statistically, there are more qualified women than men (Statistics Austria, 2015). At the same time, 4,279,600 of the working population were aged between 15-64, of which 2,018,200 were women. (Statistics Austria, 2015). Even though the working population is almost equally balanced and women are as qualified as men, the reality is that women are seldom found in executive management positions in the private sector. A study done by the Chamber of Commerce revealed that only 5.9% of women are present in the top 200 companies in Austria and 16.2% on the board of directors. Out of 606 management positions available within these companies, women occupy only 36 (AK, 2015).

In 2011, out of 500,000 management positions, only 9% were occupied by people with a migration background. 30% of private companies employed migrants and less than 3% occupied management roles (Medienservicestelle.at, 2011). The lack of statistics to determine how many women with a migrant background were managers, underlines the absence or low representation of such a group in Austrian private companies.

During my endeavors to find professional women in management, most people were glad to give me contacts; however, when I added the migration background as a variable, it completely took everybody by surprise because they could not identify any within their networks. I was more than once asked if I could actually complete this study because of the lack of them in such positions.

In spite of this, I was able to find many in middle management roles, therefore the interviews focus on this management level.

This paper will research these aspects from the perspective of 11 women migrants, six of them being employed in Austrian international companies and five being self-employed and/or entrepreneurs. These views do not reflect that of the entire population and the paper intends to look closer into the challenges and successes on their career paths.

## 1.2 Aims of the Master Thesis

The goal of this paper is to research the challenges of women migrants on the labor market with a focus on those in middle management positions and to identify the influencing factors that led to their successful careers, despite many barriers, as well as the additional key factors needed in comparison to women in management positions without a migration background. The research question is “What are the influencing factors for women migrants to achieve their career goals” and following on from that, the paper aims to look at whether there are any differences or similarities between the women migrants employed and those who are self-employed. There are two hypotheses that the research paper looks to prove. The first is that the reason for little cultural diversity at management levels is due to discrimination based on the migration background. The second hypothesis is that the self-employed group of women migrants chose independence out of necessity due to discrimination in the labor market based on their cultural background and the consequent difficulties in finding a meaningful job which offered career advancement and for which they would not be overqualified.

The interviews cover two groups: six employed migrant women and five self-employed migrant women. This comparison is made in order to understand the views of the two different groups and at the same time to get insight into the reasons for choosing a career as a freelancer or entrepreneur. It is important to emphasize once more that the opinions of these migrant women do not reflect those of the general population and express only their views and perceptions as women in management positions.

## 1.3 Definition of Management Position

Based on the online educational portal ManagementStudyGuide.com (2016), a company has three levels of management: top, middle / executor and low referring to supervisory, operative or first-line managers. Based on the size of the company, the number of management levels may vary.

This paper researches migrant women managers with successful careers at low and middle management levels, irrespective of the responsibilities and number of employees under their supervision. Originally, the intention was to interview only migrant women with high profile management careers, such as members of boards of directors and of the executive boards of companies in Austria. The difficulty in finding such women, however, has led me to research at middle and low management levels. Based on the Business Dictionary 2015, middle management “*comprises of managers who head specific departments (accounting, marketing,*

*production) or business units. They are responsible for implementing the top management policies and plans and typically have two management levels below them.”* At the same time, all interviewees have been asked to give their own definition of a management position in order to understand their awareness of the job levels they occupy. Each of them measured success either by salary levels and responsibilities or responsibilities and number of employees, coupled with the authority to define and implement strategy and with the need for a manager to have a vision and to inspire and motivate others.

Out of the two women migrant groups, the ones employed are at a middle level of management in their careers and within the self-employed group we find two types: freelancers (2) and entrepreneurs (3), all being their own boss. Their management level could be looked at as top level; however they also acknowledge the differences between a freelancer, an owner, a founder of a company and a high-level management position responsible for tens or hundreds of employees. Out of the five interviewed self-employed women, one migrant woman founder had a team of more than 20 employees. One other entrepreneur who just started her own business had held junior management positions before becoming self-employed in which she was responsible for implementation and supervision of marketing and social media projects. Based on her accumulated experience, in this paper she will be considered as a junior manager, as compared to the others.

Based on the influencing factors in reaching professional careers as women migrants, the paper will then aim to formulate a success recipe revealing the key factors to achieve career goals and offering some pieces of advice for other women migrants who want to follow in their shoes and need insight and encouragement to make it in a very male predominant business environment.

## **1.4 Analytical Procedure**

This thesis employs a qualitative research approach and uses the exploratory qualitative interview method with open-ended questions and no pre-determined list of questions, but rather a guideline to provide a certain structure to follow. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and semi-structured, meaning that the list of topics and questions slightly varied from interview to interview depending on the person. (Saunders et al, 2003). The goal was to allow the interviewee to talk freely about events, experiences, attitudes and behaviors in order to understand the environment and the social and economic factors that contributed to reaching the management positions they have attained. The interview will be an informant interview type, which places the interviewee as the person leading the flow of the interview. (Saunders et

al, 2003). The purpose of this type of interview is to find out about personal perceptions and experiences and to discover new insights in this area.

The first part of the thesis focuses on international migration and on understanding the different migration theories and perspectives, which underline how complex the topic of migration is and at the same time give an understanding of the reasons for relocating or moving to a new country. The basis for explaining why and when migration takes place is found in American history since it is considered the hub of immigration and has often been the source of studies for international scholars. The following chapter continues with an overview of the biggest migration countries at a global and European level and then moves on to providing a thorough view of migration in Austria (Chapter 3), understanding the labor market and looking into types of discrimination and gender-related issues (Chapter 4). As the topic of the thesis aims to understand the situation of women migrants in management positions, a specific chapter is dedicated to the glass ceiling effect, an effect which has been used not only to refer to gender discrimination but also to discrimination based on migration background when it comes to advancing in one's career. The glass ceiling effect in Austria, as compared to other countries, is quite thick and still requires a lot of work in order to create awareness of companies in the private sector to take action.

A look at the empirical data available already gives an insight into the influencing factors necessary for successful employment and at the same time sets the stage for understanding the positive effects of diversity in management and the Austrian labor market (Chapter 5). After having presented the overall situation of migration and its positive effects on the Austrian economy, the next chapter moves into the empirical part of the paper explaining the method of research and describing the interview guideline as well as the researched group of women. Chapter 8 then reveals the eleven case studies and interviews of professional women migrants: six interviews of women migrants in middle-management positions and five interviews of women migrants who have chosen the path of self-employment and entrepreneurship. This chapter provides an insight into the interview discussions, one by one. Chapter 9 will then examine the characteristics of the professional women and compare the answers and perceptions of the two groups employed and self-employed while identifying differences and similarities between them. The chapter then goes on to describe their struggles and turning points, but as well the successes in their careers based on the topics discussed during the interview. At the same time, this chapter offers practical advice from these professional women. The final point in this chapter, subchapter 9.10, provides a view of the future trends in Austria based on the sentiment I observed while talking to them, without really asking specifics

on what they think the future will be like. This subchapter should rather be perceived as a summary of the observations I made while trying to understand their state of mind when they were referring to the future.

The final chapter reviews the empirical findings resulting from the interviews and offers recommendations based on the accumulated knowledge provided by the eleven professional women migrants.

## **2 International migration**

### **2.1 Definition**

The term „migration“ comes from the Latin word „migrare“ and it means movement to another country. The online Oxford dictionary describes it as the “movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions” (Oxford Dictionary, 2015).

When researching for a definition of the word migrant, one can find many different versions depending on country or continent. The definition can come from the place of birth, citizenship, length of stay in another country, from the intention of moving long- or short-term, i.e. temporary or permanent stay. A more current trend points to voluntary migration, commonly referred to as the notion of “pull” factors emphasizing migration for work reasons, or the counter notion, that of “push” or forced migration, such as in the case of refugees.

Austria defines a person with a migrant background according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) definition of a person with migration background, who is, a person with both parents born abroad. Based on the Municipal Department N° 17 of Vienna, the department of Integration and Diversity, also Viennese people with only one parent born abroad are referred to as a people with a migration background. Furthermore, there are two consequent categories resulting from this definition, first generation migrant, referring to a person born in a foreign country, and second generation migrant, who is a person born in a country the origin of which differs to that of the parents. (Magistratsabteilung 17- Integration und Diversität, 2012). In Austria, the word “migrant”, written and spoken [migrant] is used interchangeably to refer to both terms migrant and immigrant. The word “immigrant” does not exist in written or spoken German. Austria refers to people who migrate as migrants of first generation or migrants of second generation. When referring to both generations, Austria also uses interchangeably the term “people with a migration background”. For that purpose, this paper will use the term “migrant” not “immigrant”, which is most commonly mentioned in the

US when speaking of migrants with the citizenship of the host society. In Austria, migrants are either first- or second-generation or are referred to as people with a migration background.

Before looking at the migration situation in Austria, an overview of world migration is necessary in order to convey a broader picture of what the levels of migration are at the global and European level.

## **2.2 Why do people migrate? Theories and perspectives.**

International migration is an intriguing and at the same time very complex and most controversial phenomenon, one that has been researched and explained from different perspectives and in different disciplines. Throughout the past century, many scholars from different disciplines have formed theories about migration; however, the lack of an interdisciplinary approach to explain the phenomenon has led to many interpretations when debating why people migrate.

As Castles and Miller underlined in 2003 „ *We are living in an age of migration!*” As paraphrased in Brettell & Hollifield, 2008, migration had seldom been discussed across disciplines. There is no particular agreed-upon theory among disciplines, one that would contain all reasons for movement across and within countries. Migration is a multidisciplinary concept. Even though scientists hold the same amount of data, it is differently interpreted. There are as many perspectives and hypotheses to explain migration as there are disciplines to analyze it.

Brettell and Hollifield, in the “Theory of Migration”, give insight into the various research questions and principles offered across disciplines. Historians analyze it from the perspective of times and places. Historians ask “*who moves, when do they move, why do they move*” (Brettell & Hollifield, 2008, p4). Anthropologists, on the other hand, study migration from the assumption that the decision to move from one place to another is influenced by their social and cultural environments. Both of these sciences articulate the importance of including the social and cultural aspect of migration when attempting to explain and as well anticipate from an economic standpoint why people move from one place to another. Geographers emphasize the relationship between space and time when explaining the transnational and diaspora dimensions. They aim to understand how time and place can influence the development of a race. Sociologists want to know the reason why migration takes place and how it sustains itself over time. However, they share common ground with the anthropologists because they draw their conclusions from social theory to articulate the importance of understanding social relations in order to explain migration and immigration. There is, nonetheless, a distinct

difference between the two sciences. Whereas sociologists analyze their information only from the receiving society perspective, anthropologists take a more holistic approach, looking at both the sending and receiving societies. Both groups agree however on stressing the importance of social networks as being both “*a causal and sustaining factor*” (Brettel & Hollifield ,2008, p6) that stands at the decision for migrating.

The science of demographics explores the cause of population fluctuations as a result of death, birth and migration. As the other sciences, demographers are not only interested in the “who” and “why” questions to explain migration, but they also forecast developments in population flows based on the available data. Whereas historians, sociologists and anthropologists look more at the “then “ and “now” dimensions, demographers, just as economists, build predictive models for the future to explain behavior. Political scientists, like sociologists, analyze migration from the perspective of the host society and want to understand how state and public policy influence migration flows and how countries are affected by immigration policy. The legal framework of a country is also an important factor that affects and explains migration, as law can influence decision-making processes.

As seen from the above-mentioned perspectives the disciplines do connect but yet scientists have always pushed to give their own perspectives without crossing into other disciplines.

### **2.2.1 Migration from an economic perspective**

Barry R. Chiswick, a renowned American economist, explains in the Migration Theory book the methodology of economics by addressing the question of “who migrates” focusing on human capital resources and looking for answers to understand what conditions would prompt a skilled migrant to choose to migrate. The methodology of economics applies a scientific approach to develop models that explain behavior, making assumptions based on those findings, creating hypotheses and then testing them. Chiswick developed models to make predictions, one of which is called the supply-side theory, that examines the behaviors and reactions among individuals with different incentives predicting rather positive selectivity patterns under certain impetus offered by the host countries. That means he rationalized the reasons for which a skilled migrant decides to move to another country. Migrants who seek work opportunities in other regions within or outside of the country are referred to as economic migrants. Compared to other migrants, who move for family reasons or voluntarily for various other reasons, they enjoy a more favorable selection on the labor market and consequently adjust and integrate more easily in the host region or country. (Brettell & Hollifield, 2008)



Selectivity of migrants shapes and influences the immigration policies of both the sending and receiving countries. One of the selectivity processes is for example the Human Capital Migration Model used by Chiswick to explain migrant selectivity. Migration generates costs. These costs can be: air fares, travel expenditures, training on the job, etc, and they vary based on human capital. The model explains the process of favorable selectivity, which is positive in the case of high human capital, when a highly skilled migrant can lower the out-of-pocket costs in migration because he/she can act more efficiently than a lower skilled migrant. At the same time the model demonstrates that the higher the skills, the higher the efficiency and productivity on the labor market in both countries. In other words, these type of migrants decide to move by weighing the rate of return (Chiswick, 2008). The bigger the out-of-pocket costs invested to migrate, the lower the incentive to migrate. However if highly skilled migrants are more efficient in their integration process due to language skills, then the migration process is much easier. Additionally, if the receiving country has higher wage levels for those with a higher human capital, the selection process will be favorable for the receiving country. The opposite would happen if there were little differences between the wages of the sending and the host country. In such a case, there would be no incentive to move. Moreover, a positive selectivity would be less pervasive with non-economic migrants, such as refugees, short-term migrants (seasonal workers), or illegal migrants. The above-mentioned model reflects the supply of migrants. However, selective migration also occurs from the receiving country, implying a demand for migrants. Countries with limited migration quotas for highly skilled migrants implement various criteria based on which migrants can be approved. Such systems also affect the positive selectivity levels on the side of migrants looking for jobs in the respective countries. Chiswick says that rather than limiting the amount of immigration visas based on various criteria, a skill-based system to limit immigration quotas would be more effective and productive, as it would create a higher human capital immigration population (Chiswick, 2008).

### **2.2.2 The assimilation theory**

One of the most dominant models used to explain the migration theory is the assimilation theory, used by historians, economists, sociologists, anthropologists and geographers to describe the process of integration of migrants into a receiving society. The assimilation theory encountered a lot of criticism beginning in the 1950s where ethnic minorities argued that the theory was both ethnocentric and paternalistic. Assimilation was considered as adjacent to the term “*americanization*”, formulated by the “*core society*” (Han, 2006, p12) of the Anglo-Saxon protestants, who represented the majority of the population. Minorities were therefore seen as

unequal because they did not assimilate into the more prominent group with its Anglo-Saxon standards. The assimilation theory, which began in 1920 and was developed over three decades by students of the Chicago School of Sociology, dominated the discipline of sociology until 1960. Barbara Schmitter Heisler, a German political sociologist, has done extensive research on international migration in Europe and the US. She argues that the theory explains assimilation as the single outcome of “incidental collision, conflict and fusion of peoples and cultures resulting from migration” (Brettel & Hollifield, 2008, p.83). However, the theory fails to clarify increasing race inequality and conflicts nor did it explain the comeback of ethnicity in the 1960s.

In the past two decades, research shifted its focus from understanding the actions and efforts of immigrants to adapt to understanding how they interact with the structures and institutions of the receiving society. The assimilation theory has proven to be controversial and it underwent much criticism since its formulation. Nonetheless, it has provided sociologists with a substantial set of data on integration and migration. Richard Alba and Victor Nee, two American sociologists have built on the theory of assimilation and addressed their theory of incorporation of migrants under the name “*the new theory of assimilation*” (Brettel & Hollifield, 2008, p.90), which also takes into consideration how the actions of migrants are influenced by the host society and the networks of immigrants. At the same time, contrary to the old theory which described assimilation as inevitable, Alba and Nee claim that assimilation is an “*unexpected and unplanned outcome for many immigrants*” (Brettel & Hollifield, 2008, p.90). That set the course for segmented assimilation, first introduced in 1993 by sociologists Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, which focused on second generation migrants and claims that the process of integration differs between first and second generation migrants as they seek to assimilate into different segments depending on the social class of their parents. This means that children of low-class first generation migrants assimilate into lower class groups. The opposite is valid for middle class migrants and their children.

Based on this theory, the outcomes are not always positive and are dependent on structural and individual factors.

### **2.2.3 The transnational theory.**

A more recent theory, the transnational theory, has observed migration for the past 30 years from an international perspective. Theorists tackled the phenomenon of international migration in an effort to understand and analyze its effects. Geographers in particular study transnational relationships and global migration because it happens in specific places at specific moments in

time. Space and time are definitive to explaining why migration happens. Beginning with the 1960s research in the field of international migration theory has taken into consideration the female perspective in migration and women's role in decision-making processes. Another area of focus is the diaspora, to which geographers have not given much importance in the past. Diaspora originates from the Greek word “diaspeirein” which means to disperse and it is used to refer to people who spread from one original country to another (Cambridge dictionary, 2016). With the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, scholars also began to take into account the diaspora to explain political and economic factors that are significant in the process of migration, while at the same time analyzing the correlations between gender, class, cultural background and destination country (Brettell & Hollifield, 2008). Although in the past there was little willingness to analyze international migration across disciplines, geographers have already taken steps to include more perspectives, not just space and time. At the same time, anthropologists and sociologists build upon the geographers’ perspective to explain patterns and processes in migration. Migration as a transnational movement has brought about the development of many approaches. Originally this theory grew from the world systems theory, developed by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) who argued that the world reacted to social change and implicitly affected and influenced migration. The world systems theory is separated into three hierarchical levels: core, periphery and semi-periphery. Basically it proposes that developed countries both dominate and exploit peripheral countries for labor and goods. At the same time, peripheral countries are dependent on core countries (industrialized capitalist countries) for investment and capital, while the semi-peripheral level is described by characteristics of both countries, core and peripheral. In short, the world systems theory is based on the belief that the future of a country is determined by its position in the capitalist world system and how it integrates in it. (Martinez Vela, 2001). Scholars are now less concerned with the process of integration but rather with understanding the causes and consequences of international migration beyond the perspective of the host society. In this period sociologists, basing themselves on the globalization theories, argued that international migration was the direct effect of production in peripheral countries and of demand of cheap labor in the core countries. While technology and the internet era revolutionized communication across borders, transnational social networks between migrants also took shape thus impacting core countries and their migration policy.

Trying to theorize such a complex phenomenon has proven to be very difficult as it has so many perspectives and neither of the sciences can really disprove the other. While they tackle different aspects, they are seen as complementing rather than excluding one other.

In the chapter *The Sociology of Immigration*, Heisler paraphrases sociologist Alejandro Portes saying that “it would be futile to attempt a grand theory in the field. Similarly, it would be futile to attempt an interdisciplinary theory of migration.” (Heisler, 2008)

Although many theories have attempted to understand and conceptualize migration, gender was rarely perceived as a factor when migrating, men being the predominant target group of the studies done. Until 1960, migration had seen little development in understanding the role of women when deciding to migrate.

#### **2.2.4 Female Migration.**

How does gender impact migration theories? Most, if not all, disciplines discussed in the previous chapter addressed research based mainly on the male or family migration perspective. The role of women was not included nor seen as separate from that of the man. The woman’s role was always assumed to be that of “*meeting the needs of the husband and children*”. (Krolokke & Sorensen, p5). The patriarchal period, which dominated until the 20th century, allowed little insight into the female perspective on all levels of social, political and economic activities. Migration was therefore very much based on a male perspective with little focus on the female impact.

Until 1960 women were categorized under “migrants and their families” meaning male migrants and their wives and children. The lack of research based on gender has predominantly elaborated theories based on male characteristics and reactions when confronted with decisions. The minor attention given to women and their reasons for migration has left enormous sources of information undiscovered and thus many questions are left unanswered when trying to explain why women aimed for a certain labor market and what drove them to migrate. Hasia R. Diner, an American historian, who studied the migration of women in Ireland in the 19th century, gave a closer understanding of this perspective. The social and economic factors pervasive throughout Europe, coupled with the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society, have pushed many people to migrate to the US. Moreover, the system of single inheritance and single dowry for women in Ireland in particular, had led to a decrease in marriages or late marriages (Diner, 1983). The situation became less and less attractive for women to stay, hence the decision for migration in this case was very much focused on the social and economic factors, or as Silvia Pedraza in her review on “Women and Migration” put it, was based on “the land-family-marriage relationship” (Pedraza, 1991). This research was the basis of several further studies on women’s reasons for migration and was used for many comparisons to show the success or failure of female emigration in many parts of the world.

In the neoclassical economic model and the push-pull theory of the 1970s and 1980s, migration theorists started to look more at the phenomenon from both the male and female perspective. However, this approach still did not show insight into who migrated, what country they migrated to and how they integrated. Rather it showed differences between genders but not the impact or consequences of gender decision-making. (Grieco & Boyd, 2003)

At an economic level, gender plays an important role and cannot be taken as neutral when considering societal impact. At a macro level, economic development exerts a strong influence when deciding to migrate or not. Men are more risk averse; however women may choose to postpone migration if economic status in the receiving society is unstable. Where there is migration, there are social networks as well. Whereas previous research focused on male networks, recent research shows that women, just as men, also build their own networks and take advantage of the resources offered to encourage migration or integration (Grieco & Boyd, 2003).

Although there is little research available on the female perspective on migration, more recent theories starting with the '70s have gradually researched women as a separate entity, acknowledging the fact that women also used networks and migrated for similar reasons, some being more or some being less important than their male counterparts.

### **2.2.5 Conclusions**

This chapter has looked into the assimilation and transnational theories while at the same time exploring gender migration and emphasizing the scant focus on the female perspective when migrating. Adrian Favell argues that most of the available literature stems from an American perspective with a focus on American life, giving it a rather internal perspective from within the country and projected on the country. "*We are the world, Americans like to think. No you are not*" (Favell, 2008, p.263). Favel goes on to criticize the lack of interest for any interdisciplinary dialogue that might have conflicted with the views and career interests of the scholars within the various disciplines, reason for which many write only about their own field of expertise and discipline. Most of the theories and research available on migration is influenced by America, being considered "*the main laboratory for research and theorizing*" (Heisler, 2008) on the topic of migration, mostly because of the long history of immigration that the USA has had. Due to this strong American influence, research has not been expanded across disciplines. Comparative research has been minimal thus limiting the outcomes, which could result from greater cooperation between disciplines and dialogue across continents.

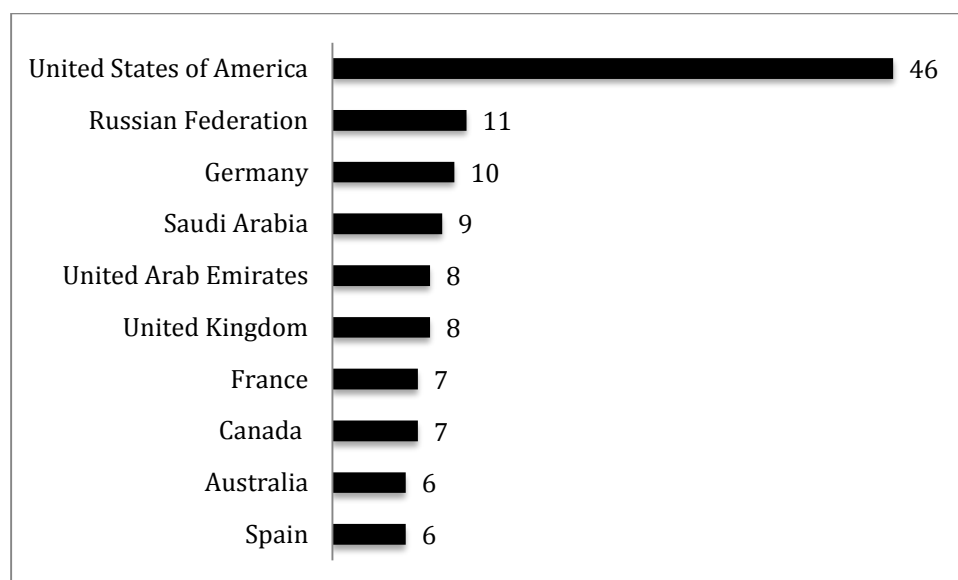
While the assimilation theory is considered to be deeply rooted in the American history of migration and is perceived as giving a rather ethnocentric and paternalistic perspective when explaining migration, the transnational theory takes a more international approach. This theory considers space and time as key to explaining why and when migration happens. Compared to the theory of assimilation, the transnational theory considers more dimensions: gender, class, cultural background and destination country. In an effort to understand how and why migration and international migration happen, Favell calls for scholars to take a more interdisciplinary and transnational approach. To be able to talk across disciplines, scholars are required to be open to let go of the already built-in ideas based on a certain field of expertise and look beyond their discipline, taking into consideration a wider perspective when explaining migration. In short, Favell asks scholars to take a more global perspective and avoid a local, or a one nation-view approach. He concludes that by comparing across disciplines and nations we can better understand the meaning of past, present and future migration.

This chapter has looked into two of the most controversial theories of migration, the assimilation and transnational theory, offering several perspectives available in the disciplines of sociology, geography, anthropology, economy and history. As migration has mostly been observed from an American perspective, America being considered a hub of immigration, theorizing across disciplines and countries has called attention to the need for a more global perspective. It is necessary to understand the push and pull factors of migration and to approach it from both the host and receiving society, while at the same time understanding the self-selection process of an immigrant to move to another country.

The following chapter will give an overview of migrating cultures worldwide and will be followed by a closer look into the European Union and its migrating flows.

## 2.3 Top 10 biggest migration cultures. An overview.

Based on the UN worldwide migration statistics, in 2013 there were 232 million international people living abroad. That counted for 3% of the global population.



**Figure 1. Top 10 countries with the largest amounts of migrants in 2013 (in millions). Source: United Nations, 2013**

The top country with the largest number of migrants is the United States of America (Figure 1) followed by Russia, which has had an increasing number of international people who have migrated from the former Soviet Union in the past 20 years in search of better opportunities. Apart from labor migrants coming mostly from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, refugees from Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia and Ukraine also continue to migrate to Russia for asylum purposes. (Malinkin, 2014). Germany ranks third; however, according to the OECD, Germany already ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the top ten listing in 2012. (OECD, 2014).

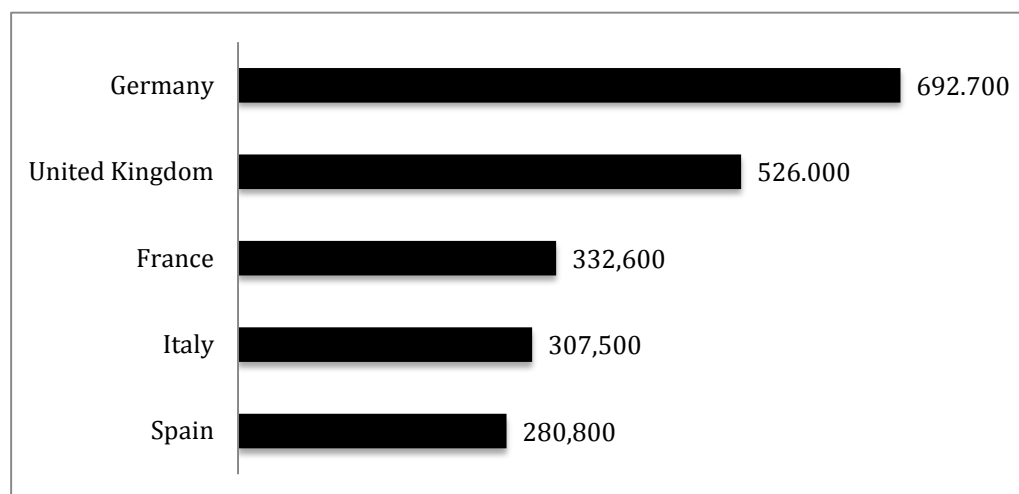
Whereas in 2009 Germany was still in 8<sup>th</sup> place, only three years later, in 2012, it had reached a staggering second place mostly due to its growing economy and the inflow of people in search of jobs. In fourth and fifth place are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates where migration is mostly work-related whereas the other countries had family as a first reason for migration.

In the United Kingdom there were 8 million migrants in the same year, followed by France with 7 million and ranking number 7 of the top 10 migration countries. (United Nations, 2013). Based on the UN World Chart 2013, out of the entire migrating population, 48% were female migrants, with the highest level being recorded in Europe with a percentage of 51.9. Compared to the year 2000, the highest inflow of migrants in 2013 was registered in the US (11 million)

and the United Arab Emirates (6 million), followed by Spain with a growth of 4 million in that year alone.

## 2.4 Migration inside the European Union

Based on Eurostat, at the EU level, in 2013, there were 3.4 million migrants residing in one of the 28 EU states, 1.4 million were non-member country residents and 1.2 million were EU nationals. The top migration country is Germany (Figure 2), second was the United Kingdom followed by France, Italy and Spain. At the same time Spain also had the highest rate of emigration – 532,300 left the country. In 2013 a total of 2.8 million people had emigrated to another member state (Eurostat, 2015). The graphic below does not reflect a per capita relation.



**Figure 2. Top 5 Immigration Countries in the EU in 2013, Source: Eurostat 2015**

In Europe, the top migrant population of non-EU nationals is Turkey (1,631,639), second is Morocco, followed by China (including Hong Kong), India and fifth is Ukraine with 608,193 people. In 2013 alone, there were 1.7 million non-EU members immigrating into one of the 28 EU countries. Overall, in January 2014, there were 19.6 million non-EU citizens living in the EU (Eurostat 2015).

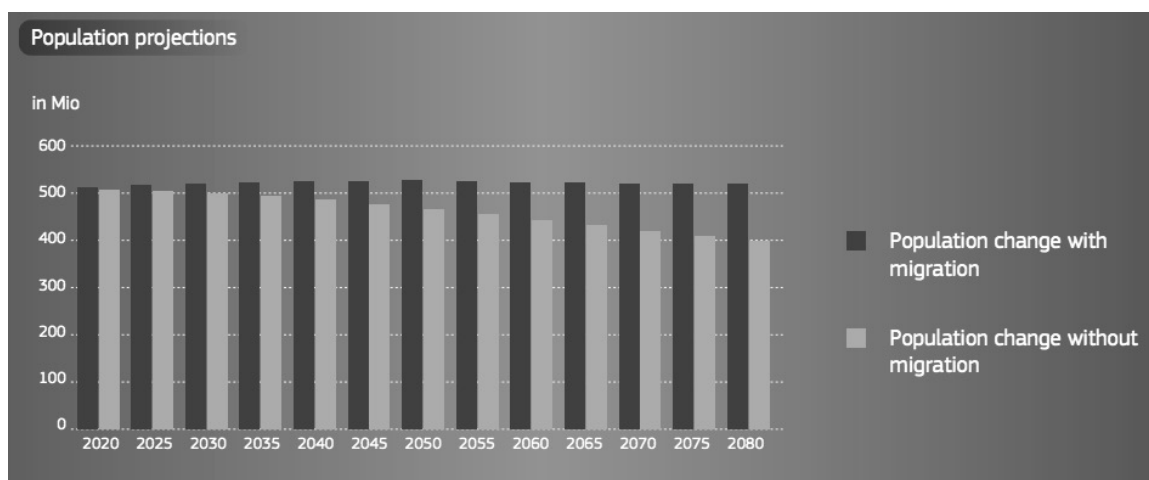
## 2.5 Migration of non-EU nationals

In 2014 the number one country of residence for migrants was Germany with 20% of the total number of non-EU nationals, and 4.84% at a country level. Italy ranked second (17.78%) and was followed by France. An interesting development is that whereas in 2011 the population of non-EU nationals was 20,106,041 million, in 2014, only three years later, the number had decreased to 19,566,332 million. More than half a million non-EU nationals had emigrated



outside of the European Union. Of the 28 EU countries, Austria has a 2.76% ratio of non-EU nationals and, compared to the whole EU population, it accumulates a percentage of 6.34 (Eurostat 2015).

Based on Eurostat, the main reason for migration for non-EU citizens in 2013 was family (28%); 23% left their home countries because of work; 20% for education reasons and 29% for other motives. At EU level, a growing concern is the aging population, which continues to increase. Without migration, by 2060 there will be two people of working age to one retiree. In addition, one of these two workers will be aged 65. The European Commission signals that any hindrance to migration would seriously affect the future of the EU and its member countries' economies and societies. Figure 3 shows the population increase and decrease with or without migration (Eurostat, 2105).



**Figure 3. Migration within the EU. Source: Eurostat Info graphic 2015, p8**

Whereas in the year 2000, there were no significant changes in the age levels between EU nationals and migrants, Figure 3 shows a progressive decrease of the EU population starting by 2025 and a staggering decrease of 100 million people by 2080 if migration is not encouraged. The world is in constant change and migration has been a part of this process since the early ages when people left one place for another in search of food and better living conditions. Globalization has accelerated this movement and it has never been so easy to migrate from one country to another than it is now. The next chapter will look into the history of migration in Austria and will examine the guest worker period of the 1950s seen as the foundation for explaining the characteristics of the Austrian labor market and its developments.

## **3 Austria**

### **3.1 History of migration**

Austrians today dispute the fact that Austria has long been a country of immigration. However, if one were to open a phone book and look at the names of Austrians, one would find a multitude of names originating from the Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish historical influence and thus testifying to the fact that Austria has long had a history of immigration. Whether under the Austrian-Hungarian Empire or after its collapse in 1918 as a result of World War I, migration, emigration and immigration were at the heart of the Austrian society and economy. Contrary to the present, where asylum seekers encounter strong societal and political opposition, between 1945 and 1989, due to its geographic location, Austria was one of the leading countries in accepting refugees who were fleeing communist regimes. While many were only transiting through Austria, many were also granted asylum and consequently settled in Austria (Jandl & Kraler, 2003).

### **3.2 The guest workers' period**

In the 1950s Austria experienced a manpower shortage - 100,000 jobs were unoccupied. Because Austrians themselves were also migrating for work reasons to Switzerland and Germany, the country needed to look for workers outside its borders. Austria first looked towards Italy and Spain. However, the low pay offered in the construction industry made recruitment in these countries rather unattractive. That is when Austria turned towards Turkey. Under the Raab/Olaf agreement, (signed on December 18<sup>th</sup> 1961 allowing “foreign workers”, called “guest workers” as of 1966, easy access to the labor market) migrants were being recruited for the job vacancies Austrians would not fill. In 1963 there were about 21,000 guest workers. By 1966 Yugoslavs were also being recruited. Based on people's reports, at that time it was as easy to find a job as it was to buy bread. “You'd come into the country and the next day you'd be employed” (Haar, 2011).

Contrary to the available statistical information on the guest worker period, which referred mainly to male guest workers, women were also taking part in the labor market.

Verena Lorber (historian from Graz University, researching on the history of guest migrants between 1961 and 1973) said in an interview she gave in November 2011 to the newspaper Die Presse that, according to statistical data at the regional level in Styria, in 1970 out of 15,034 migrant workers, 3591 were women. That number would grow in Styria between 20-30% every year.

At that time racial differences were a daily confrontation. Turkish women were considered “not very hard working”, Slovenians were “not as spoiled as Serbians” (Haar, 2011).

Under the Raab/Olaf agreement, working visas had to be renewed annually and were based on a 3-4 year rotation system, meaning that guest workers were to come alone, work for a few years and then return home, to be replaced by new migrant workers. This system did not prove to be effective as many “guest workers” chose to settle in Austria. Consequently, work-migration led to demographic increases. Between 1961 and 1974, 265,000 people migrated to Austria. By 1971, 39% of migrants were women and 15% children (Bauer, 2008).

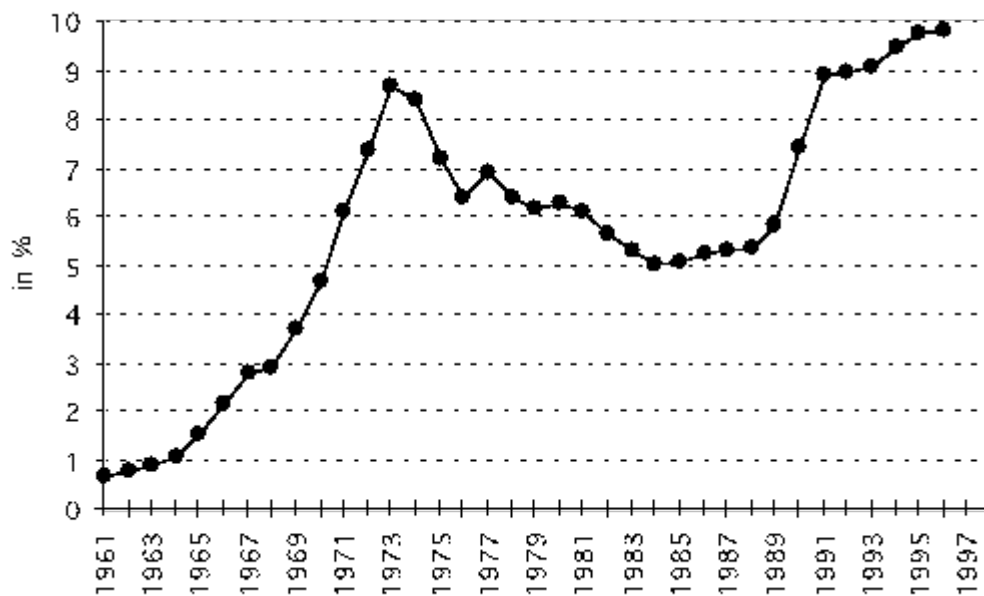
In that same year, the international oil crisis led to a major increase in worldwide unemployment. This triggered a return of the Austrian population which had emigrated for work reasons. Their return led to strong competition in the labor market. Four years later, in 1975, the Raab-Olaf agreement was therefore ended and migrant work policies became more restrictive. Guest workers were only able to get access to the labor market if they had been working for 8 years in Austria. Given the fact that guest workers were on a rotation system of 3-4 years, there were not many who could take advantage of that provision. With such a restriction in place, Austria thought that guest workers would return home. However, with little financial means to return, even though 40% of the guest workers did leave, the rest decided to stay and began to gradually bring their families to Austria. Thus the number of migrants stayed almost constant.

Between 1971 and 1981, the percentage of women migrants grew from 39.4% to 44.4%. The percentage of children increased from 14.8% to 22.5% (Bauer, 2008).

In 1989, with the fall of communism in Romania, Austria became a destination for asylum seekers. With the collapse of the Yugoslav States and the hostilities taking place in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, Austria became a magnet for asylum seekers in search for safety due to its geographic location. In addition, due to the fall of the iron curtain, paired with the wars in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Chechnya, the migrant population grew from 387,000 in 1989 to 690,000 by 1993. In percentages that represented an increase from 5.4% to 9.1% of the foreign working population in Austria (Jandl & Kraler, 2003).

Unemployment became a growing concern. In order to reduce the inflow of working migrants, Austria implemented a quota system that would limit the number of foreign workers. Consequently the labor market regulations made it more restrictive to enter Austria. Because of such restrictions, in order to avoid unemployment and thus face the challenge of being sent back, many migrants accepted jobs for which they were over-qualified, a phenomenon still

present today, where immigrants are predominantly found in lower paid jobs and less attractive positions (Statistics Austria, 2014).



**Figure 4. Employees without Austrian Citizenship 1961-1998 (Biffl et al 1997, p22)**

The above figure visualizes the influx of migrant workers during a period of almost 40 years, beginning with 1961 when the labor market was opened to foreigners. In 1971 the number of migrant workers had almost reached 9% following which it started to decline corresponding to the international oil crisis, which had caused many Austrians to return home. Between 1975 and 1977 there was again a 1% increase which was followed by a constant decrease until 1989, when the rate of migrant employees started growing again. The percentage reached 9.1 by 1993 and almost 10% by 1997, the highest in 40 years (Biffl et al, 1997).

### 3.3 Facts and Figures.

Based on the 2014 Migration & Integration Report issued by Statistics Austria, in 2013 there were 1,625,000 people with a migration background living in Austria, in other words 19.4 % of the Austrian population. Compared to 2012, this represented an increase of 7.5%. EU-wide there is a predominantly negative view of the impact of migrants on the receiving country and the host society. This image cast upon migrants is mostly encouraged by public- (the state) and private stakeholders (media) who regularly use the topic of migration as a platform for other social, political and economic issues (IOM, 2011). In order to change this perception, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) is recommending in its World Migration Report

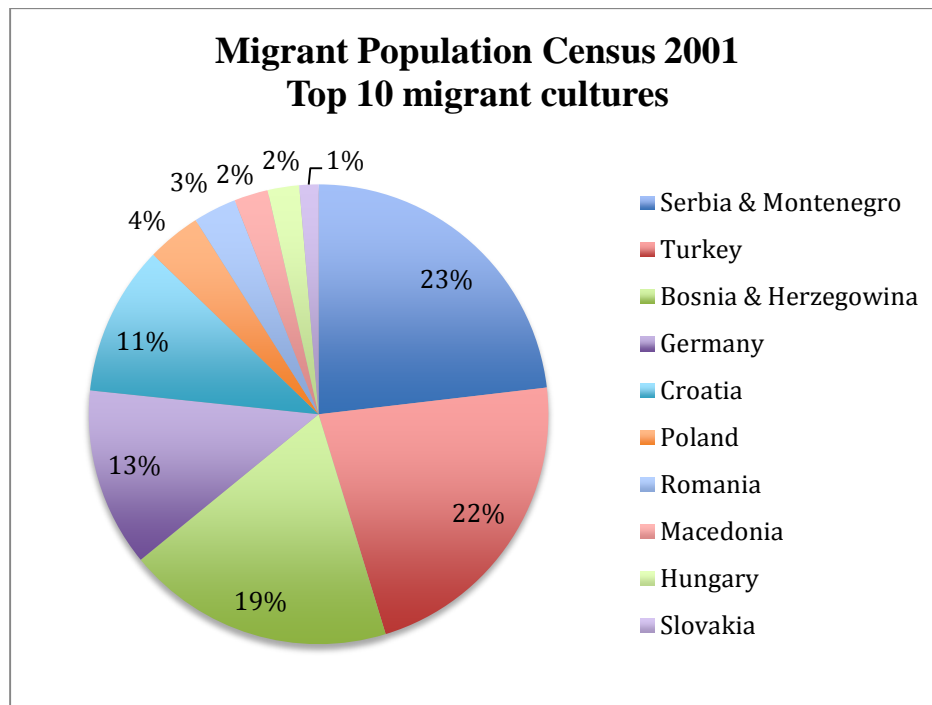
an active participation of migrants in the migration discourse rather than being the subject of discourse and the scapegoat for failed policies or the reason for declining economic growth. It is unlikely that migration is the main cause of national issues, therefore more information and involvement can lead to public sensitization of this topic. In Austria, discrimination based on nationality is one of the main causes for higher unemployment rates within migrant groups in comparison to Austrian citizens. A Correspondence Testing Experiment that researches job market opportunities for migrants (Hofer et al, 2013) discovered strong evidence of discrimination based on nationality. This subject is addressed in more detail in chapter 4.1.2 of this paper.

In 2014 the average age of foreign nationals was 35.2 whereas that of Austrians was 42.2, meaning that a society becomes younger if migration is encouraged. Statistics Austria forecasts that without a migrating population, the average age of the Austrian population would be 46.7 by 2030 and 50.8 by 2050. With migration, however, the average age is forecast at 44.8 by 2030 and at 46.9 by 2050- a clear reduction of the demographic age (demographic age= ratio between children and young people compared to the ratio of retirees) (Statistics Austria 2014).

### **3.4 Demographics**

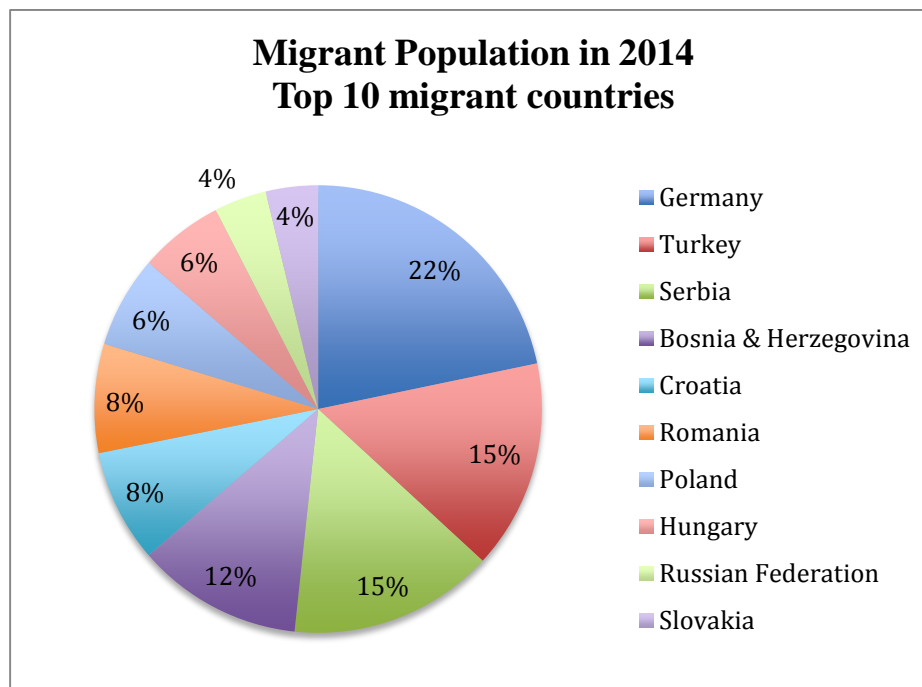
With its accession to the European Union in 1996, Austria also became part of the Schengen Agreement, allowing access to its territory without border controls with the other EU countries. Growth in migrant population was unstoppable. From 1993 to 2001, Austria grew each year by 20,000 people more. In 2001 migrants counted 9.7%, or in absolute numbers, 710,926 compared to 7,322,000 Austrian citizens (Statistics Austria, 2002).

Figure 5 portrays the minorities of migrants in Austria in 2001. Serbia and Montenegro ranked first, followed by Turkey, and Bosnia-Herzegovina were in third place. In 1961 the migrant population made up 1.4% of the entire population; by January 2014, the percentage had increased to 12.5% with German citizens becoming the largest minority (Statistics Austria, 2014).



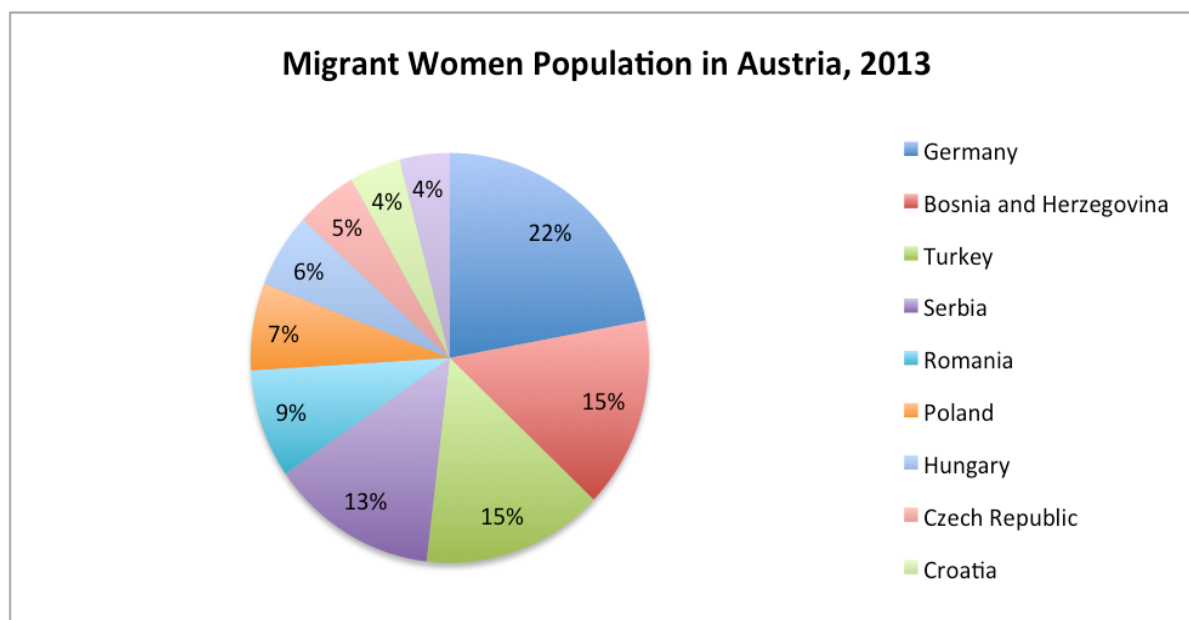
**Figure 5. Percentage of migrants residing in Austria. Top 10 minorities. Source: Statistics Austria, 2002**

Compared to the 2001 census, in which Germany ranked fourth, today, Germans have outgrown Serbian nationals and now rank number one (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Top 10 migrant countries in Austria, in percentage. Source: Statistics Austria, 2014**

In 2013, migrant women made up 17% of the entire female population in Austria. The highest percentage of foreign women comes from Germany (22%), followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina and third, Turkey (Figure 7).



**Figure 6. Top 10 migrant countries based on female gender. Source: Statistics Austria, 2014**

49.4% of women were from third countries, the rest coming from the EU/EEA (European Economic Area) or Switzerland. Out of the migrant female ratio, 58% were employed in Austria; however, when compared to Austrian women (6.4%), the unemployment rate was higher with foreign women (10.5%) (Statistics Austria, 2014).

### 3.5 Education

The education level of migrants in Austria is not uniform. Migrants are either very poorly or very well educated. Statistics show that they have either the lowest (compulsory education) or the highest education level (academic degree). As compared to the Austrian population, which is predominantly characterized as having a middle level education, i.e. technical or vocational training schools, migrants are more likely to have compulsory state education only, or in other words, almost a third (29%) of migrants (Statistics Austria, 2013). This low level of education, i.e. school-leaving certificate, is most predominant with the Turkish minority (62%). The Austrian labor market depicts the same picture. When compared to the Austrian working population, both first and second generation migrants show a higher percentage of people with a compulsory education level only. (Statistics Austria, 2013). However, in comparison to those

without a migration background, first generation migrants are more educated and outweigh both migrants of second generation and Austrian citizens in academic degrees. This is also due to the migration of highly skilled people from other EU countries (Statistics Austria, 2014).

When looking at the second generation of migrants, the level of education between the two groups, foreigners and Austrians, is very similar at both lower and higher educational levels among the population aged 25-64 (Statistics Austria, 2014).

Gender wise, the biggest female minority enrolled in university in 2012 were Germans with 15,451 women registered out of a total number of 170,488 migrant women. Italy came second with 4,155 students (Statistics Austria, 2013).

Throughout the last decades, universities have encountered an increase of student candidates with a migration background. In 1990 there were 20,000 foreign students enrolled in an Austrian university. By 2013, that number had tripled and counted for a quarter of the entire student population in Austrian universities (Statistics Austria, 2014). The highest percentage of students (73%) comes from EU/EEA countries and Switzerland.

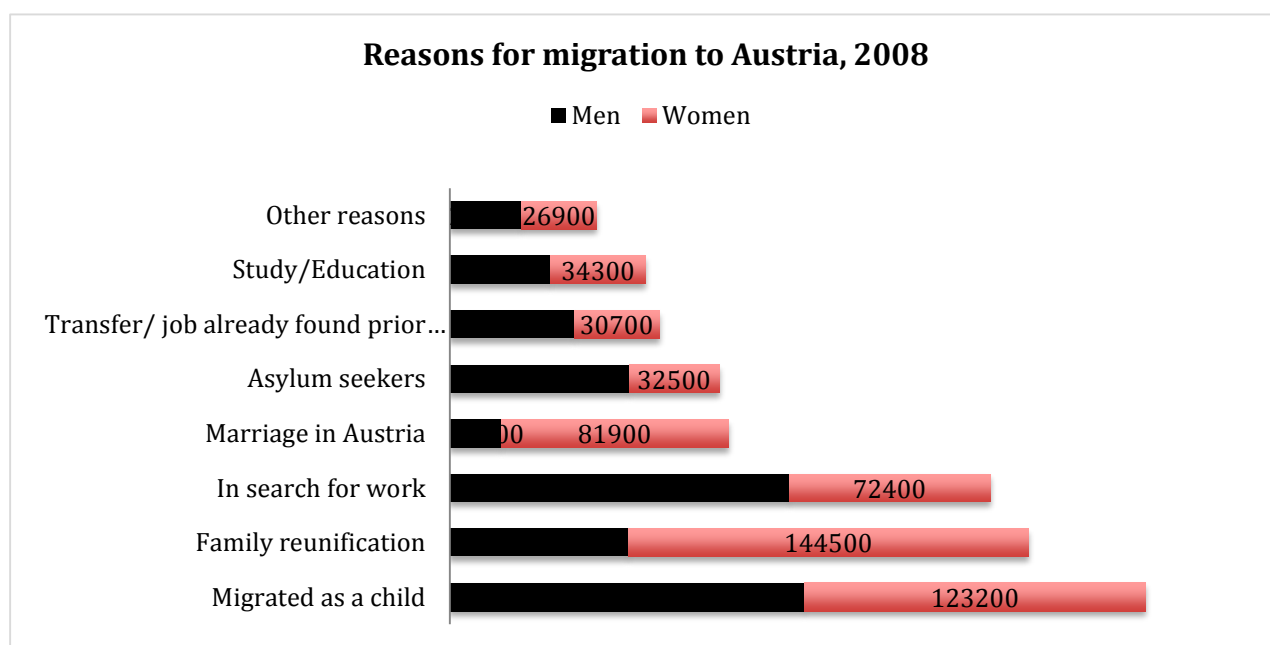
Compared to 2012, in 2014 the number of German students had increased by more than 10,000 within 2 years (25,844 students), whereas Italian students, mostly originating in South Tyrol, had almost doubled 7,600 (Statistics Austria, 2014).

### **3.6 Reasons for migration**

In Austria, in 2013, 24% of the migrants came with their parents in their childhood, another 20% came to be reunited with families and 18.8% migrated to Austria in search of jobs. (Statistics Austria, 2014) As a whole, in 2013, 37% of the labor force had a migrant background. Most of the migrants work in the service industry, offering cleaning services, employee placement or in car rentals. In these areas, the female percentage is higher. The same percentage is seen in tourism (41% men, 35% women), 25% of men work in transport or the building industry, whereas women work in the artistic and entertainment industries, or the manufacturing industry. The industries with the least percentage of migrants are finance and insurance (11%), public administration and safety (6%), or agriculture and forestry (3%) (Statistics Austria, 2014).

In Austria, if related to gender migration, women are the most common group of migrants, coming to Austria either to reunite with their families, or to marry. Men, on the other hand, usually migrate because of work-related reasons. A study done by Statistics Austria in 2008 also showed that only 7.2% moved to Austria by transferring into a job and only 6.7% came because they wanted to study (Figure 8).





**Figure 8. Parallel between men and women divided by reason for migration, Statistics Austria 2009**

Figure 8 shows the main reasons for migration for both men and women. The predominant reason was “migration as a child”, followed by family reunification, which was a reason most notable within the group of women. The third reason was work, followed by marriage in Austria, also mainly a female trend. There were 97,100 asylum seekers in 2008, a third of which were women. Very few migrated for study reasons in 2008. Here we notice an almost equal number of men and women students. If we look at nationalities and reasons for leaving their countries, the Turkish population, as one of the leading migrant groups, migrated mainly as a child or for family reasons (71%). Serbians migrated for work reasons (38.3%) while members of the EU15 came mainly by transfer, through finding a job prior to migrating (17.4%) or to get married or live with their partner (18.4%) (Statistics Austria, 2009).

### **3.7 Women migrants in Austria. Facts and Figures**

In the beginning of 2014 a total of 4,352 million women lived in Austria, of which 737,800 women had a migration background, i.e. 17% of the entire female population. 49% came from the EU/EEA countries as well as Switzerland and 51% from third countries. The dominant migrant female country is Germany, followed by Bosnia–Herzegovina, Turkey, Serbia and Romania. (OIF, 2015). Migrants in Austria, in general, are more often unemployed than the Austrian population. Unemployment in 2013 was higher among women migrants (10.5%) compared to Austrian women citizens (6.4%) (Statistics Austria, 2014).

Among the group of women aged 15-64, the ratio of employed women migrants versus Austrian women is 65% to 74% (Statistics Austria, 2014). At the same time, the ratio between unemployed mothers aged 20-59 with a migrant background and those without a migrant background is higher: 35% compared to 25%. Statistics point to the fact that, in general, women with a migration background are more often unemployed. (OIF, 2014). When considering part-time employment for a woman with children, there are more Austrian women in this group (37%) than migrant women (29%). Of all the migrant countries, the least represented group within the labor market is the Turkish women group, which is also one of the least educated. 71% of Turkish women had only a school-leaving certificate, or in other words only had the compulsory level of education, followed by women from former Yugoslavia with 46%. This also explains the high unemployment rates among these two migrant groups (OIF, 2015).

### 3.7.1 Industries women migrants work in

The industry with the highest quota of women migrants is in the corporate service industry (cleaning services, temporary work). There has been a slight decrease of 1.3% since 2012; however, the service industry remains the number one employer for migrant women (Figure 9). The second largest industry is domestic staff employment, followed by lodging and gastronomy with an increase of 4.9% since 2012. The least gender-diversified industry is agriculture and forestry with only 3.1% in 2013.

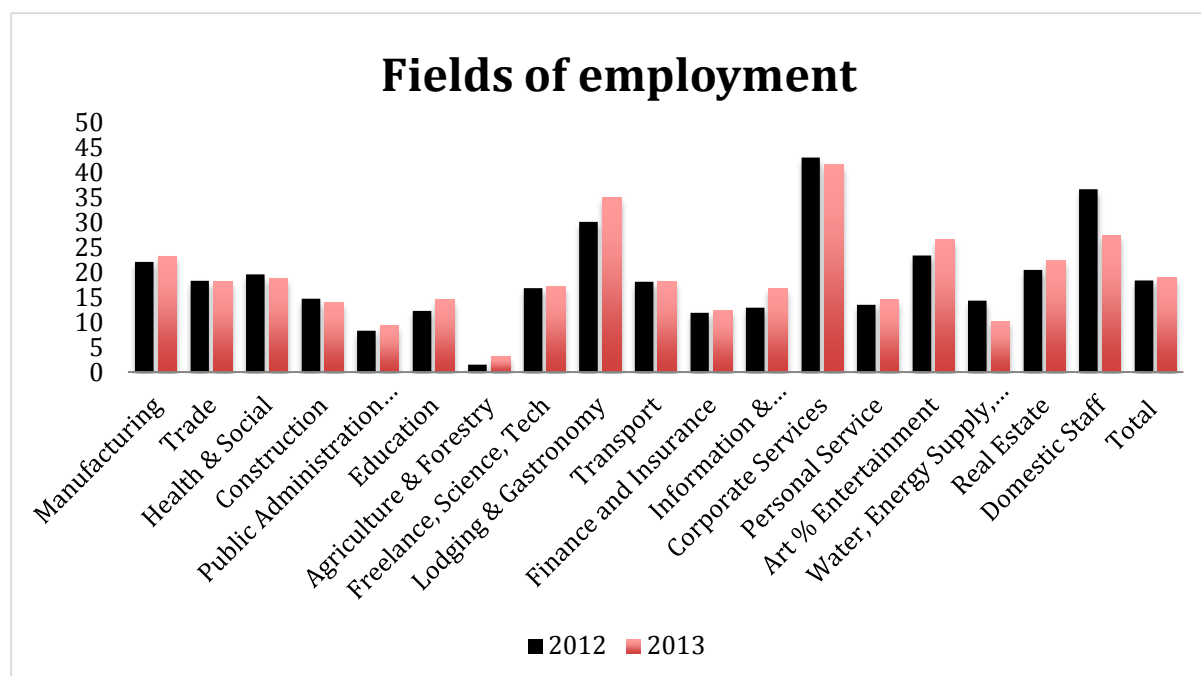


Figure 9. Fields of employment in which women migrant most work in. Source: ÖIF 2014 & OIF 2015

## 4 The labor market in Austria

Austria is perceived as the door to the single European market, a free trading area where capital, labor, goods and services between member states are as easy to trade as within their own territories. It links Western and Central Europe and its greatest advantage is its location at the heart of Eastern Central Europe. The capital of Austria, Vienna, is the country's largest city with a population of over 1.7 million people and 2.4 million as a metropolis. It employs 963.207 people and unemployment counts approximately 10% of its population (Statistics Austria, 2013). At a European level, Austria has the lowest unemployment rate and Vienna registers one of the highest GDP per capita - 44,300 EUR (Statistics Austria, 2013). The high purchasing power demonstrates the stable economic environment, which Vienna has developed.

The increasing attractiveness of foreign businesses, the high competitiveness of the metropolis, along with Austria's stable economy, has attracted more people to move towards the city. Vienna's population is estimated to grow by 20,000- 25,000 people every year (Statistics Austria, 2014). With that, unemployment is also rapidly increasing. In 2013 unemployment had reached the second highest level since 1945 with 430,000 people jobless and 67,000 in training. Out of that, 134,278 were women, an increase of 13.5% from 2012. In January 2015, the number of unemployed people at the national level had reached 472,539. (Höller, 2015), of which 147,073 were women. Migrants had the highest increase - 18.9%, compared to the population without a migrant background - 6.9%.

In a study issued in 2014 by the Social Ministry on the situation of the labor market, the high increase in unemployment is explained by the following factors (Türk et al, 2014):

- The effects of the economic crisis
- The opening of the labor market to the new EU countries Romania and Bulgaria
- The increase in life expectancy. The society is aging. The 50+ people are more at risk of losing their jobs than any other group.

## **4.1 Discrimination of migrants on the labour market.**

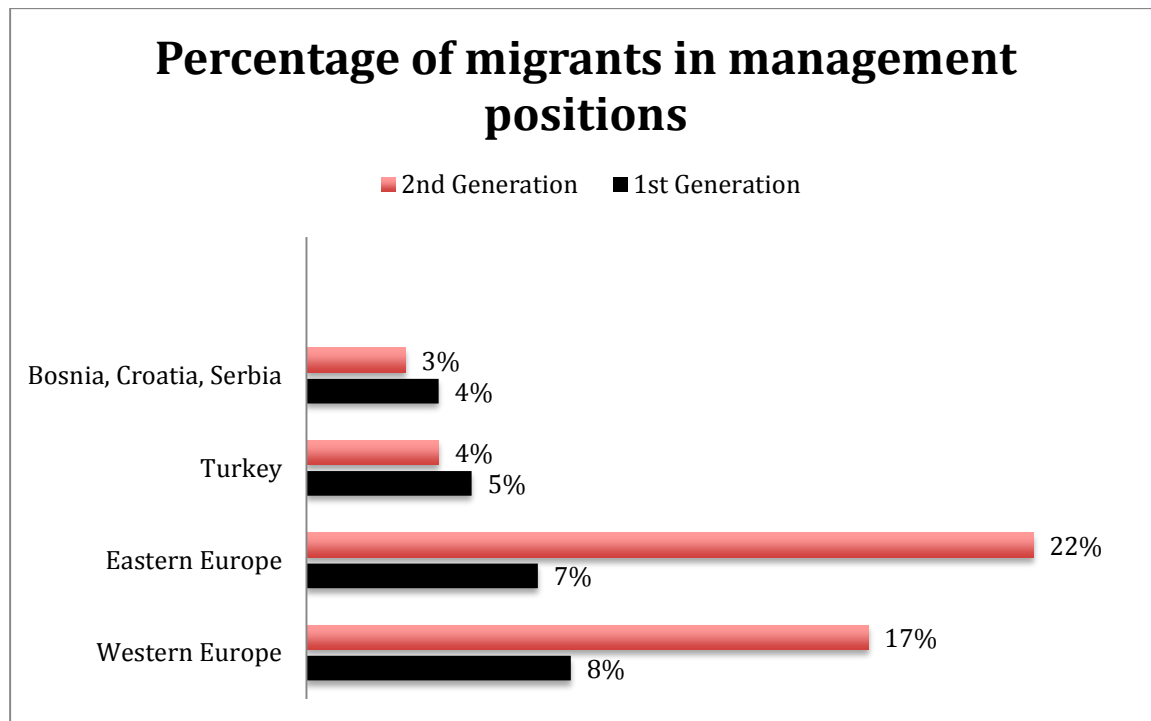
### **4.1.1 Definition. Forms of Discrimination**

Discrimination on the job market can be categorized into two time dimensions: before and upon entering the labor market. Discrimination before entering the labor market refers to different employment conditions depending, for example, on legal rights, education, or country of origin on the basis of which these groups of people are subjected to different treatment (Egger et al, 2003).

Discrimination in the labor market takes place when preferential treatment is offered even though applicants have the same prerequisites to fulfill the job. (Hofer et al, 2013) In Austria, discrimination in the labor market takes different forms. It is found in the selection of job applicants based on origin and even looks (Pramböck, 2013), in the different salaries paid for the same positions, in training, in career advancement as well as in economic crises, during which migrants are more likely to be the first group of people to lose their jobs than people without a migration background. Additionally, another type of discrimination is found in the recognition of education degrees, which in the case of migrants are often not accepted, many needing to take further exams to be able to work in their field of business. This can also be due to the standards between countries, which often do not correspond with those of the Austrian education system (Hofer et al, 2013).

### **4.1.2 Income inequality and over qualification in the labour market**

In Austria, women in general are paid less than their male counterparts. In 2013 employed women's base gross salary was 39% less than men (BMBF, 2015). In addition, although more women hold an academic degree than men, they are less often found in management positions. When comparing both migrant generations, one finds as well a large discrepancy between Western and Eastern European countries underlying two factors: great difficulty to advance in careers for the first generation and a decrease in labor market inequalities once the second generation steps into the labor market (AK, 2015).



**Figure 10. Comparison between first and second generation migrants in management positions in Austria; AK 2015**

Figure 10 shows that the highest gap is found between first and second generation Eastern European citizens. Between 2010 and 2014, only 7% of the first group occupied managing positions, whereas second generation migrants were at 22%. As previously discussed, first generation migrants are more educated than the latter (Statistics Austria, 2014); yet, they encounter more barriers on their career paths. One of the reasons could be the fact that their degrees are not accepted in Austria, whereas second generation migrants study and work in Austria. At the same time, studies show that the latter group closes the gap between themselves and people without a migration background, meaning that inequality in the labor market is no longer an issue that will directly affect them in the second generation (AK, 2015). Unfortunately, Turkey, Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia do not show the same positive change between generations, pointing to low development career options even into the second generation. Only 5% of first generation Turkish people are found in leading positions and only 4% in the second generation. This factor can be explained, however, by the low education levels within these groups (Statistics Austria, 2014).

As described above, there are not just inequalities based on education and degree recognition between generations but as well on salaries, most predominant within the female groups. When comparing the same gender, women migrants employed in Austria earn less than women

without a migration background, the total sum amounting to 82% of the yearly net income of an Austrian woman.

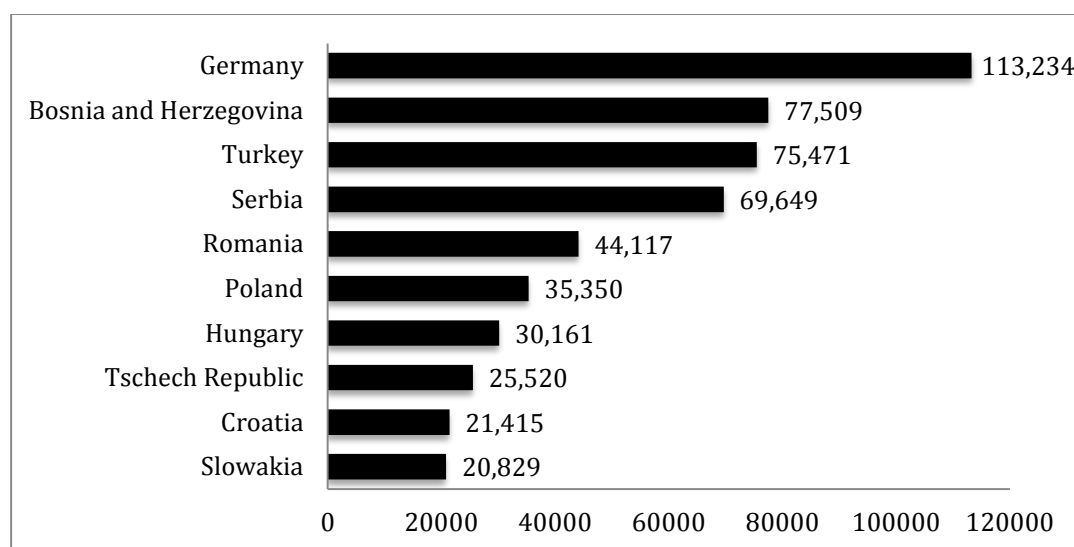
At the same time, Turkish women have an even lower income ratio compared to Austrian women in 2014, with an average income of 13,200 € per year, meaning 70% of the yearly net income of Austrian women. On the other hand, women from the EU14 countries, EEC and Switzerland are rated at almost the same level with employed Austrian women at a net yearly income of 18,800 € (ÖIF, 2015).

Based on the last labor force survey done in 2008 by Statistics Austria, 28% of people with a migration background were found to be overqualified for their jobs; 32% were women migrants, most predominantly women from the new EU countries with a ratio of 40% and those from former Yugoslavia (36%) (ÖIF, 2015).

Needless to say, unemployment rates are higher among migrant groups than Austrian citizens. Whereas women migrants accounted for 10.5% of the unemployed population in 2013, Austrian women were at 6.4%. Compared to the situation with men, migrant males were almost at the same level with migrant women, only 0.3% higher, and 3.2% higher than Austrian men, who were at 7.6%. Turkish women account for the highest unemployment rate with a percentage of 16.5% of all unemployed groups of people.

When it comes to education, 19% of women migrants had a university degree in 2013 and 18% had a high school degree, 3% more than Austrian women. Among Turkish women, 71% had obtained only the compulsory education (ÖIF, 2015).

According to Statistics Austria, the dominant female migrant population comes from Germany with 113,234 in 2013, followed by women from Bosnia-Herzegovina and then Turkey with 75,471 women (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Female population based on country of birth and citizenship (ÖIF, 2015).**

### **4.1.3 Inside the labour market.**

The director of the Austrian employment service, Johannes Kopf, is forecasting half a million unemployed by 2016, meaning an 11% unemployment rate. The highest unemployment rate was in 1954 with 14.1%.

Based on a study done in 2013, Helmut Hofer et al. from the Institute of Advanced Studies sought to find out how many rejections and how many interview invitations people with a Serbian, Turkish, African or Asian background would receive in comparison to Austrian applicants. In order to make that assessment, the institute chose five different working segments: secretary, bookkeeper, waiter, cook and receptionist. Results showed that Austrians were the most favored for the position, Serbian and Chinese were favored above Turkish people and Nigerians were the least invited to a job interview (1 out of 5). The highest discrimination level was in the role of a secretary. When it comes to remuneration, all groups of migrants were earning less than Austrians, even though they had the same qualifications. While first generation migrants were most discriminated against, in the second generation there were no longer big discrepancies or significant changes compared to Austrians. All in all, Austrians had 37% more invitations to an interview than the other groups of migrants (Hofer et al, 2013).

In the case of a job position that involved customer relations and customer contact, the study also concluded that companies preferred to choose nationals for fear of otherwise affecting their sales. Companies thus justified their decision to employ Austrians by claiming that customer preference was to speak to Austrians, rather than foreigners. At the same time, the study found that companies which were looking for applicants with perfect German knowledge, were less inclined to invite migrants to an interview. Another factor contributing to discrimination was noted in the amount of time taken for a rejection or an acceptance to an interview. Hofer et al. discovered that migrants would be invited for an interview within 3.86 to 5 days whereas Austrians no later than 3.62 days. This led them to the conclusion that for the same job, Austrians were the first to be contacted and invited to an interview. On the other hand, when it came to communicating a rejection, migrants would receive a notice by e-mail within 7-8 days, whereas Austrians would be contacted after 10 days. This means that the latter group was kept longer on the list of potential candidates for further consideration. The same situation applied to income. The study found that compared to Austrians, migrants were paid less for the same level of productivity with the same qualifications. Had there been equal remuneration, there would be no cause to claim discrimination. In the private sector,

Hofer et al. found that full-time migrants were paid 15% less than Austrians (Hofer et al, 2013).

It is important to add that the business nature of a company has an effect on the degree of success for an application. If the company does business outside Austria, the chances are much higher for a migrant to be invited for an interview. Hence, an international company, as opposed to an Austrian company, increases the success factor for a migrant to find a job. Hofer et al. goes on to say that international companies recognize the value of diversity within an organization, whereas businesses with a local market focus prefer Austrians. It is also important to take into consideration the size of a company. Even if one does business at an international level, if there is a small team of employees, discrimination within the team can still be observed.

In a study conducted in 2009 by the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw), the institute researched 1200 companies within the private sector on the challenges they were facing due to globalization. More than half of the surveyed companies did business with export. Based on the micro census in 2008, there were 540,000 employees with a migration background in the private sector, excluding agriculture and forestry. At the national level, 30% of the companies in the private sector employed migrants of which 60% put the acquired human capital in the export department where language know-how and intercultural skills are key factors for opening new markets (ibw, 2010). One particular point of interest to this thesis is the result found in respect to the reasons for employing or not employing people with a migrant background. Companies that employed migrants said that the migration background was not a relevant factor (60%) and that the best candidate was employed based on the skills he/she had. The second most mentioned reason for hiring migrants was specifically because of their language know-how and intercultural competence (30%), which were considered advantageous for doing that specific job. Thirdly, companies also hired them because they had difficulties finding Austrians willing to accept their salary offers (27%). The companies that did not employ migrants, mainly Austrian companies with a focus on the local trading market, mentioned the lack of migrant applicants as the main reason (50%), secondly the lack of necessary qualifications within this group and thirdly, the lack of sufficient proficiency in German.

11% of companies that did not hire migrants also mentioned the fact that nationals had higher qualifications than migrants.

All studies about the labor market show that companies with an international focus are more likely to hire people with a migrant background, which see their intercultural skills as a success



factor for expansion to new markets. However, the same studies raise attention to the fact that companies with a local market focus, although they have little diversity, can present an opportunity for qualified international people. They advise to not exclude them from applying for jobs.

The area of business focus, whether international or national, plays an important role in how companies recruit employees. International companies are obviously more open to hiring people with a migration background than Austrian companies with a local business focus. This chapter has examined the perspective of companies recruiting employees and has articulated several challenges with which migrants are most confronted before and when entering the labor market. But what about women migrants?

Overall Austria has a very low quota of women in management positions (Medien-Servicestelle, 2011) and statistics show that there is little gender and ethnic diversity at management levels in private companies. In order to understand the low quota of women migrants in high-qualified jobs, an overall perspective of the gender issue needs to be addressed. A low quota of women in management also has an impact on the quota of women migrants in such positions. If there is gender discrimination, then women migrants are directly affected by it as well.

## **4.2 Career women in the Austrian labour market.**

Women migrants are faced not only with discrimination based on their origin but as well based on their gender. Whether Austrian or migrant, women are paid differently and are less present in the upper management positions. The online portal [Medienservicestelle.at](http://Medienservicestelle.at) posted in October 2011 that out of 500,000 managers in Austria, only 9% of men and women have a migration background. “Less than 3% of the private sector employs both men and women migrants in leading roles”. Unfortunately there are no studies showing how many women with a migrant background are in management positions. The 9% refers to both genders with a migration background. An additional study from 2011 conducted by The Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (IBW in German) showed that within Austrian companies, less than 3% employed migrants are in management positions. The difference in percentages is explained by the definitions that both studies used when referring to migrants. The Chamber of Commerce includes migrants with at least one parent born outside of the country, whereas IBW includes both parents born abroad (Medien- Servicestelle, 2011). In order to understand the situation of migrant women in management positions, this chapter will look into the overall situation of women in management positions, irrespective of their

nationality. One first has to understand the reality of gender diversity in the Austrian labor market in order to be able to compare it to women migrants. Suffice it to say, Austria has a predominance of men at the top management level. If, in 2015, there were 5.9% of women in the top 200 most profitable companies listed on the stock market, a year ago there were 5.6%. The level at which this number grows is alarmingly slow (AK, 2015). A recent management report issued by the Chamber of Commerce studied 200 of the biggest companies in Austria. Out of those, only 36 listed at least one woman in a Senior Management position or just one on the Executive Board. It also showed that, compared to the senior management level, there are however more women present on the board of directors. This fact is due to the many initiatives taken by the state, but as well due to the increasing pressure from the public (AK, 2015).

At the European level, although the European Parliament voted for a 40% quota of women in senior management levels of European companies, this quota has not yet been implemented in Austria. However, at a national level, various EU countries have already applied their own quotas in order to increase the presence of women in senior management levels and to provide incentives to women managers.

Europe-wide, there are 20% of women in senior management positions among the largest stock market-listed companies. The top leading country is Iceland with 45% of women in top management, followed by Norway 38% and France 32%. Austria is below the 20% average European level with a quota of 17% (AK, 2015).

Out of the 200 most profitable Austrian companies, there are 606 Managing Directors and 1751 supervisory board members in total. Of the 606 managers, only 36 are women. The segment with the highest level of women in the executive board is in the service industry (11%), followed by the trading sector with 5.3% and finance sector with 4.7% (AK, 2015).

The service sector has the same rank in the supervisory board, 22% of women in 2015; however, the industry (12.4%) and trading sectors (14.5%) have not increased compared to 2014.

This study proved that out of the 200 most profitable companies, 59 of them had no women on their board of directors or supervisory board. A quota of 30% was reached in 33 companies. The best case is within the state-owned companies, which show 36% of women present on the supervisory board and a 3% increase from 2013 thanks to a quota obligation. Austria has 55 state-owned companies (44 with 100% ownership and 11 with 50% ownership) and has implemented a 25% quota of women by the end of 2013 and 35% by the end of 2018 (AK, 2015).

When women are disadvantaged on their career path due to their gender, we speak of the "glass ceiling" effect. This term is used to explain the levels of thickness, i.e. gender discrimination,

which occurs on the job market. Because this phenomenon also helps explain the low numbers of women migrants in management positions, not just Austrian women, the next chapter will focus on this topic.

### **4.3 The glass ceiling effect.**

In an article from Deutsche Welle (2013) in Germany, the online broadcaster mentions the glass ceiling effect being a challenge not only for women, but for migrants in general. Ulrike Heitzer–Priem from the Skilled Workers’ Task Force says “too many managers in Germany still have a guest worker syndrome. They have to get used to helping the foreign employees find their feet, so they can fully integrate”. In addition, many highly skilled workers return to their home countries or emigrate to another one because they “hit the glass ceiling that still excludes foreign workers from top management positions“ (Conrad, 2013).

#### **4.3.1 Definition and Origin**

As shown in chapter 4.2, Austria has still a long way to go to reach even the EU average level of 20% women in top management positions. In a study done by Accenture in 2006 called “The Anatomy of the glass ceiling”, the report analyzes the barriers to women’s advancement in their professional careers.

This concept is defined by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (established in 1991, a 21–member bipartisan body acting under President Bush) as “*the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements*”. This term was initially introduced in a Wall Street Journal article in 1986 when referring to the invisible obstacles women had to tackle when approaching top corporate positions (Falk & Voigt, 2006).

The Accenture study showed a comparison among the situations of women in management positions from several countries: Australia, Austria, Germany, Philippines, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The report discovered that the countries found some common characteristics that successful people shared: they came from middle-class societies, had stable personal relationships and had children; they were educated, confident and secure in their professional competence and were always keen to learn. As well, they identified with the company’s vision and mission and believed that hard work, dedication and performance were key drivers to a successful professional career. In addition, the study also revealed several discrepancies between women and men executives. Whereas women can advance more rapidly than men, very few of them are found in top management positions. The study showed that it had less to

do with family commitments and the preponderance of male networks, but rather with attitudes and behavior patterns.

### **4.3.2 The Glass Ceiling Index**

The Glass Ceiling Index presented in the study looked into three influential dimensions that created the glass effect: The Individual; The Company; and The Society. The ranking was between 0 (no glass ceiling effect) and 6 (maximal glass ceiling thickness). The individual dimension focuses on how women perceive themselves: self-confidence in their own abilities, attitudes concerning individual competence. The company dimension examines the equal career opportunities and how the corporate world contributes to the thickness of the glass ceiling. The third dimension, the society, focuses on the external support for advancement of women, for example, government support to promote equality. Austria scored 3.2 at the individual dimension, 4.8 at the company dimension and 4.2 on the society dimension. (Falk & Voigt, 2006). Compared to Germany (3.4 / 3.4 / 4.8), Austria has a thicker glass ceiling at a corporate or company dimension (4.8), whereas Germany indicated higher barriers within the society dimension (4.8). Austria has one of the highest barriers for women advancement and they are most discriminated against in all dimensions with regard to career success. They advance very slowly, feel less safe in their positions, feel that they do not have the same career opportunities and believe they have to work harder to achieve success. The study recommends that Austria should seek to diminish the glass ceiling effects within the corporate world. In comparison, Germany scored a high ranking in glass thickness within the societal dimension, where women feel that equality can be far more easily achieved within the corporate world than in society. This being the situation in 2006, in 2013 the situation of women on boards and in senior management positions, with or without a migration background, had not improved by much. An article in the Austrian newspaper *Der Kurier* dated September 2014 shows that Austria is 11.8 % below the EU average rate. Between 2010 and 2013, Austria had increased by 3.1% compared to other EU countries; however France had a plus of 18.1% and Italy 14.1% (APA, 2014).

All previous and recent studies show that the top floors of companies in Austria are still predominantly male and that, despite efforts to raise awareness of the effects of diversity such as increased productivity and profitability (Hunt et al, 2015), both women and women migrants' potentials are underused.

## 4.4 Criteria for successful employment of migrants

This chapter looks into a study conducted by the Austrian Integration Fund, which has interviewed over 100 human resource managers on the topic of employment of people with a migration background. The results are both staggering and stress a call to action. The available literature referenced in this thesis also points to the continuity and progressiveness of discrimination of migrants which, at the same time, explains the higher number of unemployed within this group. Compared to 2013, the unemployment rate of people with a migration background has more than doubled (+ 21.2%) as compared to Austrian citizens (8.2%) (Grieger & Csarmann, 2014)

In order to increase one's chances for success in a host country, the study highlights a set of criteria required to qualify for a job on the Austrian labor market (Pramböck, 2013). The migrant that has the highest chances of finding a job is the person who:

- Comes from the upper class of his/her own country;
- Is aged between 25 and 50; and
- Is preferably a man.

On top of that, as a migrant irrespective of gender, if you fulfill the following prerequisites, you have higher chances to work in any field:

- perfect and accent-free German
- Necessary social skills: open-mindedness, sociable, motivated
- Necessary qualifications for the job
- Professional network
- Performance.

These results came from interviewing 439 people with a migration background and 112 human resources managers. 50% of the people researched were managers and 85% had a higher education. The focus was placed on Eastern European migrants, Germans and Turkish people with 40% of the migrants having lived in the country for 25 years.

It seems that even today, with so much brain drain and brain waste, Austria and its companies find it hard to accept multicultural environments. Moreover, social class is highly important. If you come from a recognized family in your home country, if you have good connections and are able to use them for the good of the company in Austria, the chances of finding employment are very high.

It is intriguing to see that even today in 2016, Austrian companies, while noticing the need for diversity due to globalization, do not easily recognize or acknowledge the importance of

employing international people. Ethnically diverse teams increase creativity, encourage innovation and consequently growth and higher profits (Hunt et al, 20152014).

The Austrian Integration Fund Report 32 shows that companies that advertise a job opening and which specifically write “perfect German, mandatory” are most likely to invite people whose names indicate a native German speaker. These companies tend to perceive non-Austrian names as belonging to people who cannot speak correct or accent-free German. One specific case mentioned by a recruiter concerned a job position for an assistant, for which the recruiter suggested two candidates: a certain Johanna Müller and a woman called Svetlana Radakovic. Only Ms. Müller was chosen for the interview, even though both had the same qualifications. The company manager justified his choice by saying they needed someone with perfect German knowledge, both in spoken and written language. Although the recruiter had highlighted that Ms. Radakovic had better German knowledge than Ms. Müller in speech and writing, the manager was confident that Ms. Müller was the better candidate for the job considering her to be “*better suited for the company*” (Pramböck, 2013, p 22).

In order for a migrant to better integrate in a society, he/she is advised to learn the local language. However, this example proves that it is not enough to fulfill all the requirements and to have all boxes checked. Companies need to recognize that skills are found in people, not in names. The name should not be an impediment to a job interview.

Another aspect of a company’s decision on a candidate is the nature of its business. If the Austrian company is working at a national level and its customers are mainly Austrians, it has been shown that these firms would rather choose Austrians in order to ensure team satisfaction and thus sales growth (Pramböck, 2013).

Apart from the obvious discrimination evidenced in Report 32 of the Austrian Integration Fund, the research also supports the 2009 results of the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy, which mentioned that companies with an international focus are more likely to hire people with a migration background. 26% of the migrants interviewed referenced their native language as an asset leading to their employment. 13% mentioned familiarity with one’s own culture, 21% noted that a professional network in the home country is highly valued by employers doing business in that country and 26% said that understanding behavior of other cultures is very relevant to performance (Pramböck, 2013). Nonetheless, factors such as not speaking perfect German or not having a social and professional network in Austria will most likely always be a bottleneck for any migrant.

Unemployment within migrant groups is constantly rising. In 2013 there were more foreigners unemployed than people without a migration background. The overall unemployment rate was

at 7.6% and the ratio of unemployed foreigners versus locals was 10.7% to 7% (Statistics Austria, 2014). In 2014, the national unemployment rate was at 8.4% with a ratio of 12.7% unemployed migrants to 7.6% Austrians (Statistics Austria, 2015).

## **4.5 Corporate Governance Code**

Stock market companies in Austria follow the Corporate Governance Codex which aims “to establish a system of management and control of companies and groups that is accountable and is geared to creating sustainable, long-term value” (Finanzministerium, 2015). The code encourages and recommends considering women for senior management positions. A senior management position is considered to be on the executive board of directors or on the supervisory board. Currently in Austria, there is no required quota to be fulfilled for these types of companies. However, paragraph 243b of the Austrian Corporate Governance Code obligates a company to indicate in its corporate governance report the measures being taken to support women in senior management positions, i.e. board of directors or supervisory board.

Unfortunately there are no sanctions for non-compliance of these measures. Due to lack of incentive or legal pressure, these companies, compared to state-owned firms, have made very little progress in supporting women at the senior management level.

Compared to Germany, which has implemented a mandatory female quota, Austria is still refraining from implementing this measure. It is obvious though that mandatory quotas will facilitate more rapid change.

Germany also used to have a recommendation in the Corporate Governance Codex; however, recognizing that it did not achieve any results, the State passed a law in 2014 making it mandatory to achieve a quota of at least 30% in the supervisory boards by 2016. In the case of non-fulfillment, the seat on the board is to remain vacant and the number of board members consequently decreased.

These measures have led to a major increase in diversity within management boards and have shown that such a law promoted gender balance and fairness in companies. Three years earlier, in 2011, France had already implemented this law pushing for a 40% quota by 2017 within supervisory boards and administrative councils.

In Austria, however, there are still no concrete quotas in place to increase and support a higher level of diversity with senior management in the private sector. The State program has announced measures to increase the quotas, but there is no indication of what they will be.

Among the 68 companies listed on the Vienna stock exchange, only 4 women currently sit on the supervisory board (AK, 2015).

The Women Management Report shows a very strong male-oriented leadership at senior management levels with no indication of improvement in the future, except for state-owned companies, which are legally bound to achieve their quotas. This report emphasizes the importance of implementing laws at all levels of economy in order to reach a balance in gender diversity.

#### **4.6 Entrepreneurship as a career path. Migrant entrepreneurs.**

In 2010, based on online portal [Medienservicestelle.at](http://Medienservicestelle.at), there were 68,400 people with a migration background who were self-employed, 31% of them being women. 12.9% of self-employed migrants originate from the EU, EEA (European Economic Area) and Switzerland, 6.4% from Turkey and 3.9% the former Yugoslavia (without Slovenia).

In 2014, out of 469,868 active members, there were 344,832 members who were registered as a sole proprietorship company. Of these, 28% had a migration background, more specifically 96,406. Compared to Austria, Slovakia ranks first (7.7%), Romania second (5.3%) and Germany third with 2.1%. The most common fields are Business and Trade (38%) followed by Transport with 31% (WKO, 2014).

Many take the step of self-employment out of a desire for independence ([Medienservicestelle.at](http://Medienservicestelle.at), 2011) but there are currently no available data to support the assumption that self-employment is a way out of unemployment.

In an article from *Der Standard*, dated August 2011, Dean Erich Schwarz from the Faculty of Economics in Klagenfurt mentions the lack of data on migrant entrepreneurs in Austria. The only available information is that 1 out of 3 companies are founded by migrants (Ostermann, 2011). There is little insight, however, into their motivation for doing so. At an Austrian level, the main reason for founding a sole proprietorship is to grasp opportunities and the desire to run their own businesses, rather than out of necessity (Schmalzer et al, 2015).

In the same article, Dean Schwarz states that in Germany, migrants founded companies more often than autochthons, and more than 70% of them employed people in the early stage of the business. Although there is little data available, Schwarz also assumes that this is the same case for Austria. He goes on to describe migrant entrepreneurs, also known under the emerging term “immipreneurs”, as more “risk averse and more independent, and therefore with a higher entrepreneurial spirit” than native people. The typical migrant entrepreneur is “much more motivated to perform and more independent, therefore also much more risk averse”. However, Schwarz also mentions that, although there is little data on the migration background, some also found businesses out of necessity due to high unemployment rates (Ostermann, 2011).



Based on the Global Entrepreneurship Report, the number one reason for choosing to become self-employed was to enjoy more freedom. Apart from the pull factor of having more freedom, self-fulfillment and flexible hours were most mentioned as incentives to becoming self-employed. Nonetheless, the number of people choosing self-employment out of necessity also increased. Whereas in 2007 there were 6.4%, in 2014, there were 10.9%. In addition, the number of female entrepreneurs registering a company out of necessity increased to 14.6% in 2014 as compared to 5.1% in 2007 (Schmalzer et al, 2015). The previous chapter pointed to strong discrimination based on migration background and gender. It is therefore possible to conclude that migrants in general have consequently lower chances of success than Austrian citizens. Based on the Executive Monitor Report, only 7% of migrants with a school leaving certificate and 21% with a university degree succeed in becoming managers. It becomes even more difficult if age and education are combined. Migrants over 45 have less chances of reaching management levels than Austrians. The ratio is 15% to 30% Austrians, meaning that migrants have less than half as many opportunities as Austrians (Medienservicestelle.at, 2011). The scarcity of studies on migrants in top management positions points to the insufficient representation of such a group on which to conduct research. As mentioned in chapter 3.3, only 3% of the private sector employs migrants in management positions. There is, however, no information on how many jobs out of the 3% are in fact occupied by women migrants. As previously discussed in chapter 3, the glass ceiling in Austria is quite thick compared to other EU countries. We have seen the effects of the glass ceiling; the next chapter will look into the benefits of gender and ethnic diversity as a whole and will continue to portray the situation in Austria.

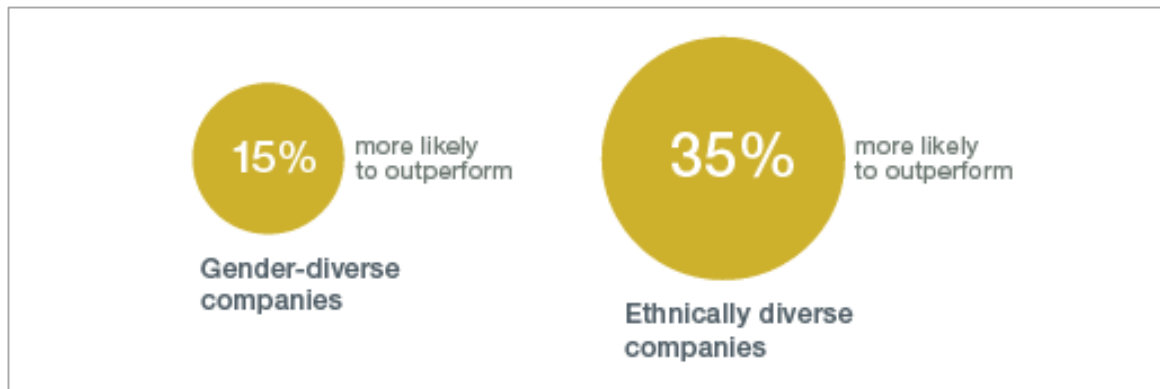
## **5 Diversity management**

### **5.1.1 Definition**

Diversity Management originated in the 1980s in the US and is a management concept developed to address the changes happening in the labor market as well as to tackle the growing competition on a global level. The main emphasis is placed on the positive effects of diversity in the business environment and on recognizing the wide range of qualities and skills that people have in an organization (Strachan et al, 2009). The following subchapter will analyze in more depth the advantages of diversity and its effects on a company.

### 5.1.2 Advantages of diverse companies

Hunt et al. explained in the article “Diversity matters” that having women in management positions increases a company’s successes and opportunities. Additionally, gender and ethnically diverse companies show even more striking results. Performance increases from 15% to 35% when both factors, gender and ethnicity, are considered (Figure 12) (Hunt et al, 2015).



**Figure 12. Why diversity matters. Effects of diversity (Hunt et al, 2015)**

Moreover, the study goes on to say that ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to outperform than a male-dominated company and it raises awareness of the fact that women and ethnicity increase the chances to recruit more talent (Hunt et al, 2015). One aspect that McKenzie stresses, is that women and minority groups are often not taken into consideration when thinking about customer needs when they are in fact the dominant purchaser in a household. This is another benefit of which companies should take advantage. Opportunities are being missed by not balancing gender diversity in teams. A third advantage is higher employee satisfaction – diverse teams improve collaboration and reduce conflicts. Diversity improves decision-making because there is a larger spectrum of innovative and creative approaches and ideas. Last but not least, in a world in which corporate social responsibility is gaining relevance, a company could positively increase its image by promoting cultural and ethnic diversity (Hunt et al, 2015).

Despite all these positive effects, there is still a conservative development of gender and ethnic diversity within Austrian companies.

## 5.2 The Diversity Charter

Report 32 of the Austrian Integration Fund points to an initiative in this area called “Charta der Vielfalt”. The Diversity Charter founded in 2010 is an initiative that aims to promote the diverse skills and values of all people, irrespective of gender, origin, color, age, sexual

orientation, or religion (WKO, 2014). Its purpose is to give companies the incentive to approach and recognize diversity as a potential for growth. However, signing this charter only shows that the company is open to all people regardless of their economic and social background. It does not address a specific call to action, such as pledging to showcase their successes to the broader public. If opened to the public, this might act as an incentive to companies with little diversity to attend the diversity charter events and learn from their best-case practices.

This initiative is a step towards visibility of such companies but the status in December 2015 shows little growth in numbers. Since it was established five years ago, only 177 companies have signed the charter. ([www.charta-de-vielfalt.at](http://www.charta-de-vielfalt.at)). To emphasize the small number, in 2013, Austria had 581,946 active companies from all business sectors, e.g. construction, education, finance, trade, health and other services (Statistics Austria, 2015). Vienna has the highest number of registered companies in Austria - 142,081 (Statistics Austria, 2015). Of these, only 177 are included in the diversity charter. Although the initiative aims to recognize diversity as an enhancement to business, unfortunately, it does not seem to have struck a chord with employers. In addition, one has to be a member to hear about the best-case practices at their events. This somehow counteracts its purpose because it limits its outreach only to the companies that have already signed. The role of the charter should be to encourage other companies, which do not support a diverse environment, rather than to share their diversity activities and results only among themselves. At this level of awareness, the charter seems to be a “nice to have” tool but it does not help to increase the level of diversity at a national level, at least not in a visible way. If only 3% of executive positions in the private sector are occupied by women and if a migration background is still mostly found in jobs with little opportunities for advancement, the diversity case is not really a business case in Austria. In the light of the many proven benefits for a company to work in diverse teams, it shows that the business environment in Austria is culturally still quite conservative and reluctant to change.

In order to understand what is happening behind the 3% rate, the next chapter will look into the situation of the few women who have made it in executive positions and highlight their views and recommendations for a more diverse culture at company level.

### **5.3 Diversity in Austria- A women’s perspective**

Unfortunately the Austrian private sector is not grasping the opportunities to benefit from diversification as fast as it should be. The Womanager Magazine examines the reality of women in management positions and, through a series of interviews from some of the leading women

in Austrian corporations, it gives proof of success and reveals the keys to success for ambitious women in Austria. The magazine interviewed some of the 50 most influential women in Austria with executive management functions. Unfortunately only 2 or 3 have a migration background. This indicates also the scarcity of such women in top management positions and is the reason why the empirical part of this thesis focuses on middle management levels.

As studies have shown, the Austrian senior management environment is male predominant. They show clear evidence that men are more likely to succeed in their career goals than women.

In the companies where diversity does figure more prominently, there is no incentive to showcase that model to the outside. Most likely the diversity programs are developed and promoted internally. Even though there is substantial proof of more business opportunities and increased productivity and economic growth if gender and ethnic diversity are part of the company culture, there is little awareness or incentive to promote that success. Secondly companies with little diversity do not take any steps themselves to learn from best-case practices. The lack of diversity within Austrian companies points to the need for more dialogue, information about benefits and advantages of gender and ethnic diversity.

Without migration, Austria's population would not only decrease but would experience a shortage of manpower as well. For example, if in 2014 migration had been stopped, in 2075 Austria's population would decrease to 6.2 million. (Medienservicestelle, 2014). Without a welcoming migration policy, Austria will not be able to stay competitive with other European countries. This will not be sustainable in the long-term. Austria's female population exceeds that of males, yet, in management positions they are unfortunately the least represented. Austria is not using its entire human resource potential. Given the fact that women are the biggest consumers with an increased sense of what the market needs, companies are not exploring these opportunities enough. Kristin Hanusch-Linser, Head of Corporate Communications at ÖBB says *"More women in Management is an important criterion to secure economic success. It would mean to forgo 50% of the market potential and above all half of the purchasing power"* ("Success has many faces", p10).

Based on the opinion of several women in executive management positions interviewed by Womanagers, for a career-oriented woman, what matters most are personal and professional networks. Women need to make themselves more visible, therefore being proactive within networks is crucial to reaching professional goals.

With obvious proof of benefits for a company, women are unfortunately found very seldom in management. Women migrants in management positions are even rarer. The available literature

and studies underline the benefits and positive effects of a balanced and diverse company culture, and that where men, women and minorities co-exist, there can only be increased opportunities and successes. In order to understand more about the role of migrants in the Austrian economy and the effects that migration has on the host society, the next chapter will address these components in an effort to examine why migrants are disadvantaged in the labor market and why their image is so negatively perceived.

## **5.4 The Effects of Migration in Austria.**

So far, the available literature has underlined several bottlenecks stretching from reluctance to hire migrants due to the nature of the business and its customer target group, to not having the right name or gender (Pramböck, 2013). The paper has also described various benefits from which a company can profit. However, this describes only the perspective of the company and its employees. But what is the role of migrants in society and how do they contribute to the economy? What are the arguments that speak for and against them? This chapter focusses on answering these questions.

- **Migration increases the birth rate**

The population of Europe is aging and at the same time shrinking. In Austria, in 2013, there were approximately 39,300 children born and 79,500 people died. Whereas 10,300 births were attributed to foreigners, there were 10,500 deaths of Austrian citizens, meaning that migrants increased the birth rate and deaths occurred more commonly among the Austrian population (Statistics Austria, 2014). The young population of Austria will also be affected if migration is not encouraged and promoted. According to the OECD „*without migration the population of 20-24 year olds would be decreasing by a quarter by 2025*“ (WKO, 2015).

- **Migration increases the working age population**

In Europe, migrants represent 70% of the increase in the workforce (OECD, 2014). Additionally they pay more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits.

- **Migrants are not a burden to the host society and economy**

“Immigrants are thus neither a burden to the public purse nor are they a panacea for addressing fiscal challenges. In most countries, except in those with a large share of older migrants, migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits. This means that they contribute to the financing of public infrastructure, although admittedly to a lesser extent than the native-born. Contrary to widespread public belief, low-

educated immigrants have a better fiscal position – the difference between their contributions and the benefits they receive – than their native-born peers. And where immigrants have a less favourable fiscal position, this is not driven by a greater dependence on social benefits but rather by the fact that they often have lower wages and thus tend to contribute less.” (OECD, 2014).

- **Ethnic diversity leads to company growth** (Chapter 5.1.2)

A topic seldom discussed or emphasized in public discourse is the positive role of migrants in a society and economy. One mainly reads and hears about the growing unemployment rate and the effects of unqualified migrants on the economy. There is little awareness created around the positive effects of a diverse culture and the contributions that migrants bring to the host society and economy. A study conducted in 2014 by the Austrian Integration Fund on the topic “Migration to Austria: An advantage?” takes a first step at analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of migration while at the same time determining the causes of Brain Gain and Brain Drain and examines the available human resources in Austria.

- **Migrants are highly educated**

One of the first facts to be highlighted is the high education level of foreigners in Austria. Statistics Austria shows in the 2013 labor force micro census that migrants from other EU countries have higher qualifications than the average Austrian. In 2013, 21% of people with a migration background had a university degree, 5.4% more than Austrians<sup>1</sup>. At the same time there were 17.1% of foreigners with high school degrees, whereas Austrians without a migration background counted 14.8%. At the lowest qualification levels, however, migrants rated more than double as compared to Austrians, where 27.9% had compulsory schooling as opposed to 13.7% of the autochthon population. This means that although there are more migrants with university degrees than Austrians, at the other extreme, Austria is confronted with the fact that the majority of people with a migration background (61.9%) have either taken an apprenticeship or have only completed compulsory education requirements.

At the same time, however, many migrants who study in Austria find themselves forced to leave the country because they cannot find employment or cannot meet the red-white-red card criterion that requires migrants under the age of 30 to earn at least €2100 gross per month to qualify for a work visa (MA 35, 2016). In an article in the Austrian newspaper Die Presse, one understands that earning such a salary is hard even for Austrians who are starting their first job. Non-EU citizens encounter even more obstacles due to the bureaucracy that the employing

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<sup>1</sup> Austria does not have a uniform system of university degrees and it is relatively restrictive in this respect.

company has to deal with in order to hire an international person. Many open letters from such graduates to the authorities have proven that the red-white-red card is neither helping them nor is it assisting in tackling the brain drain challenge that Austria faces. Apart from facing discrimination due to their cultural background, graduates only have 6 months to find a job, following which, they must leave the country (Hierländer, 2014).

- **Migration leads to brain gain for the host society**

Another effect of migration is the brain gain that comes with the free movement of people. Brain gain is defined by the level of qualification one contributes to a society in comparison with the local people (Münz, 2014). If the education level is higher than that of the average native population, then we refer to brain gain. This also signifies that they would have to be employed and paid based on their qualifications. The opposite of this effect is brain drain, a phenomenon that takes place when qualified people either return to their home country or migrate to another (Münz, 2014).

During the “guest worker” period of the 1960s-70s, in which people were mainly being recruited for secondary sector jobs (production and construction), there was no brain gain for Austria.

During the 1990s and the high inflow of asylum seekers from Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the education level was considered above the average of their home countries (Münz, 2014). However, many highly qualified refugees migrated further to the US and Canada. Those who stayed in Austria faced the challenge of not having their degrees recognized by the state, on the one hand, and, on the other, the strict naturalization law that required them to have lived in Austria for 10 years before applying for citizenship. At the same time refugees were discriminated against in the labor market, being forced to accept jobs for which they were over-qualified in order to provide for their families. Even today one can still meet doctors driving taxis because their degrees are not recognized in Austria. This is mainly the case with Eastern European countries from which degrees are seldom accepted, thereby forcing many migrants to take blue-collar jobs (Hierländer, 2014). This case falls under brain waste, where a working migrant is not paid according to his/her qualifications. However, when Austrian citizens leave their home country, one speaks as well of brain drain.

- **Migration leads to brain waste**

This effect happens when migrants are employed and paid below their qualifications. People with a migration background are most often found in the situation of accepting jobs below their qualifications because of the lack of opportunities in their field. Another reason is that university degrees are often not recognized in the host society due to different educational

standards, depending on the country of origin. In comparison to 10% of Austrian citizens who are overqualified, more than a quarter, 28%, of the migrant workforce occupied jobs below their standard of education in 2008 (Statistics Austria, 2014).

- **Migration reduces the gap between the young and the aging population**

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the prognosis for the future shows that the Austrian society is aging. Along with that, the labor force is automatically decreasing in numbers. Based on Statistics Austria, within the next decades, the number of people aged 65 and above will grow from 1.4 million (2013) to 2.6 million by 2050. (Münz, 2014).

- **Migrants pay more into the tax and social system than they receive back in benefits** (Borovska, 2010)

Contrary to common belief that migrants take advantage of the social benefits of a country, studies show the exact opposite.

- **Ethnic diversity leads to innovation and economic growth** (Hunt et al, 2015)

The effects of migration on host societies and economies are clearly very positive. Despite the fact that there are also lower-skilled migrants, studies show that migration is not a financial burden, but rather that efforts to integrate migrants should be seen as an investment. An effective migration policy and a welcoming culture are essential to ensuring inflow of human resources and qualified immigrants, thus reducing brain waste and brain drain and at the same time increasing brain gain rates. Economic trends show that in the future, Eastern and Middle EU States will enjoy an improved quality of life due to the development and stability of their economies. These trends will make emigration from these countries unattractive and thus economies like Austria will find themselves needing to compete for qualified people. These factors underline the need for a better and more proactive migration policy (Münz, 2014).

## **6 Observations based on the theoretical findings**

The first part of this thesis has focused on international migration and on understanding the different migration theories and perspectives, which underline the complexity of the migration topic. The basis for explaining why and when migration takes place is found in American history. Considered the hub of immigration, the US has often been the source of studies on migration (Brettel and Hollifield, 2008). Critics have pointed to the Americanization of migration due to the lack of transnational and comparative research. Scholars also examined it



from the perspective of their own respective fields and with a focus on the receiving country. The lack of cooperation between disciplines and continents has resulted in much criticism and has made migration a very controversial subject. (Brettel and Hollifield, 2008).

There is no single theory that has found agreement with all scholars from all disciplines. Historians analyze time and places, anthropologists focus on the social and cultural environments which lead to migration, and sociologists look at the reasons for migration. Demographers explore the causes of population fluctuation. Economists build predictive models to explain future behavior. Political scientists, like sociologists, analyze migration from the perspective of the host society and endeavor to understand how state and public policy influence migration flows and how countries are affected by immigration policy. The legal framework of a country is also an important factor that affects and explains migration since laws influence decision-making processes. There are many disciplines examining migration from their own perspectives and the past has shown little openness towards a more diverse approach.

Although Austria already has a 20% migration background with Vienna reaching 49% (Statistics Austria, 2014), the overall literature indicates the reluctance of Austrian citizens to accept the fact that Austria has long been a migration country. This phenomenon did not begin with the guest worker period in the 1960s, rather Austria was already a melting pot at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Habsburg Empire (Jandl & Kraler, 2003). The situation in the labor market points to discrimination of migrants in general but also stresses the situation of women migrants who face discrimination based not only on their migration background but also on their gender. As this paper focuses more on female migration, emphasis is placed on their situation in the labor market and in their careers. The literature available has shown that Austria is very conservative at the top floors and women are very seldom found in executive management roles. The reluctance to allow more diversity is explained by the strong male dominance and the closed networks in which they mingle. Even though there are many studies proving that diversity increases productivity and company profits, the top 200 most successful companies have only 5.9% of women in management positions. The Glass Ceiling Index portrays Austria as one of the countries with the highest barriers for female advancement and it recommends taking measures to change this behavior within the corporate world. A comparison at the EU-level places Austria below the average rate of 20% diversity with a score of 11.8%.

In order for a person with a migration background to reach his/her career goals, studies show that one has to come from the upper class of his/her home country, be between 25-50 and

preferably a man. At the same time, one's German has to be perfect and, if possible, free of accent. Accent-free German strongly increases the chances to succeed (Pramböck, 2013). Report 32 of the Austrian Integration Fund portrays the current reality of discrimination of migrants on the labor market: Austrian companies without an international focus will be most likely to hire Austrian citizens. Therefore, the chances for a job are higher when applying for management roles offered by international companies. This, however, does not ensure success. A strong network and visibility on the labor market may bring better results with the hiring company. Although there is a Corporate Governance Codex followed by companies listed on the stock market which encourages them to take women into consideration for senior management roles, the lack of sanctions for non-compliance allows the environment at the top floors to remain predominantly male. The lack of incentive to push for more gender diversity does not provide a way for women to better position themselves. A system of quotas in the private sector would bring the right incentives; however, there is great resistance against such a move.

Another possibility for self-fulfillment is through entrepreneurship. Migrant entrepreneurs seek self-employment in order to find more freedom, work flexible hours and fulfill their career goals. Although there is no concrete evidence to suggest that the migration background as a discrimination factor in the labor market leads to self-employment, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor points to 10.9% of migrants becoming self-employed out of necessity. At the same time, the number of female entrepreneurs founding a company for the same reason has gone up to 14.6% in 2014 as compared to 5.1% in 2007. (Schmalzer et al, 2015)

The reluctance to take advantage of 50% of the market potential by not allowing more women in management positions does not provide the framework for a sustainable and competitive economy in Austria. Although the positive effects of migration and of gender diversity are numerous, the unwillingness of companies and the state to address this factor will hinder Austria from competing at a European and global level.

## 7 Methodology

This chapter introduces the research method and the interview process, which aims to identify the influential factors that have helped women migrants to reach management positions in business. The empirical part, based on face to face interviews, is partly meant to be a biography of each woman, to identify the environment each woman came from and to explore, on the one hand, the influencing factors that have contributed to her successful career and, on the other, the challenges she faced while advancing on her career ladder.

This thesis employs a qualitative research approach and uses the exploratory qualitative interview method with open-ended questions and no predetermined list of questions, but rather a guideline which provides a certain structure to follow (Saunders et al, 2003). The goal is to allow the interviewee to talk freely about events, experiences, attitudes and behaviors in order to understand the environment and the social and economic factors that contributed to advancing in her career. It will be an informant interview type, which places the interviewee as the person leading the flow of the interview (Saunders et al, 2003). The purpose of this type of interview is to find out what these women experienced throughout their careers and to discover new insights in this field.

The interviewees are 11 migrant women in management positions, 6 of them are employed in Austrian companies and 5 have chosen self-employment or entrepreneurship. After these interviews, one additional interview was done with an Austrian woman without a migration background who works as Diversity Manager at the Austrian Railways Group, the ÖBB, in order to identify further elements or simply to capture her views on the topic of women in management positions and then compare them with the perspectives of the women migrants interviewed. This interview will be summarized and presented in the conclusions section of this thesis, chapter 10.

The topics that will be addressed are: background and professional career, personal beliefs, financial status, company culture, connectedness to other migrant groups, personal advice to women, challenges.

In order to allow a safe environment and deliver a complete perspective of the person interviewed, without worrying that it would have repercussions or that the information would be given to third parties, the interviewees were informed of the anonymity status of the paper and that neither the person nor the company they work for will be mentioned. It is important to emphasize as well that the opinions of these women migrants do not reflect those of the

general population. The cases reflect the reality at the time they were interviewed and are subject to change in the future depending on external factors, e.g. political, social and cultural.

## **7.1 Research Topic**

The research topic explores the influencing factors in reaching successful career levels in Austria for women migrants.

The interviews aim to identify the main driving factors for advancement in careers and to discover whether there are any similarities or differences between employed and self-employed professional migrant women in Austria.

## **7.2 Questions**

The following guideline was used:

- Background: country of origin, studies, family status, reason for migrating to Austria
- Career path: What were the challenges and successes experienced throughout your career and what were the key factors that led to your career advancements?
- Social status: integration, perception of migrants
- What would you advise women migrants to do in order to achieve successful careers?

## **7.3 Description of the research group**

The initial goal of the paper was to interview professional women migrants in top management positions at executive and board management levels; however, the scarcity and difficulty of finding these women has obliged me to look into middle management levels, where women with a migration background are more predominant than at the top. Compared to the top floors, where women are very scarce, the term “predominant” is used here to refer to the easier accessibility of finding women migrants in middle management, and does not refer to a large number of women with a migration background in management positions. In other words, predominant is used here to refer to accessibility, not preponderance of such women in these positions. The paper makes a comparison between successful career women who are employed and those who are self-employed in order to determine whether there are similarities or

differences between the two categories when identifying the influencing factors in reaching successful careers.

Throughout my journey to locate these professional women, I initially narrowed down my search to women migrants working in Austrian companies only, but the difficulty of finding them obligated me to broaden my search field to Austrian companies doing business internationally as well as international companies with headquarters in Austria.

The names assigned to the interviewees are not their real names and, in order to provide a safe environment for them to share their experiences as authentically as possible, the companies they mentioned are also not named. The research covers the career paths of 11 professional women, 6 of them employed and 5 self-employed.

Name	Age	Country of Origin	Type	Languages spoken	Years in Austria	Austrian Citizenship	Reason for migration	Level of Studies
Corrine G	40-50	USA	Employed	6	5	No	Work	Master Degree
Mary N	40-50	USA	Employed	3	15-20	No	Love	Master Degree
Laima S	30-40	Latvia	Employed	6	5	No	Work	Master Degree
Alecsandra G	40-50	Serbia	Employed	4	5-10	Yes	Family	Master Degree
Laura C	30-40	Romania	Employed	3	10-15	No	Studies	Master Degree
Elena R	40-50	Italy	Employed	5	10-15	No	Family	Master Degree
Ioana S	20-30	Romania	Self-Employed	3	5-10	No	Studies	HighSchool
Natalia V	20-30	Russia	Self-Employed	5	5-10	No	Love	Master Degree
Michelle D	40-50	USA	Self-Employed	3	15-20	No	Work	Master Degree
Cristina S	30-40	Romania	Self-Employed	3	10-15	No	Work	Master Degree
Emma R	40-50	India	Self-Employed	3	>20	Yes	Family	Master Degree

**Figure 13. Overview of data on interview respondents**

The women were located through professional women networks as well as through the startup scene. The first contact took place at different networking events; subsequently, they were asked by email or phone if they were available for an interview. The interviews were done between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> of November and each lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The interviews took place either in cafés or at their offices and they were done in the English language. Before starting the interview, there was a five-minute introduction and leisure talk. With the approval of each interviewee, the discussions were recorded. In order to offer a transparent and structured overview of each opinion expressed, each topic gives either direct answers marked between quotations or they are summarized due to the long thread of thoughts. At the end of each interview, a short section called “future trends” describes the sentiments observed while discussing future developments. The final section called “summary” reveals the profile of the interviewee and offers a short review of her perspective regarding her career path and the influencing factors contributing to her success.

## 7.4 Interview guideline

The interview framework included several categories under which several support questions were formulated. The purpose of the framework was to guide the direction of the discussions towards identifying the influencing factors leading to successful careers. The interview begins with background research on the studies, languages and environment in which one was raised and then gradually follows the different job positions acquired throughout the professional life of the women migrants. After that, the framework looks into how they perceive the social and professional environment in Austria and they are asked to analyze their own position as a woman migrant living in Austria, whether they encountered discrimination on the job market and whether their migration background was ever a barrier. The last part requests a piece of advice that they would like to offer to future women migrants aspiring to achieve higher career levels in Austria.

## 7.5 Framework

### BACKGROUND & EDUCATION

- studies and languages spoken
- short family history and education levels of parents

### REASON FOR MOVING TO AUSTRIA

- why and when did you move to Austria?

### CAREER

- What jobs have you acquired and how did you get them?
- What were the challenges and successes throughout your career?
- Did “Vitamin B” play a role in your professional career? (\*Vitamin B comes from the German "Vitamin B" - as in Vitamin “Beziehungen”, Beziehung meaning connections).

### SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- How well did you integrate and what were the challenges encountered when settling in?

### DISCRIMINATION

- Did you experience discrimination based on your background?
- How do you perceive the word “migrant”? What do you associate it with? Do you see yourself as a migrant?

## INFLUENCING FACTORS

- What influencing factors to achieving a successful career can you identify based on your professional experience?

## ADVICE

- What advice would you give to a woman migrant to help her reach a successful career?

The next chapter will present each case study and the results that underline the influencing factors to achieving successful career levels.

## 8 Case studies

### 8.1 Case Study 1\_ Elena R., Italian

#### **Background:**

Elena R. is Italian, aged between 40 and 50. She studied Economics and Business Administration in Italy and has a Master Degree in Finance from the University in Torino, Italy. She speaks Italian, English, German, French and Spanish. She does not have Austrian citizenship but has been living in Austria for the past 10 years. She is married to an Italian and has one daughter. Her current job is in an Austrian holding as a Group Treasury Manager.

#### **Parents:**

Her parents did not attend university, but were entrepreneurs and raised their two daughters to become successful at what they wanted to accomplish in life.

#### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Family. She came to Austria in 2005 to be with her husband who had found a job here.

#### **Career path**

Elena R. had a very diverse career, stretching throughout several countries. She first started in Italy, later moving to Germany for a job as Head of Finance in an international company. She learned German because she wanted to be perceived as part of the company even though her job role implied speaking mainly English. After 3 years, she moved to Switzerland but returned to Germany to be Head of Finance for a company working in the field of astronomy. While her husband was working in Austria, she would commute every weekend from Munich to Vienna to be with him and her daughter. Eventually she also moved to Vienna and worked for an

international company as Chief of Budget. Later she worked as a CFO for an international paper company and for the past 3 years she has been with an Austrian holding company as Group Treasury Manager. Her jobs in Austria were mostly acquired through headhunters as she believes that high-level positions are only visible through headhunting agencies. In Germany she was able to find them listed in the newspapers, but her professional experience in Austria demonstrated that Austria still works in quite traditional ways, with it being necessary to “know the right person” or be in the right circles.

Social and professional networks also played an important role in her career. She describes her current company as very international but very traditional at the same time, as it is a family-owned business. *“It is very modern but with a lot of tradition behind. It's really interesting to experience this. It's cultural. I can think and say a lot but I have to take care of how I say it”.*

When speaking of the management style in Austria, Elena R. says: *“Do you know the saying “kurze leine, lange leine” (to keep someone on a tight leash)? That's what they apply in management! It's the first time in my life that I heard that in my professional life. We are not animals, to keep us on a leash. This management style is only in Austria. There are people who are more independent and people who need support. But if I am the manager, I should be the driver of the strategy. Another thing is, if they help you, they praise themselves. In my culture, we don't do that. Either you help or not. If you help, it's done. But here, they underline the fact that you needed help. As if they wanted you to not bother them the next time, but what type of management is that?”*

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*„In Austria, at an organizational level, Austrians expect something more from foreigners. If a company is not centralized, they don't want to impose any ground rules. You need to reach some goals but the structure is more around people. But if the Austrians had the chance to work in the countries they worked for, they'd have a different mindset.*

*(...)I realize that I am changing and adapting to the way of dealing and approaching the Austrian people. I am more Austrian than Italian and my colleagues, the international colleagues, expect me to deal as an Italian. In an international environment I am free, I am ME. In an Austrian environment, I adapt. Because I feel it fits better for them. Italians are emotional, lively. Austrians expect something else. I am another person. Maybe like my daughter. It's a challenge. I think Austrians accept me more if I adapt to their way. Why? I think it's cultural. This word "Bescheidenheit"/ modesty- Austrians love it. Italians see that as*



*negative. It's not positive. In Austria it is different. They expect more modesty, low profile mentality.*

*(...), „I went to two headhunters in Austria. I found out something shocking. They told me, even though I had a high profile career in Germany, in Austria I needed to start from scratch. Secondly, my CV- had to be written more modestly. More „bescheiden“/modest. And I think I go through this every day. It intimidates people. The company I work for, there are different types of people. It's proven as a woman, you have to be modest. I don't care really. I still don't care, but I play their game. So that it doesn't affect me. As a foreigner and as a woman, it is expected I showed modesty. „*

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Elena R. acquired most of her jobs through headhunters and networks as well as the reputation she had managed to build. She has made herself visible on the market.

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

Elena was first discriminated against because of her gender and secondly because she was a foreigner. In her management experience she has learned to adapt, but she is constantly reminded that she is not a local.

### **How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

#### **Do you see yourself as one?**

*„A woman immigrant? - I have problems with this word. Because I never considered myself a migrant until I got here. Because this word doesn't exist. Maybe migrants were my parents who moved from the southern part of Italy to the northern part. Migrants would be in Italy the family of my mother who would move from Italy to Canada. I think more geographically. If you use this word and we are not from here, how can you expect things to change? It has a negative connotation. We shouldn't use this word. We are a person with international background. I am not a migrant. I am European. Who knows what the future brings. It's really a question of time. Why does Austria sees/names us so? Because of the tradition, because they like tradition, because they like “Bescheidenheit”/modesty, they like to be better. For me the Austrians, are the people from Milan in Italy. Those people would never leave Milan. There is nothing better than the people from Milano. It's a status thing. Such mentalities are wrong. „*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*“Yes, I wanted to integrate. My daughter went to a private Austrian school. Because she could stay there until 5-6pm. That was the reason we chose not to go to public. The school had many Austrians. We mixed a lot with that crowd. But we have a mixed social network. My daughter though didn’t have a sense of belonging here in Austria. She was born in Germany, studied in Austria and has an Italian nationality. She never felt at home in Austria. I think she was a bit discriminated. Because Austrians don’t like Germans, even though she is not one.”*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“Have the drive! Be motivated. Educate yourself well. Have passion and be committed. And loyalty. Be loyal. Be ethical. And be „bescheiden” /modest when it has to be. I always tell people to see the things not just from one perspective, which is a very logical thing to do, but if I say something now, then there must be a reason for it. I learned to be patient. You are not always in the center of the attention. Women have the beauty and the gift to do things for other people. And this gives a lot back... The trust. People trust me. And this is really important. Be authentic! I cannot play roles. Be patient, look for mentors! They are more important than networks. For men, networks yes, but for women, mentors. “*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

*“Not in my case. I didn’t need it. But I know that it’s a very Austrian thing”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Career wise, it’s very important to choose your partner. If you have high education, speak many languages, you are smart, then you want to be supported in your career. Then you have to think you are also responsible for the family. But there has to be a balance. You are both responsible, you and your husband. Before you are a woman, you are a person. As a person, you are responsible for the future of the humanity. Not because you are the only one that can give birth but also because you need to feed that person. You need to feed the new generation. So you need to earn, you also have to consider how long you want to stay at home. If you stay too long at home, it’s tough to come back at the same level of job that you left before giving birth. You also have to be supportive of your husband. It’s tough. But you have to think you are a person before you think you are a woman. In Austria you have to think about that three, four, five, ten times about that. Because in Austria you are first a woman before you are a person. “*

## **Future trends**

Elena sees that the job market is becoming increasingly competitive and it is no longer as easy to find the right job as it was ten years ago. Salaries in Austria are also lower than in other European countries, also a reason for which people choose to emigrate. Overall, she does not perceive Austria as a very competitive country, an aspect that in the long run will affect the human capital resources available on the job market. *“In Austria, my career level went down in comparison to Germany.”*

*(...) Before, it was easier to find jobs because there weren't so many educated people. Competition was not so high as it is now. I see as well that there aren't very many women in top management in our company. In Italy it would be different. But because we are an IT company, maybe that is also linked to why there are so few women up there.*

*(...)I could see myself move to Germany because they offer higher salaries. I never earned so little as I do now. And I had much more. Men don't earn more than I do, but I think it's the market. In Austria, salaries are very low. That could be a reason for me to move back to Germany.”*

## **SUMMARY**

Elena R. has built her career thanks to her skills and her determination to succeed in whatever environment she finds herself. She has dealt with discrimination based on gender as well as culture. She perceives Austria as conservative and traditional in the work environment and has often dealt with that perspective. She was able to combine career and family because she has had a very modern family in which the husband played a supportive role in order to allow a balance for both parents to achieve successful careers. She sees herself first as a person and then as a woman, but in an Austrian environment she is more perceived as a woman who is expected to adapt to the male culture. Her career level has diminished since she has lived in Austria and she wonders what level she would have reached had she continued her career in Germany or Italy. She believes that Austrians think very provincially which will be harmful in the long-term as they lose their competitiveness at an international level.

## 8.2 Case Study 2\_ Alecsandra G, Serbian

### **Background:**

**Alecsandra G.** is over 45, originally from Serbia, now an Austrian citizen, studied Economics in Belgrade. She speaks Serbian, German, English, and a bit of Indonesian and Slovenian. She did an MBA in Finance at the Donau University of Krems and has lived in Austria since 2007. She is now the Head of Finance and Development at an international organization in Vienna.

### **Parents:**

Both her parents had academic degrees.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Family. She left Belgrade in 1992 and moved to Slovenia with her Austrian husband, later they settled in Indonesia and then subsequently returned to Austria in 2007. She is divorced and has one daughter.

### **Career path**

In Austria, Alecsandra G. started her professional career from zero because her studies were not recognized and her work experience abroad was not taken into account. She did a Master of Science in Finance and graduated with an MBA in Finance. She started her career in 2010 at an international organization where she still works today. She began as Finance and Quality Manager, two years later she was promoted to Head of Finance and after another two years she became Head of Finance and Development. Having no contacts in Austria, ever since she arrived in Vienna she sought to join a professional network and found a professional women's network, where she is now Co-President.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

Alecsandra G's career was a struggle due to her age when she started her business career in Austria. Her professional experience was also not relevant for the job market at that time. *“I was a new entrant without professional experience in the area I was looking to work in.”* The barriers she encountered were not so much related to her migration background but due to her age and the lack of work experience in the career level she aimed for. While she lived in Slovenia she had had a professional break and in Jakarta, Indonesia *“I was rather teaching and practicing finance. When I came to Vienna I looked for my comparative advantage and*

*researched the job market. There was a great demand for specialists in Finance, so due to the fact that my previous studies were not recognized, I had decided to redo them in Austria. I did two degrees in one year. I was commuting every day between Vienna and Krems, I was working at the same time and was looking after my daughter too. It was very challenging but I had the ambition and the strength to pull through and show my worth”.*

While studying, Alecsandra G. was always looking to connect, knowing that she would make herself more visible on the job market that way.

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Through networking

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

Alecsandra found that her age was much more of a problem than were her gender or migration background: *“Only due to the age. As it is an international company, the country of origin is very diverse. There is only one Austrian.”* She also said that the higher the level of education, the less discrimination based on the migration background one would find. However, she did encounter discrimination outside her professional life. She chose to let it go and not let it affect her judgment, saying she *“would not have been otherwise able to move forward. It sucks your energy out. And you have to deal with that”.*

Her daughter speaks perfect accent-free German. However, she still faces discrimination in school *“She'd be called "Serbian gypsy". But she is strong. And that is what makes also the difference to cope with it.”*

### **How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

#### **Do you see yourself as one?**

*“I don't see myself as an immigrant, but I am also not an expat. I think this notion of immigrant and expat is not fair. Good foreigner and then there is immigrant...”*

#### **Do you feel integrated?**

*“Honestly, after 20 plus years, I cannot say that when I go to Belgrade I have 100% a sense of belonging. I have lived in two other countries before coming to Austria. But I decided to make a home wherever I was. I feel integrated here because it's where my life is”.*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

Quality, education, performance, constant learning, determination, strong will, networking.

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

*“Through the network. That was my Vitamin B.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

Education and quality is what will get you further. *“In a professional environment, if the employer is an Austrian, then if you are an Austrian, you are good until you prove yourself bad. If you have a migration background, you need to first prove yourself good. And you just have to accept that and adapt. “*

### **Future trends**

Overall Alecsandra G. says that Austria has developed for the better in the past 15 years. Although it is hard to settle in, with a strong will and determination, one can achieve success. She sees that her daughter is in search of her identity, being partly Austrian, partly Serbian. *“She speaks accent free German and is seen as an Austrian, however, “she is very proud of her background.”* Alecsandra believes that this kind of mentality will change how future generations perceive foreigners or migrants. She is confident that the future generations will shape a better society as well as a better business environment.

### **SUMMARY**

Alecsandra G. is characterized by a strong will to show her worth and for her sense of responsibility to take care of her daughter. In the beginning it was very challenging, however, after her studies in Austria she managed to acquire a job thanks to the professional network of which she is a member. She believes that strength, ambition, competence and performance are key factors to achieving career levels and she constantly helps other women to reach their professional goals. She is a mother, a professional woman and a mentor.

Her strong will and sense of determination played a great role in fighting prejudice or discrimination based on age or migration background. For her, being part of a network brings

a lot of energy from the people she admires and she considers networking as a source of constant learning.

### **8.3 Case Study 3\_ Michelle D., American**

#### **Background:**

Michelle D. is a US citizen living in Austria for the past 18 years. She has two international MBA degrees, one in Finance at the Pepperdine University, School of Business and Management in the US and one in Economics and Law at the EBS University in Germany.

Her first international experience was in Germany, where she did an internship at the Commerzbank. She speaks English, Russian and German.

She is the youngest out of eight children, five of which went to college and pursued higher studies. She is married to a Turkish person and has two daughters. She became a mother when she was 40. She is now a part-time consultant and a full-time mom.

#### **Parents:**

Her father worked for the Government and her mother was a sales person.

#### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Work. She came to Austria in 1997 because she had been offered a job through her MBA alumni network.

#### **Career path**

While she was in the US, she had a strong desire to work in Europe. She started applying for jobs outside the US but realized that companies needed to see her. She had to be visible to the market and show her commitment. Faxing CVs was insufficient and ineffective. So she flew to Budapest. Ten days later she received an offer from her previous US employer to go to Russia and work there.

The international MBA had opened up the way to international business and work. After one year in Russia she had acquired extensive experience worth four years of work in HR, finance, accounting and investment. Through the MBA alumni network she was then able to find a job in Vienna.

While in Vienna she joined the professional women's career network where she volunteered and was a mentee in their mentoring program. *"It was almost like a full time job. I learned a*

*lot through the mentoring program there. I developed my soft skills a lot: listening, challenging, I also learned to be softer, to ask the right questions and rather not to ask WHY but HOW. The mentoring program has really complemented my hard skills. ”*

Her first job was as a controller for an international corporation dealing in the Central and Eastern European region. After 3 years she changed into the media sector and worked for an international media company as Group Finance Director. The company helped set up joint ventures in the CEE region, would build them up and then sell them off. This job entailed 75% travel availability. She worked there for 7 years and was promoted every second year. In 2004 she continued her career in a communication company as Finance Director and International Operations and today works as a freelancer offering consultancy in finance, business development and investment as well as offering advice on startups and company exits. At the same time she is a mentor and coordinator of the mentoring program offered by the professional women's network.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*“When I became self-employed, it was challenging. I valued my worth based on the money I was making. All of a sudden, I had to let go of that, be a mom and rely on my husband. It was challenging, difficult. It took me years to adjust to that.”*

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

*Through networks*

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“I didn't feel discrimination in the job market, and actually I have never experienced that. Until I heard about that as being a constant issue women within our professional network were confronted with in their jobs. But I worked for a US company most of the time, so I was paid well and there was no gender discrimination either.*

*(....)*

*My background is mostly international. I have found it difficult to get into Austrian networks without the language. If my language was stronger I would be more active. And probably more accepted as well.*

*(...)*

*My kids don't have many Austrian friends. I think it's because they (the Austrians) are quite closed in. At the beginning I didn't believe it, but my opinion has evolved towards that. In my*



*district, the kids go to the schools their parents went to; they grow into these old patterns and they also have these snooty attitudes. My girls have Roman first names. By choice. For a purpose! Turks are so discriminated against. Don't do it. Our last name is not identifiable. They don't see it's of Turkish origin. Which is good. I don't want to cross that barrier.*

*(...)*

*Austrian society is conservative and protective- perception wise. But I am mostly on the outside. But the perception of the Austrian society is there. I don't have first hand experience but I try to avoid getting there."*

### **How do you perceive the notion of "migrant?"**

#### **Do you see yourself as one?**

*"I don't know. I perceive myself as an expat more. I didn't get the Austrian citizenship. My husband is in the process of getting it. But it's more of him running away from Turkey than it is wanting Austrian citizenship."*

#### **Do you feel integrated?**

*„We are more on the outside. We are in an international community more than in an Austrian one. I chose to put my kids in local schools in order to bridge our integration; because I don't like the feeling of being on the border. It's been difficult to integrate for myself. My kids have helped me a lot. They help me be more part of the community.*

*(...)*

*I also joined the career network because I wanted more contact with the outside world. Because in my previous jobs, my colleagues became the only people to talk to."*

### **Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*„Alumni Networks! -A very underused resource. Universities don't do enough. There is very much untapped potential. You find you only network with people in your class. You don't cross-fertilize it with other classes and years. If you were able to network with classes two years older and two younger than you, you can multiply that by a factor of four, which would give enormous exposure to untapped resources."*

*(...)*

*„I have strong ethical values (corporate ethics and morals). That was very appreciated in my job. I've had that core principle all my life.*

*(...)*

*And mentoring: Identify your strengths, learn the language, know the market. With a mentor you are also helped to identify people to connect with the right ones to get a job. Identify your skills, look for market trends and find what fits with your core values and skills. You will then find the job you look for.”*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career, in Austria?**

*„I always believed that my performance was my key driver. And I worked very hard to achieve high performance. In my own experience, Vitamin B was not a key factor.*

*In my experience, you either shine or don't. I always thought it was due to performance. It wasn't because if I knew this person, I'd get that job. Locally however, I heard it is otherwise. I prefer the first model.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*„First of all, I would encourage women to work early in their careers and have children later. Just because you need to save your money. The earlier you start saving, the better off you are in the future. Save your money! Don't buy that pair of shoes. You already have two. The pension funds are not there for you. So, save early. Every month.*

*Secondly, it's performance. Do not expect anything. Do not work as though you are working in a socialized country. Do not expect things from your company. Work ruthlessly because you want to improve yourself. Serve yourself first. Do a great job because it makes you feel better. Don't get caught up in what people are doing. Focus on yourself. Do the best you can. Do your best. It's a key thing. And try not to listen to all the rumblings on the side. When there's a smoking community in your office, that clique often has info before anybody else. And they laugh and all. The smoking clique can make you feel left out at times but try to shush that away. If you do your best, then you will stand out. And you don't have to go home after eight hours. Don't be scared to work ten hours a day. In Vienna everybody goes home at 1pm on Friday. I was shocked. At McDonalds you can check out, yes. But if you're a professional, don't expect to work 38.5 hours per week. If you want to progress put in the extra hours... because that's how you float to the top!*

*As soft skill, don't tap. if you don't write well, type well, don't expect you can catch up. And if there is something important, don't put it in an email. Call. Pick up the phone. Don't send emotional charged emails. It's shooting yourself in the foot!”*

## **SUMMARY**

Michelle D. is a very driven person who was able to combine career and family by knowing what she wanted in life and planning for it. Financially, she was very well valued and always knew her worth when negotiating, not expecting anything less. As a controller and financial expert, she gained a reputation of trust, being very reliable and driven. Her successful career was also defined by having been visible in the field she wanted to work in. She sees the importance of being part of networks and helping and encouraging other women to pursue their careers. In her case, she is happy she was able to show her worth and prove her competence at an early age so that, by the time she had children, she could easily enjoy that time and then return back to her professional career, having worked hard in making a name for herself. She is a woman in search of constant learning, looking for market trends and is there where she wants to be visible and where she knows she can make an impact. Her long work experience was built on ethical values and principles which she sees as the basis for a successful long-term career.

She perceives herself as an expat, although she has lived in Austria for almost 20 years. She does not see herself as an immigrant because she does not have Austrian citizenship. Although she feels somewhat integrated, she does not have the sense of belonging to an Austrian community. Her children go to a public school in order to allow a more open environment and help them integrate in Austria; however, she has learned that Austrian children do not mingle so much with internationals, acting more within their own groups and being relatively closed.

## **8.4 Case Study 4\_ Mary N, American**

### **Background:**

**Mary N.** is in her mid-40s, comes from the US, she studied Political Science and foreign languages in the US, with a major in Russian. Twelve years later she did a general MBA in business administration and management at the University of Minnesota, and has a post graduate certificate in Sustainability Leadership from the University of Cambridge. She does not have Austrian citizenship because she does not want to give up her American citizenship. She speaks English, German and Russian. She is married, has two children and works for an international paper company as Sustainability & Marketing Stream Lead.

**Parents:**

Her father was an engineer and her mother an accountant.

**Reason for coming to Austria**

Love. During an exchange study year she lived in Vienna and met her future husband in the process. She then moved to Vienna in 1994.

**Career path**

Mary N. had started since early age to earn her own money, *„my parents taught me to be independent since childhood. If I wanted to buy something, my parents would say, get a job, work for it and buy it yourself. So I started baby-sitting.“*

*„My first job in Vienna was at the WU. I looked into their MBA programs. I made an appointment with the program director saying I'm interested in doing an MBA, but actually I was looking for a job. But that was the only way to get to the right people. So, I told him that I was interested in working for the University of Economics in Vienna. That's how I got my first job. I learnt German while there and reached fluency after 2.5 years. (...) I define fluency "to be able to complain on time. To be able to defend yourself".*

After being at the WU for three years, she then got a job at the US Embassy in Vienna. At that time she joined a professional women's career network through which she was connected with someone that was looking for a person to work at the embassy. She worked there as a conference manager on a one-year assignment. After that, she sent three CVs to international companies; one computer company offered her a job. *“I stayed there for three years but I didn't like the company culture. I was on several occasions told “we do things differently here. This is Austria, not the global headquarters. – kind of reminding me of the way I was thinking”. My next job, I got through connections. I started at one of the top ten PR agencies in Austria. I was given my own car, team and international projects. I was just under 30 when I did my MBA and the agency wasn't happy about it. I quit and then it was hard to find a job. I was just under 30, I was married, had weird studies in US, it was hard. I was overqualified for all the easy jobs and under qualified for those I wanted to do. I wasn't even getting interviews. At that time, Austria didn't know what an MBA degree was. As I couldn't find a job, I joined my husband's company, a recruitment company. But I got bored. So, I looked again. It worked. I started at an Austrian*

*jewelry company that was working globally. However, again, I didn't like the company culture and the work environment so I left after two years.*

*In 2006 I had then found the right company for me and have been there for almost nine years now. I was promoted three times since then.*

*(...) I applied at this international company thanks to an MBA connection I had made during my studies“.*

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*There aren't many women at top management. At middle management, you see some, but above that, no. At the whole level, there is probably 7-9% women in management across the company- the reason was that the industry is at fault- paper industry... I challenged the CEO once and asked my manager, what do you do for women in leadership and he explained that we do not have a specific program for them but we do have a guideline that for any job opening there has to be on the short list of five candidates, there has to be at least two women. But we always choose the best candidate for the job. (...) I am a firm believer of quotas. Before I didn't but now I do. Without quotas, it will not change.”*

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Mostly networking: professional networks and MBA networks

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“When I am at home in the US, I am European, when I am here, I am perceived as an American. My children feel more comfortable speaking German than English. They are not discriminated. They were born here. They are fully integrated. They don't have too much exposure to the US because we don't go as often. Every two years, maybe.”*

### **How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

#### **Do you see yourself as one?**

*“I am an immigrant. I am not an expat. Expats are not interested in staying long term, or in integrating or learning the language. But see, I am not ready to say that I'll be staying here forever. However, the term migrant is perceived as negative. But I can perceive the difference.”*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*“I feel quite integrated. It is easy to stay in international networks but if you are longer than seven years, I guarantee you will stay longer. So I pushed myself into integrating with Austrians as well. I have mostly Austrian friends. The international part is with the professional women network.”*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*„Self-motivation. Desire to continue to learn- “lebenslangen lernen”/ life-long learning, openness, to be open for other opportunities. I do not have the "fear of change" as Austrians do...Networking- best jobs I have found as well.”*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

*“It’s highly used here. Definitely. It’s not good. But that’s how it works.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Full integration! Learn the language as best you can, get to know the locals, don't stick to your cultural community, and challenge the status quo. And of course network. And the only way to get ahead is to do good and let people hear about it, talk about, show them. And what I've learned over the years, it's probably best if you didn't stick to only one network. You should network outside of your comfort zone. “*

**Future trends**

*“Earlier, it was easier to find a job. If you apply, for example now for a job advertisement in the newspaper, to get an interview- you really have to be in the industry. If you come from another industry and don't have that exact experience they look for, then you are most likely up against a few hundred other people applying for that position. You won't stand a chance. Now the best thing to do is network and the people there to know you. “*

**SUMMARY**

Mary N. had the challenge to find the right fit for her career. She got her jobs mainly through networking; however, it was difficult to work with the Austrian mindset which she found rather conservative, bureaucratic and inflexible. In order to add more value to her CV, she pursued

further studies and did an MBA in 2002. Later she wanted to do another one, but with two children at home, it would have been difficult for them. *“But honestly I don't need another degree. I have a bachelors, I have an MBA. It's a woman's thing, I guess. We need to do degrees to be valued more, somehow. I think an MBA helps to a certain degree. But if it's no longer current, not so sure. It was a personal goal. I am glad I had it. But I am thinking of joining a year long program on sales training offered by the company.”*

She believes in establishing a system of quotas to allow more room for women to advance in their career paths, seeing this as a necessary instrument to change the male-dominated culture at the top levels.

She understands that having a job with responsibilities comes with extra work at home. *“I work between 50-60 hours /week. It's hard to do that with a family. But if there's a team, it works. I work on average two nights per week at home. From 8:30pm till about midnight. Just to keep up with the emails. The job comes with stress and pressure, I guess. I get on average about 150-200 emails a day.”*

Had she stayed in the US, she is firmly convinced she would have reached a higher career level in a shorter period of time. *“I feel I would have had a better career if I had stayed in the US. I would have made advancements much faster than here...Cultural reasons as well, language wise too. ”*

In 1997 it was much easier to find a job. Nowadays she understands that it would be much more difficult to change to another field of work without prior experience. She believes in networking across different fields of interest and sees it as an effective tool to getting jobs.

## **8.5 Case Study 5\_ Laima S., Latvian**

### **Background:**

Laima S. is from Latvia, studied Economics and International Management and has completed a second degree in Law, at the same time. She was 21 when she finished her two bachelor degrees. She is a certified management accountant, holds a masters degree in Corporate Management and has done an internship in International Management and Marketing at the Saint Gallen University in Switzerland. She is now senior expert of corporate strategy at a large international company. She speaks Latvian, German, English, Italian, Russian, French and a bit of Spanish. She is in her late 30s.

**Parents:**

Both parents had academic degrees. Her father was one of the best engineers in Latvia and her mother was head of internal auditing at a local company.

**Reason for coming to Austria**

Work

**Career path**

After her internship at Saint Gallen University in Switzerland, Laima S. started her career as an auditor in Germany. *“I started in auditing for a company that needed Italian and Russian so I was able to get a visa as a Schlüsselkraft/ a key worker. I worked there for 2.5 years. But I realized that auditing was not enough for me.”*

Afterwards, she moved to Austria because she wanted to position herself strategically between Eastern and Western Europe, seeing the opportunity of using her language skills more. In 2005 she started as a Business Development Consultant for an oil company in Austria and later worked for 3.5 years as an International Financial Project Manager for the European Commission located in Brussels. Wanting to come back to Vienna, in 2011 she began working as a Regional Representative for the European Investment Bank and in 2013 she obtained the position of Senior Expert in corporate strategy at a company for which she had previously worked.

**Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*“I am a person that wants to try it all. The worst thing is to regret something you didn’t do. So, my surroundings pushed me. And my parents as well. Being a woman with a migration background has been very beneficial in the jobs I took. Because my bosses saw in me a person with a vision. And my coaches, of course they themselves feel better if they help.”*

**How did you acquire these jobs?**

Laima S. obtained most of her jobs due to her strong set of skills and, coupled with the post-masters study at St. Gallen in Switzerland, she believed that it was a change maker to getting visibility on the European market. Because her education was completed in Latvia, Laima also believes that her post-graduate degree helped her a lot as she would not have otherwise managed to work abroad. *“This internship was a main turning point for me because it opened a lot of*



*doors in Western Europe. I wouldn't have had it like that if I had come with a Latvian degree. I am quite aware of that. I didn't plan to leave Latvia. It just happened. My parents sent me to a German school so, I was lucky to have had this asset when I came here. It really helped a lot because Austria is a very conservative country.”*

She got her jobs by sending in applications and seeking coaches and mentors that she respected. Her strong CV and her ambition to perform, learn and be flexible at the same time, have helped her get the jobs to which she aspired.

**Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“Never. It would be different if I were just in a typical national company without foreigners though. I think that we are niche players. Foreigners fill gaps. In my career, gender or background doesn't matter. My parents taught me self-confidence. When I talked to chancellors or ministers, I approached them at the same level. I didn't see them based on their achievements but based on their personalities. My height helps also a lot too. I am quite tall. Men are quite intimidated by that. I can do it pretty well and it comes through.”*

**How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

*„It's pretty negative. There are many qualified people who unfortunately are picking strawberries. Why aren't they better positioned? In order to do so, then you create your own company.*

*Am I an immigrant? I define myself as a European citizen. I've been living in five different countries. I don't see myself as an immigrant but as a European. And we all have equal chances. It depends on what you make of it.*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*“I feel European.”*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“What I realized that was important was, flexibility, try new things, don't be afraid to ask. The worst thing that can happen is to get a no. After five NO's you get one yes. Real supporters for me were my coaches, my mentors, who believed in me more than I did myself.”*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career, in Austria?**

*“You need to be at the right place at the right moment, or have the right connections. Many say that if you are at the top, you are not there because of your performance but because of your connections. So it's very political if you want to be at the top levels. That's why quotas would help.*

*Some say that quotas will not help get jobs by merit. But how do you define merit? How many shops you opened? How many sales you made? That's the male characteristics. A female is much more social, more focused on cooperation, teamwork understanding others- so how do you measure that? For me it's not so much on measuring according to the same criteria as men. Different qualities for different genders. Giving this chance for diversity of 50% would also give women a chance to have a saying in a business environment. At this point, it's only male.*

*(...)*

*If you are only one woman between the guys, you end up being a guy. You are a minority. But with quotas, this can be more balanced. And with that there is more diverse input.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Be courageous, be open and flexible. Never be afraid of approaching high-level people and talk to them. The worst thing that can happen is that they say no. I worked a lot on my self-confidence and my own self-esteem. Because if I cannot sell myself, then why would someone else be sure of my own qualities? And mentors. They helped me a lot. They feel also “geschmeichelt”/proud if you ask for advice. You look up to this person, you tell him/her you are my example and you ask for help and they usually say yes. I identify mentors and coaches who will have reached levels I would like to reach, for positions I'd like to aim for. And I say, you are always defined by, or rather you grow to the levels of the people you are surrounded by. If you are surrounded by immigrants at lower levels, you will stay there. If you are surrounded by immigrants at high levels, you will be there... Mentoring, asking for advice, asking for support. If you really want to achieve something, the whole world will help. If you do it alone, as a woman, it's much less likely.*

*(...)*

*Many of my coaches were men because they are not so afraid of this competition as compared to women. Men are much more competitive than women. They are not afraid as we are. I think there is a lack of self-confidence with women. We tend to underestimate ourselves.”*

## **Future trends**

Laima S. perceives development for women at the top as very slow. She is an advocate for quotas at high management levels, knowing that otherwise a diverse environment will not be created any time soon. As those levels are largely male-dominated, it is difficult to break the glass ceiling. In addition, she sees women as greatly underestimating themselves. In addition, they are not very supportive of each other and do not foster a network environment at work. *“We used to have a lady lunch at my previous job and we were just a few. We were all women of a certain management level. But when I brought in someone else, who was at a different level, she was rejected. That is pity. How can you get at higher levels if you are not supported?”*

## **SUMMARY**

Laima S. has managed to reach her career goals by always seeking people in the business world that she admired and who would agree to be her mentors. She was not afraid to ask for help or to approach high level senior management in order to learn from the best. She also worked a lot on her self-esteem and self-confidence and always went for the jobs she wanted. She did not stick to one job, but stayed flexible and tried new things. *“Often the best move to make when you work in a company, in order to get in higher positions, is to work somewhere else for a while and then come back with a better and stronger set of skills and experience. At that time you can jump two levels higher”.*

In her work experience, being a woman and a migrant have always been perceived as assets and have facilitated her move up the career ladder.

She does not have children by choice, but believes that combining career and family is possible if you make certain plans and compromises. *“You can have a family but then you don't see them as often. You get a nanny then. For example a friend of mine has three children but also three nannies. So, I suppose you have to make certain choices in life to combine career and family.”*

The company she currently works at has actively promoted diversity in management for the past eight years, seeing it as a necessity, not as a marketing activity, and recognizing that different perspectives have always driven the company towards successful and sustainable growth.

## **8.6 Case Study\_6 Corrine G, American**

### **Background**

Corrine G. is a US citizen and has lived in Europe for more than 20 years, settling first in Prague and then coming to Austria. She did her bachelor degree in Political Sciences and International Relations at the University of Tulsa, US. She then did a masters degree in Diplomacy and International Relations at the University of Georgetown, US followed by a post-graduate degree at the Institute of Sciences in Austria. She is in her 40s, is married, has no children and speaks English, German, Czech, Russian, Slovak and French. She is currently Chief Diversity Officer at an Austrian bank.

### **Parents:**

Her mother was Czech and a refugee in 1946 in Austria. In 1960 she settled in the US. Her father was born to a Czech mother but was a US citizen. They both had academic degrees.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Work

### **Career path**

Corrine G. acquired her first job in Austria as a Political Advisor for the Balkan region. She happened to be in the right place at the right time for that. The job found her while she was doing her post-graduate studies in Austria. That took her to Brussels where she worked for three years. At that time she was 30. She married a Czech person and sought a job in Prague. Thanks to her connections and network that she had built up, her boss was able to connect her to a corporation in the banking industry. She worked there for six years. After that, she switched within the same corporation to be in a more international environment at the Vienna headquarters. She has been in this role for almost 3 years now.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

Corrine G. was always sure of what her career goals were and where she wanted to go. She was inquisitive, determined, she had the right skills and competencies and always networked. Throughout her career in Austria, she found the conservative Austrian mentality to be a challenge; however, she also sees it as an opportunity to create new forward-thinking policies

for inclusive business and has made it her job to create opportunities for women in management positions.

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Serendipity. Being in the right place at the right time, but also networking and taking initiatives to apply for jobs.

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“No. Not at all. But in the Czech Republic, yes. There, we had an Austrian CEO and one other Austrian board member. Other than that, there was no cultural diversity because it was a local bank. I speak Czech, I could pass as a Czech. I do have an accent, yes, I also come from a different culture. There, I didn't feel integrated. I know the feeling because at times I felt isolated. They didn't do it intentionally. I was just so different, culturally. And I thought, is it me? You start thinking you are doing something wrong. But they are just closed off people. And the Czech people didn't really appreciate US Americans because they saw us as “well... I don't need some American to tell me what to do” kind of way. I had to show that I wasn't that person. It was tough. In Austria however, here, we are in a culturally diverse team. I don't get that feeling of isolation here. That's why I wanted to be more in an international environment. It's different at a corporate level. Our language is English and the environment is very diverse. The nationality part is an advantage. Because we want to be more international.*

*(...)*

*I was talking once to the head of HR of one of our bank subsidiaries in Vorarlberg about diversity, ethnic diversity, which is also an added advantage for our clients so we want to have employees that can better understand our clients. Meaning, we want employees who can service different ethnical customers. What I was surprised that this HR manager said- they had a candidate for a position for a branch manager and she was of Turkish origin, but he said that there is doubt if someone with “Migrationshintergrund” can have a management position. And I said tell that to the global CEO of Coca Cola who is Muhtar Kent, who is of Turkish origin. I am sure he would love to hear that! So, you see the difference in mentality. I was shocked when I heard that. They are dealing there with a set of preconceived notions.*

*If you are in a very traditional Austrian company with little diversity then there are still stereotypes. The challenge here is how to work with these leaders in this kind of environment to help them overcome these stereotypes, to start looking at the competencies and qualities, not*

origin. That's the real challenge, not just of women themselves, international women, but of organizations.

And then, there is this age issue. With women, you can never win with age, really. Because first of all, you are too young and do not have the experience, then you are supposedly in this ideal age and then that's dangerous because you might want to have kids and so on. And then you hit that age when you are too old. On my CV, I just have my name. When I was born, or where I am from and whether I am married or not, I won't put it on the CV. Only my name. “

**How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

I am here. I have a job. I am an expat probably. I wouldn't classify myself as an immigrant or migrant. I came from some place. I wasn't running from anything. I am here because I wanted an adventure. I am not here because I have to. In the US, you become an American and you are an American. My mom still speaks English with an accent, but no one asks her "where are you from?" She is seen as an American. No one asks her about her migration background. Because in the end we all have one. It's just a question of how far back you go. My relatives who live in Stockerau, they also came from somewhere else. So I think this is the danger with the terminology. Because once you start using that terminology, you are already labeling. And if you say I'm an expat, an international expat and you are seen as somebody with a “Migrationshintergrund”, then you are already creating bias. I am actually a migrant if you look at it, because I love living in different countries. If I got offered my dream job in Bangkok, I am there. You go where the jobs are. In the US it's common practice. I think with the millennial people, people are more connected; the technology that connects us all will change that. The world is getting smaller and I think those people, the more exposed they are the more they will change the culture. At that point, we will all be coming from somewhere. So, the question is, how can we move more from this labeling culture? For the media is for example to stop using this vocabulary. It starts with talking to the respectable media, only the problem is that people read more the Kronen Zeitung. They are misusing the terminologies. They should stop using those labels. It all takes time but there should be more open discourse about it.”

**Do you feel integrated?**

“Yes.”

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“Don’t give up. Work hard for your goals. Seek mentors and role-models. And network as much as possible. Women should help each other more.”*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career, in Austria?**

*“Austria is a very conservative country. You need to know the right people and make yourself visible in order to make it to the top. Unfortunately Vitamin B is very common.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Role-modeling. But it depends what really motivates somebody. If I were a young woman from Syria, or Turkey, with an education, and ambition (you need it), I don't know if I would stay here. If I truly had ambition, and I truly had this drive, I'm going to make it, then I'd look into where I could get that in another country. This is probably counterproductive, but the question is how conducive is the environment here for that? That's not my advice really, but just don't ever give up. And don't settle for anything less. I think we need new success stories, of women migrants who have become successful. It's possible. You can achieve it and if you have a dream, it might not be easy, but nothing really is. That's probably easier said than done. In a small town, it's more difficult.*

*(...)*

*Mentoring is also very important. There are also programs for that. But you don't really need a program for that. For example, men don't really have programs for that. Men just naturally seek out mentors. Do women network? Not as much as they should. They don't make time for it. And that is very important.*

*(...)*

*Women with children? - For me for example, I didn't want children by choice. Because I wanted to pursue my career. But there are also such women who have done it. It's possible. There are also opportunities to work part time, job sharing, flexible working etc. There is also this method: management by objective. You do it wherever, whenever, but I expect it delivered on time. That helps people with families. And as well, men can do that. Because it takes two to raise children. It's not just a woman's job. It takes two to have kids, so there should be two to raise them. In Sweden, if you don't take leave of absence to raise your newly born, it is perceived as negative. As if you didn't really looked after your family. Here, it's like the woman's job, still seen very conventional.”*

## **Future trends**

*“Austria is a very traditional country. In general, women in management positions are very few, especially at board levels in publicly traded companies, Here, my reading is that Austria is a very traditional society. If you look at the Austrian companies, it's the old boys network. By that I mean I talk to young Austrian men who even complain about this old boys network because even for them it's hard. You have to have the right political views and so on. There is a complete lack of diversity.*

*In our board, we have ethnic diversity, but not gender diversity. Three out of six are non-Austrians. The fact that 50% of the board is different it changes dynamics, because you have diversity in thinking. It's no longer the same small group of guys. You know, if you have decision makers who all think alike, who are from the same economic and social background, that's where you have the most danger of group thinking. And if no one is challenging the conventional wisdom, that's when you get the mess like the Lehman brothers, because no one is challenging the culture. That's why the European Commission wants quotas. It's not because it's not fair, but it's a matter of corporate governance. And it's good for the business.*

*So when will things change? You see more and more disruptive businesses. It's coming soon. The rapid technological development and if you look at the younger generations- they will want to be in challenging environments.*

*(...) I am a strong believer in quotas! In the US we had this in the late 60s, which gave access to ethnic minorities, women, people of color, Native Americans. At that time, it was a white male dominated society, but because of affirmative action, it really opened the door. Do we need it now still? No, but it really broke the ceiling and it gave access to many talented people such as Barack Obama and Condoleezza Rice. They would not have had that opportunity had it not been for a quota type of system. I am for quotas because despite progress made, we still have the glass ceiling. And the higher up you go, the worse it gets. I talked to a lot of younger women who were saying "I am a smart woman, I am against quotas because I know my worth and I will make it based on competence and skill". But that will get you as far as a certain job position. And then something funny happens. You talk to women who are now over 40, in their late 40 and when you speak of these management levels, you get all these women who are now for quotas all of a sudden because these are the ones who thought that they will make it and they will advance, but when they wanted to reach the top level, they hit the ceiling. So now they wonder, who are those people getting these job positions then? So yes, we need quotas. Do we need them long-term? No, but it changes culture. It drives culture change.”*



## SUMMARY

Corrine G. is a strong and determined career woman. She believes that diverse teams work more effectively and encourages women to look for mentors in order to reach their career goals. She believes in the possibility of combining career and family; however, her choice was not to have children. She has seen many women who can manage both and feels that women should do so if they wish. She perceives Austrian companies as conservative but sees a dynamic cultural shift in the future where small players will need to adapt in order to be able to compete.

*“Austrian companies will have to compete. Two years ago, I was walking by Stephansplatz and there was a rally of FPÖ. H.C.Strache [the chairman of the Freedom party] was talking about competitiveness. And why Austria isn't competitive anymore. Because of bureaucracy, high taxation and so on. True. But, when he started going on about the foreigners issue, with the borders open and people coming from Prague, Slovakia and Poland and Hungary, basically undercutting and asking for less salaries, Strache contradicted himself. Because these people are competing. That is competition. His argument didn't make sense anymore. If a small Austrian company is getting worried, this is what's happening- a globalization of the market and then it's going to have to change. And whoever doesn't like it they have to accept it. Otherwise they will not be able to compete.”*

Corrine has seen that women do not network as much as they should. She therefore endeavors to change this trend by facilitating such networks within the company in which she works in order to provide more chances for women to advance in their jobs. She believes that female quotas would drive change at a cultural level, taking the US as a successful example. She also believes in the blind CV practice from the US, which reduces unconscious bias:

*“Because it works like this. If I am hiring a manager and am working with a headhunter, they send me a stack of fifty CVs for example. And I only see qualifications. So I pick the top ten out of them. And then I invite the people for the interview and then I find out that the most impressive CV is a 50-year-old woman with a headscarf. But then, because I am already impressed with her qualifications, that bias is no longer dominating. In Austria, you first see a picture, then a name, and if you don't look Austrian or the name doesn't sound Austrian, that's unconscious bias. You might think you are not a discriminating person, but subconsciously it happens. So, the challenge is not just so much getting up on the high levels but how to get through these first waves of recruitments.*

## 8.7 Case Study 7\_ Laura C., Romanian

### Background:

Laura C. is Romanian, she studied Economics at the University of Vienna, has a Masters degree in Executive Management and is a certified coach, trainer and mediator. She works as a Marketing Consultant and is an associated partner at an Austrian consulting company. She speaks Romanian, German and English. She is married and has one child. After 11 years, she is still a Romanian citizen, choosing not to renounce her nationality. She is in her mid-30s.

### Parents:

They both have academic degrees

### Reason for coming to Austria

She came to study in 2004

### Career path

Throughout her student years, Laura took different jobs to support herself. Her mom always encouraged her to be independent "*never allow a man to buy you clothing. Be independent*".

She worked as a marketing assistant and later as assistant to the CEO. After that, she became a freelancer in marketing in order to obtain a work permit.

Subsequently she got a permanent position at the consultancy company she was freelancing for and was promoted several times. Eventually, she was offered the position of senior partner. Her jobs were found by being inquisitive, active scouting and making enquiries. She never got replies whenever she applied for jobs via newspaper ads.

She became a senior partner by showing resilience, bringing ideas and value to customers and by seeking mentoring and further courses to deepen her knowledge in the area of marketing.

### Challenges and successes throughout the professional career

Since becoming a mother, she has encountered more skepticism from her customers. "*Customers really ask me if I have children, before they want me on the project. They don't like it. Once a lady asked me whether I had children and I was happy she asked me that. I shared a bit about the joy of having him. But she said: It's not good if you have a kid. You won't deliver. I got mad and I told her :Listen, I have a child. I am not stupid, or retard, or handicapped. I*

*have a kid and I can be a mother and a businesswoman. I got the project in the end. She was only the intermediary. The project had a certain goal to achieve. I tripled that turnover”.*

**How did you acquire these jobs?**

Personal network

**Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“No, not so much in the career, but in the university. They were making fun of my accent. But that only pushed me more to be perfect at it. (...) Our son doesn’t have these issues. He is Austrian. The name is Austrian. People don't know him to be Romanian. But he plays in the kindergarten with Austrians and they learn Romanian words. And he knows also a Czech person and they learn to use Czech and the same with a Polish child. They don’t care where everyone is from.”*

**How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

*“In Romania I am a foreigner. My home is Austria. Theoretically I am an immigrant. I was born somewhere and came to another country. I am European citizen living where I want to live. Do we need a label? Ok, but this word is not used properly. It has nothing to do with what we're made of. At the end of the day we are humans. Why would you label people? I don't like when people talk about immigrants as if they were killers, terrorists. What people don't see is that immigrants recreated the cultures we live in today. It would be so boring without them. Or without us.*

*(...)*

*I myself don't differentiate between people based on background. But see them all as people.”*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*„I feel comfortable here. I don't know what integrated is. I pay a lot of taxes, I function in the system. Is this integration? I have Austrian friends, I speak the language. Is this integration? I don't know. I feel comfortable. I feel good. And if I don't feel good anymore, I will leave.*

*(...) I have a mix of friends: Austrians and internationals. I avoided having only Romanian groups or living in parallel societies. “*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“What I learned from my parents: don't give up if you have a dream, go for it. But before you act, think first and make a plan. And see any challenge as a step, a step towards something better. If people laughed at my German, I learned to be better at it. You need to take this in a good way. To fight for what you want to achieve. That is what drove me. It's a mindset. To overcome things. Another influencing thing is the people around me. I am more aware now of the people I spend my time with. And I also appreciate more. And then, very important is the education. You cannot expect a huge job, with medium or average performance.”*

*As well, my personal network has helped, but I am looking to join some professional international ones. But I haven't had the time with family and all.*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

*„Yes. Everyone uses it. Doesn't work without. But every country has that. But what I learned in case for women, I learned that vitamin B might open a door, an opportunity, but it's up to you to advance from there. Vitamin B won't help further.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“I assist recruiting teams. Companies get the CVs and they think, would this person fit into my culture? This is where the issue starts. It's not the name, it's not the person, but they ask themselves should I waste my time integrating this person, or should I take someone who is already integrated here and not waste time or money on that. This is how they think. But on the other side, if you are a student and you know you are faced with that, why didn't you get into networks, why didn't you volunteer to do this or that, open your doors, go to student organizations. You can't expect to study five years and have no work experience. There are many who fight for the same jobs. You need to stay competitive. Same with job applications. You need to customize that based on where you apply. You cannot have the same one for every company. Students need to go to career fairs. Take your CV there, check it by experts, be tacky, be crazy, don't give up. Work on it. If you don't do that, of course you can't complain that you don't find anything. But you have to be creative in getting out there on the market.*

*For women migrants in general, make sure you are very good at what you do. Learn constantly. Never stop doing that. Learn German, because you understand the culture and people differently and to stay true to who you are. Take it one step at a time and do it right. Develop a good network and a support system. If you are a mother, tap into the resources you have:*

*friends, mothers, grandmothers who can help with babysitting. You don't have to be home 24 /7. That way you can combine career and family."*

### **Future trends**

Laura C has a positive attitude that the future generations will change mindsets regarding migration backgrounds. She sees them as people who will learn to value others for their skills and character, not to judge them based on their origin. She perceives Austrian companies as conservative and neither supportive nor trusting of working mothers. She stresses therefore networking at any level and as much visibility on the market as possible. Especially for newcomers, students or migrants in search of jobs, she emphasizes the importance of volunteering, networking, mixing in the work environment in which one is interested.

Although she does not have time for extracurricular activities, Laura wants to make time for involvement in women's networks.

### **SUMMARY**

Laura C. came to Austria to study. Having been taught to always be independent, she had an innate drive to seek opportunities to earn money. As a student, she did part-time jobs and networked within her personal circles, always inquiring about new job openings and making sure people knew her career interests. She was driven by ambition and perseverance; she constantly studied and took further courses to advance her skills and competencies. She saw challenges as opportunities and was always able to overcome them successfully by not settling for less. When she became a mother, she perceived clients as judgmental and skeptical towards her performance; however, her strong will and determination has proven them wrong. *"In the end, what matters is what you deliver. And customers were pleased with the results."*

She has not dealt with discrimination based on her migration background, but rather based on gender and family status.

## **8.8 Case Study 8\_ Natalia V., Entrepreneur, Russian**

### **Background:**

**Natalia V.** is 26, comes from Russia and has lived in Austria for more than five years. She is married to an Austrian and is a serial entrepreneur, meaning she is involved in more than one business. She studied International Business in England and holds a masters degree in

Advanced International Studies from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. She speaks Russian, German, English, Polish and French.

### **Parents:**

Her parents were both educated engineers and she was already involved in the family business from the age of 14. She learned entrepreneurship from early age.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Studies and later stayed for family reasons

### **Career path**

Natalia V. first worked in Moscow as a Junior Auditor and later as an Investment Analyst in January 2009 in Vienna. Between 2005 and 2010 she consulted on business development for a global company working in social games, which are online games played through social networks. Throughout her studies she had founded several companies in Moscow and Austria. After graduating from the Diplomatic Academy, because she could not find a job, she founded a company in the real estate sector. *“I was looking for a job after I graduated, but I couldn't find any. I was looking in consulting, banking. I had some interviews. But I was comparing salaries and level of position with Russia and it was not comparable. I decided to start my own experience. I also had job experience before. I worked for a year in a venture fund and for my father for 7 years.”*

Because she was unable to get a work permit, she felt led to establish a company and become an entrepreneur, seeing it as an opportunity to make herself visible on the job market and create an international network around herself. She founded a company in the real estate sector as well as an online course for female entrepreneurs to help them avoid the obstacles she had encountered and to give them tips and tricks on how to become successful. She has had many appearances in newspapers and has become a recognized person in the startup scene. She does not consider working for someone else as she has realized that she would not be able to advance in her career as fast as she would like to, due to her age, gender and migration background.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*„Well, I didn't want to stand around until I got a job. I wanted to do something. I am not a person who lives like this. We heard so many things about starting a company in Austria that we decided to do it. The challenge then was that I was Russian, now it's because I am a woman. I find it worse somehow. The fact that I am a woman is worse than being a Russian. Because*

*of the industry I am in. Men don't take me seriously. Even in the startup community. It's a men's world. Being taken seriously is a really big thing. But it's not just an Austrian thing. I was in Prague at a real estate conference. People thought I 'd be someone's secretary. “*

*(...)*

*I do feel I am achieving my career goals through entrepreneurship. I think I will stick to this area now. My dream job? When there will be income. It's a process. I learned so much and now I have much more clue. So my next company will be even better. I continue founding until I have the money.”*

### **What jobs/ businesses did you create?**

*„I founded different businesses. I had a crowd-funding platform for social business in Russia for four years. And then we had a few e-commerce online sites. I founded a few companies: five-six companies. But now I have two running.”*

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*„I had no working permit either. My surname was also probably a problem. Seriously. I was 24, 25 getting engaged, foreigner, had no kids, so companies wouldn't hire me. I had a few interviews and one job offer. I had sent 25 CVs and the one job I got offered had very low salary. Now I think back and I wish I didn't spend those six months writing motivational letters. But I had to try.*

*(...)*

*When dealing with the administration processes I always take my husband along. Because he's Austrian and they treat us differently then. I was at the “Magistrat” alone a few times and they are not very nice. They completely treat you differently if you speak accent free German. And I do speak proper German. But they treat you differently. I can understand that these people have a lot of stress, but still.*

*In founding, I got all the services. MINGO gave us consulting too.”*

*(...)*

*The fact that I am a woman is worse than being a Russian. Because of the industry I am in. Men don't take me seriously.”*

### **How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

*“I see myself as an international person, as an expat who can live here today and tomorrow somewhere else.*

*I think... by people with international experience, I am perceived positively, but the others see me as negative. At first sight they always treat you like you are an immigrant, but once they get to know you, it gets better. But you always need to work on it extra. You need to draw a few keywords to accept you. If I say I studied at the diplomatic academy, the mindset changes. So you have to sell yourself a bit more. (...) I see an immigrant as a person who came here to get a better life. It's weird that they call people second generation still an immigrant. It's not a topic to me. They are fully integrated, born here, with Austrian nationality, and they still see them as immigrants. It's weird.*

*I think it's generally a negatively perceived term. It's selective negativity. If you are a rich Russian or Ukrainian they'd look at you differently then if you were an immigrant from the 10th district. So it's a very selective perception.”*

### **Do you feel integrated?**

*“I don't know. I left home when I was 16. I am not really integrated anywhere. I see myself as an international person, as an expat who can live here today and tomorrow somewhere else. I am quite ok. I speak German. I feel ok. Privately I feel very good here.”*

### **Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“Education, for sure. Learn how to deal with different people and cultures... Failing and then getting up and going further. Dealing with failure is a big thing. I failed many times. It's a process.*

*And networking. But women are not very supportive of women, unfortunately. Men network differently. Generally, when I have to meet a woman, there is competition. Even in the startup community. It's something to improve. I feel that. But men unite and help each other more. Networks help for sure. Very important. But also very targeted. In the beginning we were going to random events, but with time, you get more focused and selective.”*

### **What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

*“With most of the stuff here, you need that. Without referrals it doesn't work. Even with customers. Even with the smallest stuff. Even with funding. I got a feeling that it is also the case.*



*It's better that you are referred. Everything. Finance. But on the other hand, it's a small country. I understand. In Russia, if you are not referred to, it's not a big deal.*

*(...)*

*I think in the beginning you need connections. You need to know the right people. I think I would find a job now much easier because I know people.“*

### **What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Work internationally! Build an international network! Learn German!”*

### **Future trends**

*“I have the feeling that unless you found a company, you won't reach the career levels you wish for as a person with migration background and in an employment position. Honestly I think here you need to be about 20 years in a company to reach a certain level and then you get there and you are with a salary of 5-6.000 € and that's basically the maximum you can hope for. For me that is not a big incentive. And I know people with migrant background because they reached a certain level and cannot get higher. Because it's political. Nepotism plays a big role up there. So, you'd have to change companies to move up. I think that's weird. I don't want to play along that system.”*

### **SUMMARY**

Natalia V. is a young, ambitious, well-educated Russian woman who has managed to create her own career path when she could not find it in the job market. Even though she is only 26, she started her work experience from a young age, learning the ins and outs of entrepreneurship from her father and then later throughout her studies, when she founded several small companies. She is married to an Austrian and learned quickly after coming to Austria that her accent in German was perceived negatively. She has encountered discrimination based both on her migration background and as a female entrepreneur on several occasions and sees it quite often in her environment. When dealing with the state administration, having her husband with her helps to avoid discrimination and delayed processes.

She believes that women do not network as much as they should and they do not help each other enough. Even though men are also competitive, they help each other, nonetheless, and nurture a more inclusive environment.

Natalia has built a strong network and believes that if she now wanted to, she could get a job far more easily than when she first applied. The key to a successful career is networking, education and speaking the language.

## **8.9 Case Study 9\_ Ioana S. Entrepreneur, Romanian**

### **Background:**

Ioana S. is Romanian, she came to Austria in 2009 to study Communications in German at the University of Vienna. She is now 26 and is an entrepreneur, passionate for Marketing and Technology. She speaks Romanian, German and English.

### **Parents:**

Both parents have academic degrees.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Studies

### **Career path**

Even though she is only 26, Ioana S. tried to be at the heart of the job market from the beginning, learning how to network from close friends who were already active in it. She had a close mentor thanks to whom, she was able to make herself visible. While studying, she worked at several student jobs such as fundraising for an NGO and volunteering for an organization that brought inspiring international speakers to Vienna, where she later became the Head of Communication. Later she worked in a call center and then for an advertising agency where she stayed for almost two years as the Head of Social Media department. Before she became an entrepreneur, she worked for two years at a state business incubator as a consultant in social media and marketing.

She chose to be an entrepreneur because she did not like the working environments in the companies in which she had worked. Listening to other people's experiences, it seemed that it was not better elsewhere either. So she decided to become her own boss by choice. Recently she co-founded a platform which features inspiring entrepreneurs who provide information and answer questions. At the same time she started several projects in the area of food culture and one in coding for women. She also does marketing consulting as a freelancer. She would consider going back to being an employee if she came across a company that shared her values.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

She was fortunate to have studied German in Romania and to have been able to get jobs when she needed extra money. She was very determined to be proactive and, even though some student jobs were not very interesting, she accumulated a great deal of work experience by deciding to do those jobs anyway. Thanks to her partner, she learned that networking was the key to achieving more and even though she was shy and did not yet see her worth, she began to get more involved outside of her Romanian network and volunteer at different events. *“I was lucky that my partner taught me about networking and taught me how to do it. I had an example to follow. A mentor. I was shy, I had nothing to say about myself. I was only a student. But, I went with him to events and I learned how to talk. People got to know me because they were seeing me everywhere. So, I was visible.”*

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Ioana got her jobs through proactive searching in newspapers, online portals and networking.

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

Ioana S. did not encounter much discrimination based on her migration background, but more due to her youth, gender and expected performance, which made it necessary to always prove herself. At the state company she worked at, she says *“The boss was female. They wanted to get international people there, so the team was very diverse. Outside of that, everyone was Austrian. The cultural background was not a disadvantage but the age was. Most of my colleagues were around 50. I had to prove myself constantly. All the time. The company was also very bureaucratic. It wasn't a very friendly environment. I found it also harder to negotiate with my female boss. Rational arguments had no value for her. I didn't get a raise there. It was more conservative. (...) Discrimination at work? Based on age and gender. Our female boss favored others. In an argument, her favorite person also won. He was a male. And he got a lot of power, responsibilities and authority. He advanced faster.*

*(...) If I am outside of the networks, I can see that people keep the distance. And it's based on my accent and on my name. Like, for example when my laptop got stolen and I received a notification from Apple that the laptop was found. I sent this info to my business partner. She is Austrian. In the meanwhile I called the police and informed them. I asked for help. He was not very encouraging and not helping. And my business partner, she asked for help for me and the police sent a car there. So, It is influencing whether you have an accent or not. “*

**How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

*“I guess I'm an immigrant, although I don't really like this term, I have negative associations with it. It somehow draws a line between the locals and "the others". I see myself rather as a temporary Viennese not born here. Not sure how much time it takes for an immigrant to be considered integrated.”*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*“Yes, I feel integrated. I speak the language. I have a network of friends and professionals. I feel I can handle life better than most young Austrians because of the networks.”*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*“Networking -one of the most important ones. Determination- do it- hands on mentality. My cultural background helped me a lot somehow. Because us Romanians tend to be louder, more active, energetic, Austrians are more relaxed, “gemütlich”. The fact that I come from another background are plus points. I take opportunities where others don't. I was there, people saw me and I could move faster than others. As a student you need to be pro-active. What kick-started my career was the fact that I was volunteering. If I am just a student and I go to a bank or something in the HR sector, human science, without experience, of course they won't take you. Applying for TV stations or advertising companies, it's not enough to just have the studies. You need to have a project you worked on. Language is also something necessary. It helped a lot that I knew it.*

*(...)*

*“It also depends on how you define a career level. Depends on how you measure success. I'd like to design a product, an experience, or behavior of the people. To design a product, an experience which can change the lives of the people in a positive way. I don't measure it in money or job titles. If I get the minimum to live off, I am quite ok. Money doesn't motivate me. People motivate me.”*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career, in Austria?**

*“I encountered a lot of incompetent people in jobs. I am not sure that they are there because they are Austrians, but actually yes. Especially in the public sector. If I look at their CVs and*

*their backgrounds, I used to ask myself. How did they get there? The lack of competence is really stunning so, I think it is somehow linked to Vitamin B. “*

### **What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*“Show off and position yourself. Find out what you want to do. If you have at least a direction, get to know the people in the area. Go to events, start projects, throw yourself in cold water and it will work. Work together with someone on your ideas. It's much easier. The future for me is more outside of companies. Build your own company!”*

### **Future trends**

Ioana S. sees a shift in the young generation and the desire to work outside the 9-5pm mentality. There is a new generation coming that will shape jobs and how companies are run. There is a more responsible generation arising and there will be a need for new approaches to the meaning of “work.” She sees entrepreneurship as the way to creating value and as an opportunity to show one’s worth without being required to prove oneself as is necessary in a corporate environment.

### **SUMMARY**

Ioana S. is a young ambitious Romanian entrepreneur who discovered the importance of networking as a young student. Even though she had little knowledge of her competencies and was shy, with the support of her partner / mentor, she was able to discover her value and to build up her self-confidence and self-esteem. She learned a lot through volunteering and has done many different jobs in order to be independent. She sees the importance of jumping into cold-water situations where you can learn many new things about yourself. She avoids networking only within her own culture and has created a very diverse professional environment that will help her continue building her business successfully. She has encountered discrimination based on her age. Her migration background has been primarily an advantage in the jobs she took. She realized that she would not be happy in the work culture of Austrian companies, which demonstrated favoritism and saw work experience as being linked to a person's age, so she chose to be her own boss in order to continue reaching for her career goals in a less complex working system. *“This freedom feeling is hard to exchange for anything else”*. She also weighs success not in money but in the value she creates for people through the products and services she has to offer. In order to achieve your goals, she advises women

immigrants to network, position themselves in their fields of interest and to make themselves visible by being proactive within those environments.

## **8.10 Case Study 10\_ Cristina S., Entrepreneur, Romanian**

### **Background:**

Cristina S. is Romanian, she is 34 and has lived in Austria for more than eleven years. She studied Finance and Banking at the University of Economics in Bucharest, Romania and was a member of the international student organization AIESEC where she also acquired the position of Vice-President of Finance in 2004 and was part of the executive Board both in Romania and later in Austria. She speaks Romanian, English and German. She is a serial entrepreneur.

### **Parents:**

Her parents did not have the chance to study, but encouraged her to pursue higher studies.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Work. As a member of AIESEC, she came to Austria in July 2004 as a recruiter for the organization.

### **Career path**

As a member of AIESEC's board of directors in Austria, she worked as a Trainer and Talent Manager. At the same time, she founded an NGO intended to create solutions for a sustainable future, which still exists today. In parallel, she worked for ten months for a foundation as a Program Manager, developing and implementing an educational program for sustainability. She then applied for a job at an international bank and worked for two and a half years in holding management and later as a Country Manager for the CEE region. In 2012 she co-founded a co-working space with the intent of providing an inspirational work place, meaningful content and the infrastructure necessary for startups to flourish and grow. She works as a consultant and trainer for companies that are looking to reshape the future and introduce innovative processes. She chose to be an entrepreneur because the job she wanted to do did not exist. Therefore she created her own space in which to work. She is driven to offer sustainable solutions for a better tomorrow. She wanted to be a change maker and empower people to promote sustainability.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

Cristina S. was unable to find the job she always dreamed of, so she created it herself. She had a vision and with that, she created the space for it.

*„My dream is to create the space and possibilities and support structures for the people who want to pursue their own dreams and own ideas. It doesn't always have to be about finding your own place created by someone else. Build it yourself. Create it for yourself and for others. Secondly is impact orientation. Creating everything better. Constantly working in creating a better reality.”*

She consults on change-making, people management and impact orientation and believes that every company needs to build sustainable solutions for a better life for future generations. It was a challenge for her to find companies working in that field, but she also searched for opportunities in the companies for which she worked. She explored all areas of interest until she decided to become an entrepreneur. She has been self-employed since 2010. She now helps create jobs and works to build a better tomorrow by offering sustainable approaches and instruments to be used in business strategy.

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

She looked for companies in which she would be interested to work and applied either directly or by asking inside her network. She researched, sent emails and presented her interest in working there even though there were no job openings. She is currently the founder of several organizations.

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

*“Oh, yes. You are perceived as being not from Vienna. This inclination to be asked "Where are you from?" If you are asked that, it's something else that they also imply- you are not from here!- And that is not something you want to constantly be reminded of after eleven years. I had this at any level. Actually more at higher levels more- in meetings, networking events and so on. In a mixed environment it's different. And it starts then from the moment you yourself say where you are from. When I say Romania, there is that certain face and that certain reaction. And secondly, my favorite is- “ah yes, either "Ah, ja I've also been in Romania in the '90s to support the poor" or "yes, my mother is being looked after by a Romanian". These 2 situations constantly happen.”*

**How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

**Do you see yourself as one?**

*“I think it’s quite old school and provincial, how we are described as. How do I perceive Austrians, the environment? It’s a conservative mindset. It’s something that kind of drags down the potential of Austrians as an economy as a geographic positioning to be what it can be in 2015 and be what it could be in 2020 if they had a different kind of openness and mentality to be an international center, but I get the feeling it’s not really wanted.”*

**Do you feel integrated?**

*„I feel integrated, yes. I never really spoke German. If I have to, I will. But somehow I was avoiding it. Or maybe it was just the environment I was in that didn't really require German knowledge. People say that you need to speak German to be integrated, but honestly I don't believe that. I started up three companies without knowing German. I've been living here for eleven years now. I did business, I hired people. It's not that I don't speak it, but I don't use it. However, I feel restricted at times. I could have achieved more had I been fluent, for sure. But in MY Austria, I feel integrated”.*

**Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

Genuine connections, networking, performance, determination

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career in Austria?**

Cristina S. is aware of this practice in Austria and she used her own type of Vitamin B through networking.

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*It depends on the company. There is a difference between an international and an Austrian company. You need to be strong, as an immigrant. You cannot be less than that. You need to. You are not from their territory; you will always be the one who is not from here. So, be strong. Secondly you need to connect beyond and build strong connection within and outside of the company within the framework you want to grow in. Don't fake relationships, look for genuine connections. Make sure you are seen and you are considered a reliable partner and deliver. Perform and don't over do it. If you are totally the outlier, everyone will hate you. Because you are anyway the outlier so if you exaggerate and try to be better, smarter, faster, it just makes it*



worse. *Be in tune with that, find your role in the groups, don't be too different. Because that is not going to do it. Perform and adapt to the environment.*”

### **Future trends**

*“I think it's not about open-mindedness, it's more of a power play. After being quite in the middle of Austria, which is more or less like a village- in the sense that you can get to know the main players quite easily. It's a power issue at the same time. It's not an openness as an attitude or a culture. It's a fear, it's a desire to keep a status to keep a certain power which by opening you risk to lose it. We cannot totally address this issue ourselves, but the economy is shaping it. You cannot keep a certain status for too long and now with more economic challenge, this will happen by itself. Plus the new younger generations - we need to empower ourselves to be louder, to fight for the reality we see and try to stop it. And not believe that it has to stay like this. For that we need to be many and those “many” have to be united.”*

### **SUMMARY**

Cristina S. came to Austria with the purpose of becoming a change-maker. She wants to empower people to take responsible and sustainable approaches in their business dealings and to create a better world. As such idealistic concepts were not promoted within companies, she decided to become an entrepreneur and create this idealistic world. It was a dream that she is living today under the many companies that she has founded.

*“What I realized when looking to be in HR, what I was passionate of, HR was not doing it. I had a different idea and thought I'd find it in that department at this one bank. The element I wanted to cover was mostly just 5% of the entire job. In the meantime I had realized what I wanted to do, so I started creating my path. Nothing is to be lost either. I studied banking so I wanted to see why. So I worked in banking for a while. And I wanted to do people development and started up a consulting company, as an anchor for my dreams. I didn't want to get lost in the corporate and in banking. Then I wanted to do a PhD in sustainable banking. I was interested to see how banks contribute to a better tomorrow. I decided that in 2007. I did two years of the PhD but it kind of got interrupted by my dreams.”*

Cristina is married and believes that career and family can be combined with the right balance. Even though the question “Where are you from” is a constant reminder that she is not from here, in "her" Austria, she feels integrated. She does not believe that she needs to know German fluently in order to be integrated because she is successfully running three businesses in

English. However, she acknowledges that, at times, she is limited in her endeavors to create an even bigger impact because she does not speak German often enough to be fluent.

In order to be successful, she believes that performance, genuine connections and business relationships, and making oneself visible on the market are factors that are necessary to reach one's desired career levels.

## **8.11 Case Study 11\_ Emma R, Entrepreneur, Austrian with Indian origins**

### **Background:**

Emma R. is in her mid-40s, originally from India, she came to Austria from the Middle East with her parents when she was 10. She was enrolled in an international school where she studied German as a foreign language. She later studied psychology at the University of Vienna and has a PhD from the Grenoble Graduate School of Management in Business Administration and Organizational behavior. She has more than 20 years' work experience and has published many articles on women and leadership with a focus on the Indian diaspora. She is now an Austrian citizen and speaks English, German, Indian and a bit of French.

### **Parents:**

Her father worked for a refugee organization connected with the UN and had a higher education. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom.

### **Reason for coming to Austria**

Her father's job and the war that had broken out in the Middle East were the reasons for which they left and came to Vienna.

### **Career path**

After graduating from the University of Vienna, she initially worked as a Consultant, then as a Recruitment Officer at an international organization and later as a Human Resources Manager at Hewlett Packard where she stayed for two years. In 2001 she moved to Germany to work for the European Central Bank where she stayed for four years as a Senior Human Resources expert. Due to personal reasons, she moved back to Austria where she decided to become a freelancer and follow her own path to success. She became an Executive Coach and Trainer in organizational behavior, with renowned clients such as IBM, UNESCO, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. From 2008 to 2014 she returned to the European Central Bank where she took the position of Senior Organization Expert. She came back to Vienna in 2014 and

decided to re-open her consultancy business. She is an Organizational Psychologist specialized in change management.

### **Challenges and successes throughout the professional career**

*“When I first looked for a job, I realized that I would always be at an enormous disadvantage. I was even told once:” well we think you can do the job, but you just don’t look as if you can!” That was in 1993, after I had graduated from university. In those days, there were no offices for anti-discrimination. There was no awareness and there were few people who looked different.”*

### **How did you acquire these jobs?**

Her jobs were mostly found via ads in newspapers. She was always checking the newspapers, even when she had a job. She actively managed her career.

### **Did you encounter discrimination throughout your career?**

Discrimination was something Emma went through during her studies at the university, but with strength and ambition, she managed to ignore that and pursue her career goals. Not taking discrimination personally is something she has since learned. At work, discrimination was mostly manifested through the level of income and the fewer opportunities she was given compared to her colleagues. Because the companies were very international, there was no discrimination based on migration background. *“When it came to skills, I was always able to take that challenge. It was more about perceptions and opportunities, in particular when it came to money and visibility.”*

### **How do you perceive the notion of “migrant”?**

#### **Do you see yourself as one?**

*“Whereas the word migrant has more of a neutral connotation, knowing that “it’s what we do, it’s why we have legs, it’s something more neutral. But the word immigrant is perceived as a low skilled person, who is forced to find better living somewhere else. Like Filipino maids who go to the Middle East.*

*But there can also be highly skilled immigration. A highly skilled white person that goes somewhere is perceived as an expat, but a brown skilled person who goes somewhere else is an immigrant.*

*Immigration implies that you change your nationality in order to be able to live somewhere. This is something that you don't necessarily have to do as an expat. There is definitely structural discrimination here. For example, the freedom with which an Austrian hotel manager can go to Malaysia and work, is not going to be true for an Indian hotel manager who decides to come to Salzburg to work. No matter how good the qualifications might be, it's not going to be the same. And the likelihood that the Indian hotel manager who managed to get a job in Salzburg might have a stronger desire to change his citizenship than the Austrian- so there is a structural issue behind it.*

*(...)*

*"I find something very awkward when you have someone that was born here and has always lived here, that people say that this person is a second generation migrant with Turkish routes. I think they speak that way here. In the UK they would never say that. I mean, yes ok the guy has Turkish routes, but who cares? He doesn't understand Turkish, he doesn't live there, he doesn't want to live there, he doesn't want to have anything to do with it anymore. And we all eat Kebabs, so I mean that is no way to distinguish it. I think the terminology is simply used wrongly and used to create a sentiment which is not correct."*

Emma also finds herself in awkward situations when there are panel discussions about integration. She says, *"tell me who can speak about migration experience when you have the following panel people: an Austrian, another person who was born in Austria but has parents born abroad and possibly this person looks more darker skinned. Where is the migrant there? This person was born here! Isn't that already labeling?"*

### **Do you feel integrated?**

*"I was told that if I really wanted to be integrated, I had to marry an Austrian man! I didn't do that. If you are a foreign woman, married to an Austrian, it's likely that he will be given a lot of credit for your career. And it's seen as a sign of ultimate integration. Ridiculous, but true. Probably still today. That seems to be the way to enter society."*

### **Based on your professional experience, what are the key factors to a successful career?**

*"Constant learning, listen and network, be open to new challenges, never think you couldn't work in another field, be daring, courageous, don't care what people think about you- but act like that in a non-arrogant way. Look for feedback."*

**What is your experience with the so-called “Vitamin B”, as in knowing the right person to get to a particular job or to advance in your career, in Austria?**

*“At top levels, knowing someone who knows someone is valid for both men and women. It’s not about networking with everyone; it’s about knowing the person you need to know. Entrepreneurship in many ways counter balances that. If you are an entrepreneur and have a product or service that people recognize, it might not be so much about that kind of networking. It will always be about networking. Entrepreneurship on the other hand is less niched, is broader, less about the person- I think. I think it is actually a door, on a more positive note.”*

**What is your advice for women migrants to reach successful careers?**

*Go for it! How to get there? It will be about building a sense of personal resilience. Because they will be exposed to certain situations that are different than to what men are exposed to in sense of controversial statements. What is still inevitable for women is that they have to be very well qualified. As part of their measure for worth. It's also important to be single-minded getting to the top and not taking things terribly personally and to develop a lot of wit and humor and confidence around that.*

*(...)*

*Vitamin B is overrated, personally. When I got into ECB, I was asked: "Who did you know there" and I said it's not "kennen" it's "können". In my entire career I didn't know anybody to enter certain job. What I realized when I was there, it was to get to know the right people who'd push you further. And I think that sometimes Vitamin B is overrated. What is not overrated is networking, or social skills in general. Also overrated is this pushy kind of network. Networking is more the ability to listen, to communicate, to foster normal relationships with people and to understand that there is a give and take. There are a lot of people who are very good at taking, but not at giving. This good sense of social skill is way more important than vitamin B. Because the irony is that if you are a good person at social skills you will meet the right people. You cannot know them from the beginning.(...) I like the emotional intelligence. Be polite, say thank you.*

*My wild guess is that entrepreneurship for women with a migrant background is the way to create a career here. It's actually THE door.”*

**Future trends**

*“I don't think we have to look at the female immigrant issue right now. If you look at the new government in Upper Austria, I think it's a women issue in general. I think we are regressing.*

*The fact that not one woman was appointed, and they don't even have the sensitivity to appoint a token woman so that it wouldn't be so obvious, but I think it's an enormous regression-that they can go on this way and think that the world is fine. That, I found shocking. They wouldn't even pretend that they had someone at least. To at least keep the optical picture. I think there is a huge problem with migrant women, generally. I think that women who are foreign have a particular reputation of being exotic, which men find attractive but not necessarily in a professional way. As it's true for the corporate world there is still a double bind around a woman who is successful professionally. I think women still battle the image of 'if being too aggressive they are vampires and if too soft, then you are a mommy type.' They sometimes battle it on their own as well.*

*I think as well, with the term migrant, immigrant, it's all getting a bit out of control. I think it will happen as it has in the United States, once the society becomes more mixed. The way I see the whole topic of migration- integration, call it what you want, in Europe, Continental Europe, is that we are going through an enormous change and there is a lot of resistance to that change. In order to make it somehow understandable, we are using all these funny words and we are using them interchangeably and until someone like yourself says: do you realize how absurd this is, I cannot draw the line anywhere, who goes into which box now, which I think will happen one more generation. Only one and it won't play a role anymore. Because in the UK for example, nobody would ever say that. There are like Indians with second, third generations and nobody calls them a third generation migrant. You'd go into serious trouble if you started talking that way. No way you'd hear a comment like that on TV, like here. This is how I explain it. It's a very dynamic issue now but it will go away. Schools are already very mixed. And they will fall in love with each other and when you are in such environments, you cannot use such terminology, right? Because you're talking about your kids. It's a very emotional topic and people try to resist. But this is happening now. It's not even a question anymore."*

## **SUMMARY**

Emma was driven by her ambition to succeed. Her parents were her role models and she grew up with self-confidence, always ignoring what was damaging to her integrity and always listening to her intuition. She built her career by being constantly alert to new opportunities, looking for jobs in the newspapers and working hard to achieve her career goals. She refused to let discrimination stand in her way. Instead she showed ambition and ignored personal discriminatory attacks that would have compromised her self-confidence. *"Do not take*

*everything personally. There is nothing wrong with you*". Competence, performance and soft skills are a prerogative to getting the career you want to pursue. Knowing the language also makes a difference. *"There is as well a different perception when you acquire the citizenship and speak the language, as compared to being a foreigner but yet speaking the language"*. Adaptability and flexibility are also very important skills.

Emma faced discrimination based on her gender and her cultural background, regardless of whether she was employed or self-employed. However, as an entrepreneur, she now sees herself as being in a position to provoke and challenge the status quo. *"In an employed circumstance, you are always in the asking position, you are not in an eye-to-eye position"*, she says.

She does not like the terminology and the categories that international people are placed in because they create prejudice. Emma also sees that in Austria, it is not just an issue of where you come from, but more of a gender issue which seems to be regressing as a consequence of the recent elections in Upper Austria where no woman was elected *"I think it's an enormous regression that they can go on this way and think that the world is fine"* she concludes.

However, she is optimistic about future generations, when it will no longer be a question of origin, but rather of one's competence and skills.

Emma became self-employed by choice. She believes that she would have had more career opportunities in another country and that there would have been fewer barriers on her way to success if she had lived somewhere else.

## **9 Research results and interpretations**

This chapter presents the observations made based on the perspectives of the professional women migrants, employed or self-employed, in respect of the different topics discussed during the interviews. At the same time, similarities and differences between the two women migrant groups will be observed.

### **9.1 Education and Background**

Out of the eleven interviews, ten women had acquired at least a Masters Degree or an MBA. Except for Ioana S. from Romania, who is self-employed and is now doing her bachelors degree, all the professional women show a strong academic background. Having come to Austria for one of the four reasons: family (3), work (4), love (2) or studies (2), almost all the women had previously studied in their home country. Many have acquired additional title

degrees in Austria or in other countries in Europe in order to add more value to their previous studies.

Except for Cristina S. from Romania, who is self-employed and holds a degree in Economics from Bucharest, and Elena R. who studied Finance in Italy, all the other nine women have acquired an extra degree outside their home country. Alecsandra G., who is originally from Serbia, said: *“When I came to Vienna I looked for my comparative advantage and researched the job market. There was a great demand for specialists in Finance, so due to the fact that my studies were not recognized, I had decided to redo them in Austria.”*

Laima S. from Latvia believes that her post-master studies at St. Gallen in Switzerland have helped her a lot: *“This internship was a main turning point for me because it opened a lot of doors in Western Europe. I wouldn't have had it like that if I had come with a Latvian degree. I am quite aware of that”*. Although she previously had completed two bachelor degrees in Latvia, one in Economics and one in Law, she recognized that her studies would not mean much outside of her home country because Latvian universities had little recognition.

Corrine G. from the US studied International Relations and later did a post-graduate degree in Austria at the Institute of Science. Almost all women acknowledged the fact that studies done outside of Austria would need the support of either another degree with international recognition from a well-known university or a degree acquired directly in Austria. Natalia V. from Russia mentioned her degree when referring to the way she is perceived in Austria: *“If I say I studied at the diplomatic academy (in Vienna), the mindset changes.”*

The university degrees have been a prerequisite for advancement in the positions many of the interviewed women have acquired. For almost all of them, higher education is one of the most influencing factors to reaching higher career levels. Six of the women have a Masters Degree and four hold an MBA. Michelle D. from the US has even two MBAs.

Almost all the women come from families with academic degrees. Those few parents who did not have the possibility to study, raised their children by teaching them the importance and value of education. Out of the six women working for a company, four have children and two (one over 40 and the other in her late 30s) have willingly decided against founding a family in order to pursue their careers. Out of the self-employed group, only one woman has children. Michelle D. from the US had her children in her early 40s. Before having a family, she was, however, not self-employed. She worked for international companies and only chose to be a freelancer after becoming a mother. She did so out of the desire to become more flexible in combining career and family. She argues that her choice to have children later in life was better



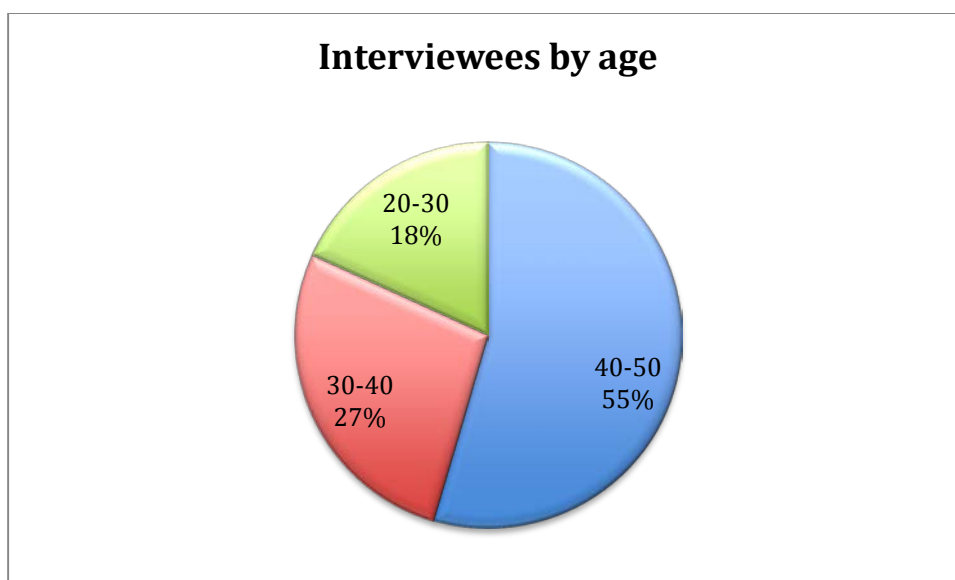
since, by then, she had managed to acquire a high professional career level and had created a name for herself in her field.

### 9.1.1 Languages

Six of the eleven interviewees speak at least three languages: English, German and their native language. Corrine G. from the US and Laima S. from Latvia each speak six languages, Elena R. from Italy and Natalia V. from Russia both speak five languages and Alecsandra G. from Serbia speaks four. All women acknowledged the fact that their language skills have been a great asset to their jobs. With regard to knowledge of German, the women migrants had either acquired middle to advanced levels or were fluent, believing that it is necessary for a complete integration and to increase their career opportunities. Two of them had learnt German in their home countries; the others had studied it in Austria or Germany.

### 9.1.2 Age

The dominant age range within the employed group is from 40-50. Four out of six women are between 40 and 50 and two are between 30 and 40. In the self-employed group, the age varies. Two of them are between 25 and 30, one is between 30 and 40 and two of them are between 40 and 50. The youngest of the eleven women are two entrepreneurs, Ioana S. from Romania and Natalia V. from Russia.



**Figure 14. Interviewees by age within the employed group of migrant women.**

Figure 14 shows the age groups of the interviewees and the predominant age of the migrant women, which is 40-50.

### 9.1.3 Citizenship

The average length of stay in Austria among the interviewed women is ten years. Despite this length of time, only two women have acquired Austrian citizenship, Emma R. who came to Austria with her parents when she was a child and Alecsandra G. from Serbia who came to Austria 8 years ago. Even though almost all of the women are eligible for Austrian citizenship, none of them wish to acquire it because they would have to renounce their own nationality. Three of the interviewed women are Americans, three are Romanians, one is Russian, one is Italian, one is Latvian and the two Austrian women originally come from India and Serbia, respectively. When looking at the reasons for migrating to Austria, the answers vary. Four of them came for work-related reasons, two of them came to study in Austria and chose to remain in the country after graduating, two of them chose to live here because of relationships and the remaining three came to Austria to be reunited with a family member.

## 9.2 Career path

All eleven professional women migrants have gained a lot of work experience to get to where

*“I found my jobs mostly through networks: professional networks and MBA alumni networks.”*

Mary N. , US (Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead)

*“...through pro-active search in newspapers, online portals and networking.”*

Ioana S. , Romania (Entrepreneur)

they are now, starting since their early student years. One similarity between the two groups, employed and self-employed, is that they all started very early in making themselves visible on the job market, even before they began looking for jobs. One factor, which is characteristic of all migrant women, is their determination and strength to fight for and achieve their life goals. They searched for the jobs that were interesting to them and through mentoring, networking or personal relations have managed to work their way up. Although the experience on the career path varies from case study to case study, there are similarities in how they acquired high-profile jobs, the most common factors being networking and

having mentors.

*“Serendipity. Being at the right time in the right place, but as well networking.”*

Corrine G., US (Chief Diversity Officer)

*“Mentors. They helped me a lot. They feel also “geschmeichelt/proud if you ask for help and they usually*

*say yes.”* Laima S., Latvia (Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy)

When it comes to soft skills, they all share the same willingness and determination to succeed. They are very proactive and do not see their migration background as a barrier, even though some of them have been discriminated against. Almost all mentioned the importance of speaking the language in order to increase their opportunities for successful careers. Nonetheless, the inability to speak German was not perceived as an impediment to achieving one's career goals.

*“People say that you need to speak German to be integrated, but honestly I don't believe that. I started up three companies without knowing German. I've been living here for eleven years now. I did business, I hired people. It's not that I don't speak it, but I don't use it.”* Christina S, Romania (Entrepreneur)

The most common soft skill noted from the interviews is the ability to adapt to their work environments.

Another point that both groups share is that all the women have worked for either international companies with headquarters in Vienna, or for Austrian companies that did international business. In my selection process, I was unfortunately not able to find a woman migrant in management that worked for an Austrian company, which only did business locally. This result coincides with the studies on the diversity of companies in Austria and the recruiting departments, which are more inclined to hire Austrians in addition to favoring people with native German language knowledge, especially if the company only trades locally or at national level. (Pramböck, 2015; Schmid, 2010).

In the self-employed group, whereas Ioana S. chose to continue her career path by creating her own business, Natalia V. from Russia had no choice due to the difficulties in finding a job that matched her experience and the career field in which she wanted to grow. Out of the five self-employed professional women, four of them willingly chose this career path in order to pursue their dreams in a freer and more flexible way.

### 9.3 Challenges

When discussing the challenges encountered in the job market, most of the women mentioned the necessity to adapt to the company as well as to Austrian culture.

*“I stayed there for three years but I didn’t like the company culture. I was on several occasions told “we do things differently here. This is the Austrian not the global headquarters. – kind of reminding me of the way I was thinking”.*

Mary N., US (Sustainability and Marketing Stream lead)

She also said that when she was 30, she did not find her place on the labor market very easily:

*“ I was just under 30 when I did my MBA and the agency wasn’t happy about it. I quit and then it was hard to find a job. I was just under 30, I was married, had weird studies in US, it was hard (...) I was over qualified for all the easy jobs and under qualified for those I wanted to do. I wasn’t even getting interviews”.*

Mary N., US (Sustainability and Marketing Stream lead)

Throughout her career in Austria, she has found it very difficult to adapt finding Austria rather *“conservative, bureaucratic and not flexible.”*

Elena R. (Group Treasury Manager) from Italy said, *“I think Austrians accept me more if I adapt to their way”*. Another aspect was the mentality of the Austrian companies. Emma R. originally from India (Freelance Consultant), notes:

*“When I first looked for a job, I realized that I would always be at an enormous disadvantage. I was even told once:” well we think you can do the job, but you just don’t look as if you can! “... ”In Austria, it’s not just an issue of where you come from but more of a gender issue as well. I think it’s an enormous regression, what happened in the Austrian elections in Upper Austria: that they can go on this way, with no woman in the team and think that the world is fine”.*

Emma R. originally from India, Freelance Consultant

Michelle D. (Freelance Consultant) from the US encountered fewer such problems during her work experience in Austria, mainly because she worked for American companies based in Vienna. She started encountering more challenges though once she became self-employed:

*“When I became self-employed, it was challenging. I valued my worth based on the money I was making. All of a sudden, I had to let go of that, be a mom and rely on my husband. It was challenging, difficult. It took me years to adjust to that.”*

Michelle D., USA ,Freelance Consultant

At the same time, before she could speak German, her challenge was to integrate with the locals:

*“My background is mostly international. I have found it difficult to get into Austrian networks without the language. If my language was stronger I would be more active. And probably more accepted as well”.*

Michelle D., USA ,Freelance Consultant

Alecsandra G. (Head of Finance and Development) from Serbia encountered the challenge of her studies and work experience not being valued in Austria. She started a new degree in Austria at the age of 40 in order to increase her opportunities for a decent job.

*“There was a great demand for specialists in Finance, so due to the fact that my studies were not recognized, I had decided to redo them in Austria. I was working and commuting every day to university and looking for my daughter at the same time. It was very challenging”.*

Alecsandra G., Head of Finance and Development

One of the professional women migrants with a young child mentioned the difficulties for working mothers to be accepted by the customers, which was a hindrance to her career advancement. Laura C. from Romania said:

*“Customers really ask me if I have children, before they want me on the project. They don't like it”.*

Laura C, Romania, Associate Partner in a Consulting Company

Ioana S. (Entrepreneur) from Romania, who is 26 but has strong visibility within her professional networks and has worked for several companies already, mentioned that her challenges were her age and gender and being taken seriously when she tried to provide solutions on certain projects. Apart from that, she acknowledged a lack of support from women managers to help other women. In the last company she worked for, before she decided to become an entrepreneur, she was challenged by her female boss on several occasions:

*“It wasn't a very friendly environment. They were also bureaucratic. I found it also harder to negotiate with my female boss. Rational arguments had no value for her. I didn't get a raise there. It was more conservative. (...) Our female boss favored others. In an argument, her favorite person always won. He was a male. And he got a lot of power, responsibilities and authority. He advanced faster.”*

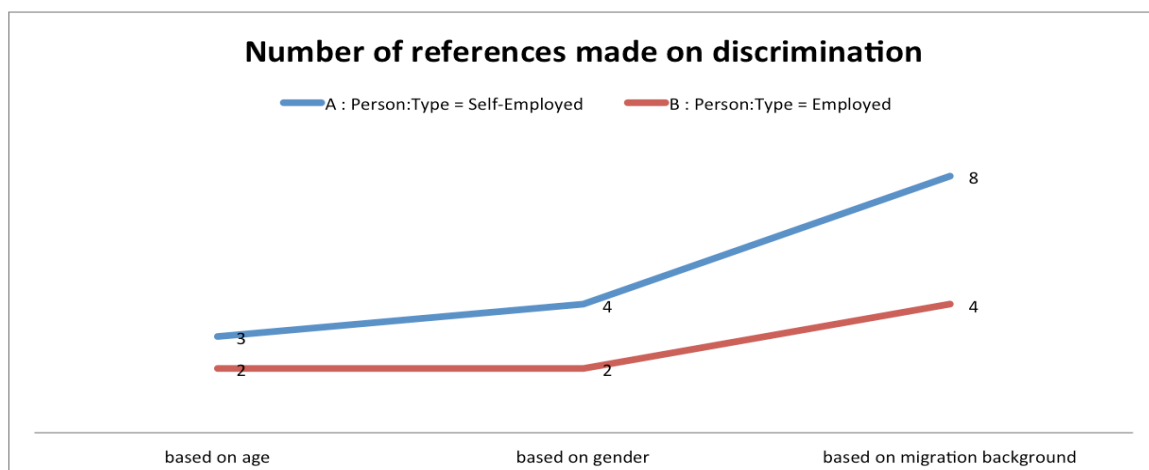
Ioana S., Romania, Entrepreneur

When talking about company culture, both groups mention the same thing. Whether younger or older, whether with more work experience or less, all of the women perceive the Austrian culture and the job market as conservative, inflexible and discriminatory of age, gender and cultural background.

## Discrimination

The most common type of discrimination within both groups interviewed is the discrimination based on migration background in the context of their social life and discrimination based on gender within the work environment. However, there is an underlying difference among the two groups when it came to the environment in which it occurred. Whereas employed women referred to discrimination based on nationality taking place more often in society than at work; the other group experienced discrimination in both the social and work environments.

Figure 15 visualizes the number of references to discrimination made by each group when referring to age, gender and migration background. It shows that the ratio of references is higher in the self-employed group by age (3-2), by gender (4-2), by origin (8-4) than the professional women working in a company.



**Figure 15. References made to discrimination within both groups**

The self-employed group refers to nationality more often and has experienced discrimination based on age and gender more often than the women in the other group.

Based on the interviews, this difference between the groups could be explained by the difference in their social and work environments. Whereas employed women work in an international company and are more likely to mingle with co-workers during the day, self-employed women attend different events and mingle with more diverse local groups of people as they aim to increase their customer portfolio in Austria. Additionally, they also handle public administration issues more frequently and are confronted with bureaucracy. Therefore, as seen from the interviews, self-employed women are more exposed to prejudice on a day-to-day basis than those in the employed group. This could explain why the self-employed migrant women refer to their migration background more often, since it is more dominant in their life.

*“I am constantly reminded I am not a local.”*

Elena R., Italy, Group Treasury Manager

*“I am perceived as not being from Vienna.”*

Cristina S., Romania, Entrepreneur

*“(...)more at a structural level within companies and based on background in university.”*

(Emma R., originally from India Freelance Consultant)

Alecsandra G., Head of Finance and Development, experienced discrimination on the job market due to her age and within society due to her migration background.

On the other hand, Michelle D. Freelance Consultant from the US, has no direct experience with discrimination in her previous work as an employed woman. However, she has made certain intentional choices in life in order to avoid possible prejudice. Other women have experienced discrimination differently.

*„My girls have Roman first names. By choice. For a purpose! Turks are so discriminated against.”*

Michelle D., USA, Freelance Consultant

*“When I am at home in the US, I am European, when I am here, I am perceived as an American”.*

Mary N., USA Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead

*“I never experienced it. But it would be different if I were just in a typical national company without foreigners.”*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

*“And then, there is this age issue. With women, you can never win with age, really. Because first of all, you are too young and do not have the experience, then you are supposedly in this ideal age and then that's dangerous because you might want to have kids and so on. And then you hit that age when you are too old”.*

Corrine G., USA, Chief Diversity Officer

*“(...) Before you are a woman, you are a person. (...) In Austria, you are first a woman before you are a person”*

Elena R., Italian, Group Treasury Manager

*“No, not so much in the career, but in the university (...) „making fun of my accent“*

Laura C., Romania, Associate Partner in a Consulting Company

*My surname was also probably a problem. (...) When dealing with the administration processes I always take my husband along. Because he's Austrian and they treat us differently then (...) They completely treat you differently if you speak accent free German. And I do speak proper German.“*

Natalia V. , Russia, Entrepreneur

*„If I am outside of the networks, I can see that people keep the distance. And it's based on my accent and on my name. So, it is influencing whether you have an accent or not.“*

Ioana S., Romania, Entrepreneur

Three out of the eleven women mentioned that their accent in German was perceived negatively and both entrepreneurs Natalia V. and Ioana S. have indicated that their names were a disadvantage when sending out applications for jobs.

Although all of them speak German, some more fluent than others, two of the migrant women from the self-employed group mentioned the fact that having an accent is perceived negatively when dealing with administrative matters:

*„When dealing with the administration processes I always take my husband along (...) They completely treat you differently if you speak accent free German. And I do speak proper German. But they treat you differently.”*

Natalia V, Russia, Entrepreneur

*“If I am outside of the networks, I can see that people keep the distance. And it's based on my accent and on my name. Like, for example when my laptop got stolen and I received a notification from Apple that the laptop was found. I sent this info to my friend. She is Austrian. In the meanwhile I called the police and informed them. I asked for help. He was not very encouraging and not helping. And my business partner, she asked for help for me and the police sent a car there. So, it is influencing whether you have an accent or not. “*

Ioana S., Romania, Entrepreneur



In conclusion, both groups were faced with discrimination with the only difference being that one group is more exposed to it than the other due to the nature of the business. Self-employed women are more often outside of the environment of a company and therefore more exposed to cases of prejudice as they come in contact with a bigger pool of people with different backgrounds. In the work place, however, gender is predominantly the cause of discrimination since nationality is perceived as an advantage in an international company.

## 9.4 Social environment & Integration

Integration comes from the Latin word “integer” and in sociological terms means “to bring different races and ethnic groups into an unrestricted and equal society” (The Free Dictionary, 2015). When speaking of integration and being part of society, one particular influencing factor leading to a stronger integration for some of the interviewed international women was the fact that their children helped them be more active within their communities. The wish for their children to be part of the Austrian society and not just mix with internationals, has motivated them to participate and engage more locally.

*„We are more on the outside. We are in an international community more than in an Austrian one. I chose to put my kids in local schools in order to bridge our integration. Because I don't like the feeling of being on the border. It's been difficult to integrate for myself. My kids have helped me a lot. They help me be more part of the community”.*

Michelle D, USA, Freelance Consultant

*„Yes, I wanted to integrate. My daughter went to a private Austrian school. Because she could stay there until 5-6pm. That was the reason we chose not to go to public. The school had many Austrians. We mixed a lot with that crowd. But we have a mixed social network“.*

Elena R, Italy, Group Treasury Manager

When it came to the question of integration, all women felt integrated by their own standards. Some, however, know that they are not perceived as such because they do not speak perfect German or because they do not mix enough within the Austrian community. Nonetheless, all of them consider themselves as being part of the society, some in a broader way than others.

*„I feel integrated, yes. I never really spoke German. If I have to, I will. But somehow I was avoiding it. Or maybe it was just the environment I was in that didn't really require German knowledge. People say that you need to speak German to be integrated, but honestly I don't believe that...(…) But in MY Austria, I feel integrated”*

Cristina S, Romanian, Entrepreneur

*„I was told that if I really wanted to be integrated, I had to marry an Austrian man! (...) If you are a foreign woman, married to an Austrian, it's likely that he will be given a lot of credit for your career. And it's seen as a sign of ultimate integration. Ridiculous, but true. Probably still today. That seems to be the way to enter society.”*

Emma R., Austrian with Indian background, Freelance Consultant

*„I feel European“*

(Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

*„I feel comfortable here. I don't know what integrated is. I pay a lot of taxes, I function in the system. Is this integration? I have Austrian friends, I speak the language. Is this integration? I don't know. I feel comfortable. I feel good. And if I don't feel good anymore, I will leave.”*

Laura C, Associate Partner, Romanian

*“Yes, I feel integrated. I speak the language. I have a network of friends and professionals. I feel I can handle life better than most young Austrians because of the networks.”*

Ioana S, Romania, Entrepreneur

*“I feel quite integrated. It is easy to stay in international networks but if you are longer then 7 years, I guarantee you will stay longer. So I pushed myself into integrating with Austrians as well. I have mostly Austrian friends. The international part is with the professional women network. “*

(Mary N., Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead, US)

In both groups, their work and life experience in Austria determined the process and level of integration, which is very much influenced by their personal surroundings. All women feel integrated from their own perspective but recognize that they are perceived differently from the Austrian perspective, which entails more participation and inclusion in the society.

## 9.5 Vitamin B references

In Austria, Vitamin B is a term used for “Beziehungen” (connections), which are needed when looking for a job. This term is used to highlight a practice that creates bias in the process of recruiting the right person for the job. Vitamin B points to the fact that often people get jobs because of their connections and not because of their qualifications. Whether perceived as prejudice or advantage, one third of the population finds a job through connections or recommendations (Die Presse, 2012). Whereas Vitamin B is a negative term used on the labor market to refer to preferential selection of future employees, the opposite could be networking, which pursues the same goal but is a positive alternative for getting noticed on the labor market. A survey conducted by the career platform careesma.at interviewed 1164 people on the topic and found that 40% of them referred to Vitamin B as being one of the biggest influencers to successful employment. This is also consistent with the answers given by the women migrants, irrespective of employment category.

During the interviews, when asked about the Austrian reference to Vitamin B, all women mentioned the fact that Vitamin B is a very anchored principle at high levels of management and that nepotism is quite common within Austrian companies. It is important to point out that in the interviews, the professional women most often made reference to the positive alternative to Vitamin B, which in their case was to get connected through networking, for the purpose of getting to know new people and finding out about job opportunities.

*“Vitamin B is highly used here. Definitely. It’s not good. But that’s how it works.”*

Mary N., USA, Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead

*“Not in my case. I didn’t need it. But I know that it’s a very Austrian thing”*

Elena R., Italy, Group Treasury Manager

*„You need to be at the right place at the right moment, or have the right connections. Many say that if you are at the top, you are not there because of your performance but because of your connections. So it's very political if you want to be at the top levels“.*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

*„Austria is a very conservative country. You need to know the right people and make yourself visible in order to make it to the top. Unfortunately Vitamin B is very common.“*

Corrine G., USA, Chief Diversity Officer

*“I encountered a lot of incompetent people in jobs. I am not sure that they are there because they are Austrians, but actually yes. Especially in the public sector. If I look at their CVs and their backgrounds, I used to ask myself: How did they get there? The lack of competence is really stunning so I think it is somehow linked to Vitamin B. “*

*Ioana S., Romania, Entrepreneur*

In all case studies, both groups mention the fact that networking was the main factor for them to becoming visible on the market. On this topic there are no differences in the reactions or answers of women between the two groups. They all reacted in the same way when asked about Vitamin B and referred to networking as being a successful channel towards meaningful jobs.

## **9.6 Perception of the word “migrant“.**

Throughout the interviews, when asking the question “Are you a migrant?” most of the women perceived that it carried a negative connotation. In addition, it seems that many have had difficulties in finding their own “box” in which to place themselves. Two of the women have acquired Austrian citizenship; two women defined themselves as expats (a person that has come into a new country on a work contract with the intention of leaving after a few years) (Investopedia, 2015).

Out of all interviewed women, only two actually said the words, “Yes, I am a migrant” but they also added that this term is very negative. The other nine rejected this description altogether, classifying it as very negative.

Natalia V. from Russia has lived in Austria for 5 years and describes herself as:

*“An international person, an expat who can live here today and tomorrow somewhere else”.*

*Natalia V., Russia, Entrepreneur*

One person saw herself as an expat, even though she has lived here for more than 15 years, another described herself neither as a migrant, an expat or an Austrian. Laima S. from Latvia sees herself as a European citizen, just as Elena from Italy. Corrine from the US continues to see herself as an expat, even though she has lived here for 20 years. At the same time, she does not understand why there has to be such a strong need for Austrians to put an emphasis on our differences:

*“My mom still speaks English with an accent, but no one asks her “where are you from?”. She is seen as an American. No one asks her about her migration background. In the US, you become an American and you are an American.”*

*Corrine G., USA, Chief Diversity Officer*

Ioana S. Entrepreneur, from Romania mentioned:

*“The term “migrant” draws a line between the locals and the others. I see myself rather as a temporary Viennese not born here”.*

Ioana S., Romania, Entrepreneur

*“There is good foreigner and than there is immigrant...”*

Alecsandra G., Austrian with Serbian origin, Head of Finance and Development

*“A woman migrant? I have problems with this word. Because I never considered myself a migrant until I got here. (...) It has a negative connotation. We shouldn’t use this word”. (...) I am not a migrant. I am European.”*

Elena R., Italian, Group Treasury Manager

*“I think it's generally a negatively perceived term. It's selective negativity. If you are a rich Russian or Ukrainian they'd look at you differently then if you were an immigrant from the 10th district. So it's a very selective perception (...) I see an immigrant as a person who came here to get a better life. It's weird that they call people second generation still an immigrant. It's not a topic to me. They are fully integrated, born here, with Austrian nationality, and they still see them as immigrants. It's weird.”*

Natalia V., Russian, Entrepreneur

*“Do we need a label? Ok, but this word is not used properly. It has nothing to do with what we're made of. At the end of the day we are humans. Why would you label people? I don't like when people talk about immigrants as if they were killers, terrorists. What people don't see is that immigrants recreated the cultures we live in today. It would be so boring without them. Or without us.”*

Laura C, Romanian, Associate Partner

Both groups perceive the word “migrant” or “immigrant” as negative labeling and agree that the term has been used improperly.

Although the word “migrant” refers to a category of people who have moved into a host society for various reasons, such as family, relationships or work, they all unanimously avoid being referred to as such and prefer to describe themselves as internationals, expats or Europeans. What all the women emphasized was that the need to define international people has always been the reason for which they are still perceived as different or as "the others".

## 9.7 Key factors for a successful career

It is without a doubt that the most influencing factors to successful careers are networking and mentoring (Figure 16). Apart from those two elements, education in conjunction with performance was mentioned as a third factor.

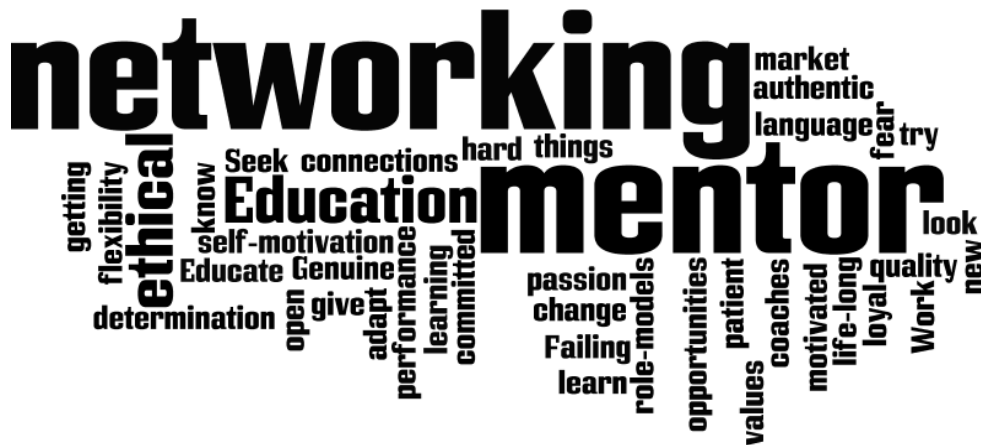


Figure 16 Visualization of word frequency in Nvivo.

Following those three criteria, a set of soft skills are referenced as being important in order to reach successful careers.

Life-long learning is something that was also often referred to as a way to remaining competitive on the job market. Being strong and determined to achieve one's goals are two attributes necessary to make you "stay in the battle" when encountering obstacles. When talking about discrimination based on gender or migration background, most women mentioned looking at these experiences as opportunities, incentives to perform and improve one's strengths. However, when trying to reach executive management levels, some of the employed migrant women mentioned that the glass ceiling effect started exactly at that point.

*"I am for quotas because despite progress made, we still have the glass ceiling. And the higher up you go, the worse it gets. I talked to a lot of younger women who were saying "I am a smart woman, I am against quotas because I know my worth and I will make it based on competence and skill". But that will get you as far as a certain job position. And then something funny happens. You talk to women who are now over 40, in their late 40 and when you speak of these management levels, you get all these women who are now for quotas all of a sudden because these are the ones who thought that they will make it and they will advance, but when they wanted to reach the top level, they hit the ceiling".*

Corrine G., USA, Chief Diversity Manager

*“I challenged the CEO once and asked my manager, what do you do for women in leadership and he explained “we do not have a specific program for them but we do have a guideline that for any job opening there has to be on the short list of 5 candidates at least 2 women. But we always choose the best candidate for the job”. I am a firm believer of quotas. Before I didn't but now I do. Without quotas, it will not change.”*

Mary N., USA, Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead

*“Some say that quotas will not help get jobs by merit. But how do you define merit? How many shops you opened? How many sales you made? That's the male characteristics. A female is much more social, more focused on cooperation, teamwork understanding others- so how do you measure that? For me it's not so much on measuring according to the same criteria as men: different qualities for different genders. Giving this chance for diversity of 50% would also give women a chance to have a saying in a business environment. At this point, it's only male.”*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

These examples are indicative of the fact that no matter the perception of what a successful career may be, when it comes to getting to the top levels of management, the influencing factors, networking or mentoring, are no longer as definitive to advancing on the career ladder. Once reaching middle management levels, a woman cannot get higher due to the dominance of men and a very political environment on the top floors. These opinions also raise awareness of the Corporate Governance Code in chapter 4.5 of this thesis, which underlines the futility of just applying a code in a corporation which only promotes guidelines for more diversity. They prove to be ineffective in the absence of sanctions or legal pressure for non-compliance in meeting the objectives outlined in the code which companies had signed and to which they were committed.

Another influencing factor towards a successful career is language. It goes without saying that, even though it is possible to be successful in Austria without speaking German, knowing the language is definitely a facilitator and an accelerator of one's career goals. Cristina S mentions:

*„I started up 3 companies without knowing German. I've been living here for 11 years now. I did business, I hired people. It's not that I don't speak it, but I don't use it. However, I feel restricted at times. I could have achieved more had I been fluent, for sure.*

Cristina S., Romania, Entrepreneur

Other soft skills that have been emphasized are the importance of being ethical, genuine and loyal - qualities that are necessary and appreciated in management. When striving to achieve career goals, the respondents mentioned that patience and flexibility are two soft skills that are very beneficial when encountering obstacles on the career path. The two groups, irrespective of age and work experience, are both aware that these factors are very influential to their future. Despite the difficulties in advancing in executive roles, if determination, performance, the ability to adapt and strength, coupled with mentoring and networking as influencers, are put to good use, professional women can be successful in reaching their career goals. Based on these influencing factors, the next chapter focuses on the advice that these successful women give to those who want to pursue successful careers.

## 9.8 Advice for women migrants to reach successful careers

This chapter builds on the previous one, in which women migrants were asked to identify influencing factors to building a successful career path. Based on their experiences, the most common attributes and qualities needed to become a successful manager are to be strong and determined to achieve your goals and, at the same time, to be proactive in finding support networks and mentors to increase opportunities. The advice they offer is consequently linked to the previous chapter 9.7, which will appear repetitive in this chapter, however, it stresses the importance of having these qualities and skills in a very competitive labor market.



Figure 17. Most referenced attributes when asked to give advice



Self-confidence is as important as networking. Learning both the language and pursuing a life-long learning mentality are also key factors to keeping oneself competitive in the labor market (Figure 17).

Figure 17 offers a visualization of the most used and repeated attributes when articulating the influencing factors for success and when giving advice for achieving management positions and advancing in careers.

Self-confidence was mostly emphasized to bring awareness of the fact that women, in general, tend to underestimate themselves too much and too often, a factor that hinders their advancement. Additionally, building resilience is a strength that will help in challenging times.

*“You need to be strong, as an immigrant. You cannot be less than that. You need to. You are not from their territory; you will always be the one who is not from here. So, be strong”*

Cristina S., Romania, Entrepreneur

*“How to get there? It will be about building a sense of personal resilience. Because they will be exposed to certain situations that are different than to what men are exposed to in sense of controversial statements”.*

Emma R., Austrian with Indian background, Freelance Consultant

As previously mentioned, adapting to the work environment, performing and doing one's best, have also been predominant attributes throughout the interviews.

Whether employed or self-employed, the interviewed women have had similar experiences when it came to describing a certain set of skills that one needs to have, stressing the fact that it is hard to be a woman in the job market today. They consider this set of skills as necessary for working in a country like Austria, which is conservative, traditional and even, provincial.

*„How do I perceive Austrians, the environment? I definitely see it quite old school and provincial. This kind of conservative mindset (...) After being quite in the middle of Austria, which is more or less like a village- in the sense that you can get to know the main players quite easily, it's a power issue at the same time. It's not openness as an attitude or a culture. It's a fear, it's a desire to keep a status to keep a certain power which by opening, you risk to lose it.”*

Cristina S., Romania, Entrepreneur

*“My kids don't have many Austrian friends. I think it's because they are quite closed in. (...) In my district, the kids go to the schools their parents went to. They grow into these old patterns and they also have these snooty attitudes”*

Michelle D. USA, Freelance Consultant

*„My parents sent me to a German school so, I was lucky to have had this asset when I came here. It really helped a lot because Austria is a very conservative country“ (...) You need to know the right people and make yourself visible in order to make it to the top“*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

*“Austria is a very traditional country. In general, women in management positions are very few, especially at board levels in publicly traded companies, Here, my reading is that Austria is a very traditional society”*

Corrine G., USA, Chief Diversity Officer

The interviewees articulate that the business environment is quite restrictive towards women when it comes to career advancement. Most of the professional women have encountered these challenges and have described the reality of being a woman in management. It is not impossible to have success but it requires more effort on the part of women. It requires self-confidence, determination, patience and the ability to adapt when facing challenges and obstacles. They strongly recommend looking for mentors or networks that support and promote diversity in business. If your qualities are visible in the labor market and if you are resilient and self-confident, generally it is possible to reach your career goals.

## influencing factors



## advice



**Figure 18 Visualization of the influencing factors for a successful career and of the attributes referred to when giving advice**

## 9.9 Career-Life Balance

For women in top management, usually it is a challenge to find a balance between work and family. Some say it is not possible at all. Aiming for a high profile career in management and having children is less likely to be possible. At a middle management level, however, out of the eleven migrant women, five of them have children, three chose not to in favor of their careers and three have no children yet. Whereas women without a migration background are more likely to have the option of bringing the children to their grandparents, women migrants do not always have that choice. It can become a very costly endeavor trying to combine and balance career and family. However, based on the interviews, most women were optimistic about reaching a balance if one had the right partner in life who would share the responsibilities of parenthood as well as support the wife's career ambitions.

*“Career wise, it's very important to choose your partner. If you have high education, speak many languages, you are smart, then you want to be supported in your career. Then you have to think you are also responsible for the family. But there has to be a balance. You are both responsible, you and your husband “.*

Elena R., Italy, Group Treasury Manager

*“You can have a family but then you don't see them as often. You get a nanny then. For example a friend of mine has 3 children but also 3 nannies. So, I suppose you have to make certain choices in life to combine career and family.”*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

*“It's possible. There are also opportunities to work part time, job sharing, flexible working etc. There is also this method: management by objective. You do it wherever, whenever, but I expect it delivered on time. That helps people with families. And as well, men can do that. Because it takes two to raise children. It's not just a woman's job. It takes two to have kids, so there should be two to raise them. In Sweden, if you don't take leave of absence to raise your newly born, it is perceived as negative. As if you didn't really looked after your family. Here, it's like the woman's job, still seen very conventional”.*

Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Officer

*“If you are a mother, tap into the resources you have: friends, mothers, grandmothers who can help with babysitting. You on’ have to be home 24/7. That way you can combine career and family.”*

*Laura C, Romania, Associate Partner*

On this topic, most migrant women, irrespective of whether they are employed or self-employed, viewed having a family as being a natural course of life and did not look at the career-life balance concept with doubt, but rather with the option of being able to choose both or either of them. They perceived it as a challenge, but not as an impossibility.

The following chapter presents my observations of how the professional women view the future. Without actually asking the question “What do you think the future will be like”, the women broached this subject themselves during the interviews.

## **9.10 Future trends**

Judging from all the interviewed professional migrant women, a certain sentiment arose when talking about the future and how they perceive it. This chapter aims to convey that feeling by addressing the concerns underlined by these women when speaking about the labor market and its future development, concerns which are important to articulate in order to formulate several recommendations following this chapter. Between the two groups of women migrants, similar sentiments arose. Whether employed or self-employed, whether in their early 30s or late 40s, all interviewed women rendered the same outlook and perspectives on the future.

**The job market is becoming more and more competitive.** Some of the women from the 40-50 age category expressed the fact that 15-20 years ago, it was much easier to find a job. Competition was not as high and education was not as accessible to everyone; therefore, with a strong educational background, determination and the right support networks, one would become more easily visible on the job market.

**Austria needs a change in mindset.**

Because of the traditional and conservative culture that Austria continues to have, the country is perceived long-term as being non-competitive, which will affect the economic growth and potential it could reach if the culture were more open to diversity and change.

*„How do I perceive Austrians, the environment? I definitely see it quite old school and provincial. This kind of conservative mindset. It's something that kind of drags down the potential of Austrians as an economy as a geographic positioning to be what it can be in 2015 and be what it could be in 2020 if they had a different kind of openness and mentality to be an international center, but I get the feeling it's not really wanted.*

Cristina S. Romania, Entrepreneur

The low numbers of women at the top has also raised the issue of women quotas in the interviews. Given the thickness of the glass ceiling in Austria, for women migrants it is even a bigger barrier. As literature showed, women migrants are even less present in management positions than women without a migration background. There is enormous competition because the access to the top floors is very narrow for women in general. Many agree that without forced quotas in the private sector, the potential that comes with a diverse culture remains greatly untapped.

*„If you are in a very traditional Austrian company with little diversity then there are still stereotypes. The challenge here is how to work with these leaders in this kind of environment to help them overcome these stereotypes, to start looking at the competencies and qualities, not origin. That's the real challenge, not just of women themselves, international women, but of organizations.”*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy)

*“Austria is a very traditional country. In general, women in management positions are very few, especially at board levels in publicly traded companies, Here, my reading is that Austria is a very traditional society. If you look at the Austrian companies, it's the old boys network. By that I mean I talk to young Austrian men who even complain about this old boys network because even for them it's hard. You have to have the right political views and so on. There is a complete lack of diversity“.*

Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Officer

Compared to other countries, salaries in Austria are lower. Elena R from Italy might consider migrating back to Germany where she had a more promising career.

*“In Austria, my career level went down in comparison to Germany. (...) I could see myself move to Germany because they offer higher salaries. I never earned so little as I do now. And I had much more. ”*

Elena R, Italy, Group Treasury Manager

### **Other countries are more competitive and more attractive**

Three of the interviewed women who have worked for more than 20 years in different companies, wondered about the management level they would have achieved by now if they were in a more open and diverse economy, such as the US or the UK, or even Germany. They were sure they would have earned much more and advanced much faster, and perhaps would have even been in much higher positions than they are now in Austria.

All in all, the migrant women see gender as the issue that comes before the topic of discrimination based on the migration background.

*„I don't think we have to look at the female immigrant issue right now. If you look at the new government in Upper Austria, I think it's a women issue in general. I think we are regressing“*

Emma R., Austrian with Indian background, Freelance Consultant

*„I feel I would have had a better career if I had stayed in the US. I would have made advancements much faster than here. Cultural reasons as well, language wise too“*

Mary N, USA, Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead

### **Entrepreneurship will be the door towards a fulfilling career**

*„I have the feeling that unless you don't found a company, you won't reach the career levels you wish for as a person with migration background in an employment position“*

Vladlena V., Russia, Entrepreneur

*“My wild guess is that entrepreneurship for women with a migrant background is the way to create a career here. It's actually THE door“*

Emma R., Austrian with an Indian background, Freelance Consultant

*“The future for me is more outside of companies. Build your own company!“*

Ioana S., Romanian, Entrepreneur

### **Austria will change with the next generations.**

One positive sentiment that came out of the interviews is the projection that future generations will no longer look at one's migration background or gender but rather at one's qualifications.

*„It's a very dynamic issue now but it will go away. Schools are already very mixed. And they will fall in love with each other and when you are in such environments, you cannot use such terminology, right? Because you're talking about your kids. It's a very emotional topic and people try to resist. But this is happening now. It's not even a question anymore“*

Emma R., Austrian with Indian background

*„I think with the millennial people, people are more connected, the technology that connects us all will change that. The world is getting smaller and I think those people the more exposed they are the more they will change the culture. At that point, we will all be coming from somewhere“.*

Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Officer

*„There is a new generation coming that will shape the job and processes of companies. There is a more responsible generation arising and there will be a need for new approaches of the meaning of work.“*

Cristina S, Romania, Entrepreneur

### **A need for female quotas in the private sector in order to change culture**

Because Austria is very conservative in the way it does business, and management floors are still male-dominated, most of the professional women who have broached the subject of quotas also mentioned the need for them in the private sector. Austria is perceived as resilient and reluctant to change its culture; therefore the interviewed migrant women raised the need to implement forced quotas. Even though they are aware that "forced" is not the optimal way to drive change, they see no other option. Three of the women from the employed group recommended quotas as a way to promote diversity in management.

*„In our board, we have ethnic diversity, but not gender diversity. 3 out of 6 are non-Austrians. The fact that 50% of the board is different it changes dynamics, because you have diversity in thinking. It's no longer the same small group of guys. You know, if you have decision makers who all think alike, who are from the same economic and social background, that's where you have the most danger of group thinking. And if no one is challenging the conventional wisdom, that's when you get the mess like the Lehman brothers, because no one is challenging the culture. That's why the European Commission wants quotas. It's not because it's not fair, but it's a matter of corporate governance. And it's good for the business. (...) I am for quotas because despite progress made, we still have the glass ceiling. And the higher up you go, the worse it gets.(...) So yes, we need quotas. Do we need them long-term? No, but it changes culture. It drives culture change“.*

Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Officer

*“I am a firm believer of quotas. Before I didn't but now I do. Without quotas, it will not change”*

Mary N., USA, Sustainability and Marketing Stream Lead

*“You need to be at the right place at the right moment, or have the right connections. Many say that if you are at the top, you are not there because of your performance but because of your connections. So it's very political if you want to be at the top levels. That's why quotas would help (...) Giving this chance for diversity of 50% would also give women a chance to have a saying in a business environment. At this point, it's only male. If you are only one woman between the guys, you end up being a guy. You are a minority. But with quotas, this can be more balanced. And with that there is more diverse input”.*

Laima S. Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

### **Women need to help each other more**

One factor that was often mentioned by the migrant women in the self-employed group was that women tend not to help each other as much as they should because they are competitive in a rather counter-productive way, whereas men do not fear competitiveness. In addition, when compared to men, women do not network as much as they should. It was also noted that mentoring is imperative when aiming for higher management levels and should be promoted to a greater degree.

*“They are more important than networks. For men networks yes, but for women, mentors”.*

Emma R, Austrian with Indian background, Freelance Consultant

*„Women are not very supportive of women, unfortunately. Men network differently. Generally, when I have to meet a woman, there is competition. Even in the startup community. It's something to improve. I feel that. But men unite and help each other more.“*

Natalia V, Russia, Entrepreneur

*„Many of my coaches were men because they are not so afraid of this competition as compared to women. Men are much more competitive than women. They are not afraid as we are.“*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy



## 10 Conclusions

### 10.1 Summary

The scope of this paper was to identify the influencing factors that lead to successful careers for women with a migration background in management positions, drawing a comparison between employed and self-employed women migrants. The literature part examined the available data on the topic of migration and focused on understanding the situation of women migrants in the Austrian labor market. In the first part of the thesis literature and primary research have shown strong evidence that there is discrimination on the job market with regard to a migration background and that, without the right set of qualities, qualifications, skills and network, it is very hard to find the right job and advance in one's professional career. The hypothesis was that self-employed women chose this career path due to the difficulties of finding a fulfilling job, or any job at all. Out of the five self-employed women, only one fell into that category, therefore, my hypothesis, based on these interviews was wrong. The other hypothesis was that the reason for which there are so few women migrants in management positions was due to discrimination based on their migration background. There is strong evidence of discrimination when entering the labor market and starting to work in Austria for the first time. The barriers for women migrants are therefore much higher at the beginning of their professional careers in Austria. However, studies also show that the higher the management position, the less discrimination based on migration background exists. At an executive level, intercultural skills and the variety of languages spoken are perceived as assets for the company. Therefore, at high middle management and beyond, the discriminatory factor is not the migration background but rather the gender. In conclusion, both my hypotheses were disproven.

Another aspect that the available literature revealed was the fact that success on the labor market is based on a set of prerequisites that one should have even before entering the country: one has to come from the upper class of the home country, be between 20 and 50 and preferably be a man. Perfect and accent-free German, qualifications, performance and a professional network are further prerequisites which together form the perfect cocktail for reaching a successful career level in Austria. (Pramböck, 2013). This set of qualifications and criteria needed prior to settling in Austria is rarely available for migrants who are already in Austria, a fact which makes working in a job for which they are over-qualified almost inevitable for this latter group (Statistics Austria, 2014).

The empirical stage examined the professional lives of eleven international women in management positions and looked at the work profiles and experiences of six employed women migrants and five self-employed women migrants, in an effort to understand whether there are any differences or similarities between their work experiences at different management levels and career stages. The youngest women were Natalia V. from Russia and Ioana S. from Romania, both entrepreneurs, both aged 26. Despite their young age, they have had a lot of work experience and enjoy the benefits of a large professional network that they built throughout their careers. The most dominant age group among the eleven interviewed women is that of 40-50 years old (6 women out of 11) who consequently also have the longest work experience. All the migrant women have had a strong educational background, each graduating with either a masters degree or an MBA or both, with the exception of Ioana S., who is currently doing her bachelors degree in Communications at the University of Vienna.

The empirical part of this paper focused on women migrants in management positions in two work groups: employed and self-employed. The research was done through the exploratory and semi-structured interview method and aimed at identifying key factors that positively influenced these women's careers as well as observing any similarities or differences between the women who were employed and those who were self-employed. The interviews showed little difference between the two researched groups in the qualifications and qualities they identified in order to be successful in the labor market. Results have both reinforced the available research on migrants in the Austrian job market and complemented it by showing what is needed in order to achieve professional career levels after one moves to Austria, without having a network or coming from an upper-class society in the country of origin, as previous research has shown. In other words, this research points to a set of skills that can be developed while being in the Austrian labor market and without having had a prior network in the home country.

Whether employed or self-employed, the women migrants have pointed to networking and mentoring as the most influencing factors to achieving career goals. The right level of education and knowledge of German language, coupled with a particular set of soft skills such as self-confidence, resilience, flexibility as well as effective performance are some of the main prerequisites for successful integration in the job market as well as achieving a successful career. Self-confidence was mentioned in the interviews as being an under-developed soft skill, mainly being referred to as something that stands in the way of achieving success as fast as men do, simply because women tend to underestimate themselves too much. A lack of self-confidence is also common with women without a migration background. In 2014, Hewlett

Packard conducted an internal study on the confidence gap. It discovered that women only applied for a promotion if they fulfilled 100% of the job description requirements. Men, on the other hand, would consider applying if 60% of the requirements were covered. (Clark, 2014). It is consequently a fact that women in general are more problem-oriented and do not feel they can do the job unless all boxes are checked. Literature has shown that women do not network as men do and that they need to be more active in this area.

When looking into the future of women in the labor market, women migrants perceive it as quite negative. Despite their optimism to encourage and support other women aspiring to higher management positions, when one aims for executive levels, they do not see any possibility of further development without a forced quota in the private sector. Regardless of the skills a woman has, at the higher levels it is not just a men's world, but "*it's also political*" (Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Manager).

## 10.2 Observations

As shown in the chapter on Discrimination, among the interviewed women, discrimination based on migration background was most referred to as an issue occurring outside of the work environment. The higher the level of management, the more ethnic diversity is seen as an asset. However, the most disadvantageous aspect of their jobs was the fact that they were women, not that they were migrants. Most of them have encountered difficulties in management due to their gender. A more neglected factor in companies is the fact that women do not help each other, a problem that has not been tackled sufficiently.

*"We used to have a lady lunch at my previous job and we were just a few. We were all women of a certain management level. But when I brought in someone else, who was at a different level, she was rejected. That is pity. How can you get at higher levels if you are not supported?"*

Laima S., Latvia, Senior Expert of Corporate Strategy

There has been a growing awareness among the interviewees of the issue of competitiveness among women, which acts as a barrier. Compared to men, women do not mix or network enough and they tend to undermine each other and pull each other down because they perceive each other as a threat. One journalist, Lisa Quast mentioned in a Forbes article "*that in a men dominated world, women compete for a smaller piece of the pie*" (Quast, 2010)", a reason for which they do not see themselves as allies, but rather as targets.

Journalist Tanja Paar from the Austrian newspaper Der Standard wrote on the advantages and disadvantages of female networks. Women see them "*as opportunities, but not as a patent*

*solution”* says Regina Prehofer, Vice-rector for Infrastructure at WU University. She also believes that without quotas, there will be no change. *“I was once against quotas, but the older I get, the more I am for it”*. She recommends that women use their contacts, but she also adds that *“Men are often less shy about it than women”*. (Paar, 2015)

This is consistent with the response of the Diversity Manager of a large Austrian bank:

*“You talk to women who are now over 40, in their late 40 and when you speak of these management levels, you get all these women who are now for quotas all of a sudden because these are the ones who thought that they will make it and they will advance, but when they wanted to reach the top level, they hit the ceiling. So now they wonder, who are those people getting these job positions then? So yes, we need quotas. Do we need them long-term? No, but it changes culture. It drives culture change”*.

Corrine G, USA, Chief Diversity Officer

This article underlines the same points made by the professional women in the interviews. Networking is important for a career, but women do not take enough advantage of that resource. Competition between women is often in the way of fostering a support mechanism for them to grow together. In the same article, Gertrude Schatzdorfer, Managing Director of Schatzdorfer Electronics also refers to an issue raised by the professional women: *“In order to work together, us women have to like one another first.”* (Paar, 2015).

Based on the interviews, the professional women have raised both the issue of quotas and the fact that women do not help each other. However, on the topic of quotas, there seems to be disagreement between women in middle management and women who have already reached the top executive management level.

In November 2015 I attended a panel discussion on “Women in industries dominated by men”, organized by the Professional Women Network. The speakers in the panel were two women without a migration background in top management positions: Professor Elisabeth Stadler, General Director of Vienna Insurance Group and Claudia Höller, MBA, Member of the Board of Directors of Erste Bank AG. The audience was 100% women and most of them had a migration background (approximately 80%). In the Q & A section at the end of the panel discussion, I was able to ask them about their opinion regarding women quotas in the private sector. The answers came as a bit of a surprise to many of us women sitting in the audience. It appears that those who have reached top management levels are more against the idea of forced quotas, whereas those in middle management support them. Ms Stadler mentioned she did not like the idea of quotas because she believed that education, skills and performance are the key factors that should secure a high profile job, not gender. She promotes dialogue and support

for women in companies but she also raised the issue of women not helping each other, being rather competitive and wanting to be the only ones at the top, which is not the case for men who support each other more. Her view is that women must work on themselves and not ask for quotas.

Höller mentioned that she tries to encourage women, but only if they want to be encouraged. She does not want to have to convince them to apply for a job, rather, it should be something voluntary, something that does not happen very often.

While I understand the positions of Ms. Stadler and Ms. Höller, many women in the audience, myself included, completely disagreed with the view that not many women want to boost their careers towards the top floors. The fact is that they do not get a lot of support while at the top and find the environment very hostile which makes them disinclined to apply for such positions. One interesting note that Ms. Höller made was that it is lonely at the top and one has to be aware of that when choosing a high-level career. While she mentioned that applying for a high-level job should be on a voluntary basis, the fact that she also described the top floors as lonely points to the lack of support to foster a more female-friendly environment by increasing the number of women in executive management. It would then not be as lonely. It is somewhat of a contradiction on the part of Ms. Höller. It seems that although Erste Group promotes women in management, a diverse culture is more realistic at middle management but not so much on the top floors. Regarding career-life balance, Ms. Höller said that they cannot co-exist in such a high profile position because there is always someone or something not being looked after properly: the children, the husband or the department one manages. She did not believe that it can work but conceded that, in the end, it is the woman's decision which path she chooses to take. Based on her perspective, I wonder sincerely if she would consider hiring women with children in her department, because she seemed very biased on this topic.

As mentioned in chapter 7 Methodology, I also interviewed one professional woman without a migration background, working in the middle management sector, Dr. Traude Kogoj, Diversity Manager at the Austrian Railways Group (ÖBB Konzern), whom I asked to give her perspective on the topic of diversity, women quota and the company culture in which she works.

ÖBB is a semi-public company, meaning that a women quota in management and overall is very much desired and encouraged, which is why the company has implemented many sustainable measures to create a women-friendly environment in management positions and overall even though this is a rather male-dominated industry. In order to provide a friendly atmosphere for women to develop their careers, ÖBB offers mentoring and coaching to help them continue on their career paths. These measures are being implemented throughout the

entire company from top to bottom in order to support a very diverse culture. One of their goals is to increase the presence of women on the board of directors to 25% and 20% in management positions. This is a company that truly lives this culture at all levels and throughout all departments. On my way to interviewing Dr. Kogoj, on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the building, and as well when leaving, I observed a noticeable flow of women coming and going out of the elevator. And this occurred in a company which operates in a male-dominant field. There was a noticeable presence of women in the company.

Ms. Kogoj's job is to drive cultural change and secure sustainable development of the measures implemented in order to not just help women reach their potential but to offer them support in top management positions so that they actually remain in those positions. Ms. Kogoj believes that in order to change culture, "it has to be a company decision to increase the women quota in management", otherwise it is not sustainable in the long-term. She also agrees with the fact that women are not very supportive of each other if there are very few present in management positions within the company. The competition is too high.

*"It has to be at least a quarter of the management positions occupied by women. Otherwise if only 10% is reached, it becomes a burden for them. They need support... We offer a program called "Coaching for Her", for which women in management can register. This program is because they are often under pressure. And we want to offer support. This program is used quite often by them".*

As compared to the other professional women, Ms. Kogoj works in a semi-public Austrian company, which means that advancing in her career would be much more encouraged due to the company culture to increase diversity in management. I chose to give her opinion on this matter from the perspective of a diversity-friendly company and consequently to stress the importance of implementing sustainable measures to support a change of culture, a change which must start at the top in order to be effective. The successful implementation of their measures could well be replicated within the private sector if there was more public pressure to do so.

As a woman in middle management, Ms. Kogoj understands that there are women who want the quotas and those who do not, the latter believing they can reach their career goals through skills and performance alone. However, she suggests that those women against quotas have perhaps not yet reached the career level that brings them from middle to top management; otherwise they would understand how thick the glass ceiling in the private sector truly is. At that point, they would change their opinion on quotas. When asked if their activities and

successes are communicated with other companies and promoted to those who want to be more open, Ms. Kogoj referred to a new EU non-financial reporting regulation which requests not just a company's balance sheet but non-financial results as well, such as gender diversity, education, environment, etc. This is one step that will create more pressure within companies.

*“This is good for companies that want to change their culture or to become more transparent and to be more open. It is easier for them to argue it because they have to make that information public. And honestly, what company wants to say that the company has 99% men employees or 99% women employees. Any person would think that it is weird”.*

Although some of the big corporations meet informally to discuss and present their measures and successes, unfortunately there is no action to lobby for more diversity outside of those meetings to influence companies outside this circle.

*“To be able for us companies to unite and develop performance ratings based on a grade system and make this public for other companies and to say „This cannot go on like this. There is little action in this respect. It would be of course desirable to have something like that”.*

As presented in this paper, migrants are more discriminated against in the labor market than any other groups. The name, the face, the accent are often eliminatory factors when applying or interviewing for jobs. Whether it is before or after they enter the labor market, they face many challenges. At a higher level, advancing in a career as a woman with or without migration background is very much counteracted by a conservative and male-dominated company culture on the top floors. Although a migration background is no longer an impediment at executive levels, gender becomes a strong barrier. Gender then takes the place of the migration background as the first discriminatory factor.

The resistance towards ethnic and gender diversity in management that the Austrian economy and job market seems to hold on to, will position it long-term as non-competitive and will be damaging to the growth of the economy. The interviewees perceive it as detrimental to reaching sustainable economic growth and to Austria's competitiveness in Europe. A desire for change in culture and mindset is the overall sentiment that resulted from the interviews in this thesis.

## **10.3 Recommendations**

### **A quota to drive cultural change**

In order to address the issue of the lack of women in management, with or without a migration background, a quota in the private sector would facilitate advancement as well as lead to a more friendly and gender-balanced environment, where women will not feel outrun or intimidated by their male counterparts. Women themselves emphasize that a forced quota is not something they would consider as fair treatment towards men, but can the current situation of 5.9% of women in the private sector be considered as fair? Therefore they see the need for a female quota implemented in the private sector, knowing that it will drive a change in culture. Studies have shown that it leads to changing the way companies think and to a more open business environment. Such a quota system could be dissolved after 7-10 years, when companies will have changed and accepted gender diversity as being the norm, no longer the exception.

### **Reducing ineffective competition through encouraging more networking**

In order to address the issue of negative competitiveness among women in general, networking for women should be promoted at all levels within and outside companies and approached as a way to interact with women at different management levels, thus providing an environment that fosters inspiration to follow successful women. Networking should become an eco-system of support among women and a place of promoting and uplifting one another. When it comes to networking outside the company, women need more encouragement to make time for it.

### **Boosting your career through networking and mentoring**

In the case of women with a migration background, in order to boost their careers, it is recommended to engage in networking not only within an international network environment but also with other Austrian career networks. Advancing in one's career also means making oneself visible to as large a pool of stakeholders as possible. Staying within one network or networking only within international groups narrows the opportunities.

As previously shown, a migration background plays an important role when being considered for jobs. There is a high level of discrimination based on the name and country of origin, especially for those entering the Austrian job market for the first time. For this reason, it is very important to network, look for mentors and make oneself visible in the labor market.

### **Programs for a career-life balance should be accelerated and implemented**

Greater public awareness of the benefits of the modern family, in which both parents share responsibilities and support each other in their careers, would also be an incentive to network in order to find more opportunities for advancement. At the same time, a better organization



of career-life balance with more support for women with children and offering better child care and longer kindergarten hours would also lead to more diversity within companies.

### **Social advertisements**

Government-funded TV ads to emphasize social issues would be an asset. One could highlight the benefits of ethnic and gender diversity in companies, another could stress the importance for women migrants to do more networking to increase opportunities on the job market. Such measures would foster an environment for women to be able to have a career-life balance.

### **Speaking German with an accent should not be a problem for companies**

It is advisable to raise the awareness of both the public and private sectors that speaking German with an accent is not a bad thing. If one speaks German perfectly, the accent should not be an issue when hiring. The belief of Austrian companies that migrants speaking with an accent might decrease their inland sales (Pramböck, 2013) is an issue that must be addressed. There is a need to create more dialogue by showcasing migrant role models and making success stories more visible to society, as well as promoting their contributions to a company, to the economy and the society in general. If this were emphasized not only at company level but also in public discourse, there would be a positive change in the mentality of the more conservative-thinking Austrians.

### **Migrant role models**

Showcasing successful companies and presenting migrant role models would open more dialogue and increase awareness of the economic benefits and, consequently, the ecosystem. At this point, the only instrument to showcase such positive effects is through the Diversity Charter (Chapter 5), which shows little effectiveness on a larger scale because it is not very well promoted. More dialogue on this topic would bring greater awareness of how business people think and act. A recent example of the lack of awareness is the Vienna International Congress Com.sult, which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2016. The congress was built around the theme of “The future of Growth” and debated the topics of migration, infrastructure and digitalization as important factors for competitiveness and innovation. Diversity, as a relevant growth factor, was not considered. Even in the list of speakers, women were under-represented. Out of approximately 42 speakers, there were only five women, two of which were in the role of moderators. Had there been more awareness and public pressure to have a larger representation of women in the private sector, the organizers and sponsors would most likely have been more sensitive in that regard when preparing the guest speaker list. I attempted to raise this issue with the organizer of the congress, Mr. David Ungar-Klein, in an e-mail; however, he had unfortunately no interest to discuss the matter.

### **More dialogue with more accountability and action**

Whether employed or self-employed, the overall outcome of the interviews is that it is difficult to achieve a career level in Austria as a migrant who speaks German with an accent unless one works in an international environment. As a woman migrant, breaking the glass ceiling and reaching executive roles is one more obstacle to overcome. It is without doubt much more difficult to be a migrant woman in Austria, needing to prove herself twice as much in the job market than an Austrian woman. Facilitating more dialogue within and among companies on the benefits of multi-culturalism would help bring more understanding of the benefits of diverse groups.

### **Dialogue is not necessarily action.**

So often I have been to panel discussions organized by public and private companies. If you go to three of them, by the fourth one you feel like they are repeating themselves. No new approaches, no new information. There are mainly topics about migration and integration or about diversity and the lack of it, but apart from speaking about these issues, there are no measures taken after drawing the conclusions of the panel discussion. While I understand that dialogue brings awareness of a social issue, the people going to those panels are the people interested in these topics, which are also mainly the same people going to the next ones: diversity managers, migrants wanting to understand the job market situation, other company managers and women looking for more support, who expect to actually see results. These panel discussions serve more the role of informing the crowd, but no action results following the discussions.

### **Promoting the Diversity Charter with every occasion.**

While dialogue plays a beneficial role in creating awareness of an issue, it also requires action and accountability for the results and recommendations given by the stakeholders. It requires more public pressure to change social issues. Talking about them is a thing half done. At the end of each panel, I would recommend something that also creates accountability, such as promoting the Diversity Charter and having more people and companies become aware that this Charter actually exists. The Diversity Charter could become an instrument to put more pressure on companies to be part of a community that promotes diversity.

### **Blind CVs**

In addition, in order to decrease discrimination based on migration background and age, when applying for jobs, the blind CV would help to increase opportunities. As such, only education and skills would be the defining criteria to getting invited for a job interview or not. Once invited, even though age and background become obvious, the recruiter will already be more

influenced by the work experience and education, rather than the appearance. Bias will be minimized. At the moment, recruiters are still quite selective. In 2013, graduates with a migrant background had to send 17.5 CVs to get one interview, as compared to Austrian citizens with a ratio of 9.5 CVs. (Der Standard, 2013).

### **The word “migrant” needs a facelift**

When it comes to terminology in the public discourse regarding migrants in Austria, most women interviewed are hopeful that future generations will shape a more open society and drive a change in mindset. All of them agree that the term “migrant” has been misused and that if we do not start looking at this from a new perspective, prejudice will remain on the job market because we are always seen as “the others”. As long as we are described as people with a migration background, or people with an international background, whether we are referred to as migrants first generation, migrants second generation, immigrants, foreigners, expats or Austrians with a migration background, we will always be pointing to what separates us, rather than focusing on the values and skills that unite us.

### **Regulating the negative press when referring to nationalities**

Second generation migrants should be referred to as Austrians, not Austrians with a certain migration background. This is especially used in boulevard newspapers when reporting about a criminal act. These types of newspapers should be more accountable for the way they portray the image of migrants because they have a strong influence over the public. It is advisable to avoid pointing to the nationality when referring to criminal activities if it is not necessary, especially when such newspapers are so easily accessible. In an open letter I wrote to “Heute” newspaper in January 2015, I raised awareness of its negligence in emphasizing nationality when reporting on crimes in Austria. Their response was that they neither try to emphasize the nationality of migrants nor to hide it. In addition, the chief editor representative, Mr. Peter Lattinger, said that they are not interested so much in the nationality, but rather in the felony on which they are reporting. In order to demonstrate how they influence mentality, I conducted research on their newspaper. I took 10 random “Heute” newspapers published in the course of 2 months and looked at the references they made to nationality when reporting positive and negative press articles. Out of 65 negative articles, 31 had neutral references with only the name as identification of the perpetrator, 25 articles referred to a migrant’s nationality and 9 mentioned Austrians, where one example of an Austrian reference was: “Austrian with an Egyptian background”. In the case of positive articles, although the names indicated a migration background, at no point were there any specifications of the origin of the person. The ignorance with which the newspaper writes about people is reflected in this research. If they do not care

about who did the crime, or more specifically, where the criminal is from, then why put mention it? While I pointed toward the fact that the newspaper influences public opinion and leads to discrimination against migrants by reporting only on negative news, Mr. Lattinger said and I quote “You cannot convince me that our reporting is discriminatory”.

In conclusion, in order to address these issues, a collective approach is required and a better understanding of the long-term effects of these issues if they are not dealt with as soon as possible. Without a proactive attitude towards driving change, Austria will not be able to stay competitive, nor innovative. This does not imply an infringement of the freedom of speech, but rather speaks for an ethical approach in public discourse. Applying sanctions when ethnic references are made in a negative and generalized way creating the wrong impression about migrants is an effective way to reduce discrimination. Otherwise mindsets will keep being influenced and migrants will keep being discriminated against on the labor market.

#### **A quantitative survey**

Based on the results of this research paper, it would be recommended to conduct a quantitative survey on women with and without a migration background in order to better understand the overall sentiment of women managers on the labor market, and then recommend measures and activities that allow for more ethnic and gender diversity in management positions.

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