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Challenging global health equity, that is our mission! My name is Lotte van der Strate and I would like to tell you more about the research we have done for the minor beyond borders: challenging health equity.

During this research I worked together with my peers, Frances Jüttner, Femke Huijsse and Sam van Maurik. Our teachers, from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences brought us into contact with Elena Curtopassi of the ELISAN network and Ignacio Socias of the IFFD. I would like to thank the IFFD, ELISAN Network and the Rotterdam University of applied sciences for the great opportunity to be part of this research and the chance to develop myself as a future professional.

The **International Federation for Family Development (IFFD)** is a non-governmental, independent, and non-profit federation, whose primary mission is to support families through training. **The European Local Inclusion & Social Action Network (ELISAN)** aims to provide creative and innovative responses to social needs in Europe.

Elena Curtopassi and Ignacio Socias, our principals, hosted us in Brussels at the start of this minor. We met the IFFD and ELISAN and we learned about the Venice Declaration. The Venice Declaration is drawn by the IFFD. It is based on the eleventh Sustainable Development Goal, SDG-11, of the United Nations. SDG-11 calls to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. By signing the declaration, regions, cities and territories who are represented by the IFFD, proclaim to follow this universal call through follow common endeavours, as proposed by the IFFD.

We decided to focus on the tenth point within the Venice Declaration: Vulnerable Families. “Establish specific programs to recognize the value of unpaid work and care, and address the needs of families in vulnerable situations, including single-parent families, large families, migrant families, etc”. For our research, we went to Marseille, Venice and Rotterdam.

We were warmly welcomed by the Bouches-du-Rhone and Veneto regions. Here we were able to see some of the beautiful initiatives they have set up. In Marseille, for example, we visited the 'Social Val Plan' and the MDS house, very interesting meetings that were very useful for our project.

We started our research in Marseille and here we narrowed our focus. In Marseille, we saw problems related to migration and we started to look more closely to this topic. We formulated the following research question: *What are the best ways to address social exclusion and to stimulate co-creation for migrant single mothers with housing in the age of 21-35 in urban settlements post-Covid?*

We decided to focus on women who are already provided with housing and are at the start of their integration-process.

Four our research, we came across many associations, both governmental and non-governmental, who help these women in numerous ways. We saw a variety of beautiful initiatives ran by inspiring and passionate people mostly volunteers. These are the people that help to make changes in the lives of the migrant women. The organisations helped us to gain

more understanding about the problems migrant women are facing and they showed us possible solutions.

We have spoken with a lot of migrant women during our research. The inspiring organization 'la sel de la vie' helped us to get in touch with migrant women. Without the help of la sel de la vie and without the openness and willingness of the migrant mothers to contribute and to start the dialogue with us, this research would not have been the success it is right now.

I will present to you our most important findings.

- Migrant women face social exclusion

Migrant women remain among the most vulnerable members of society. In many host countries, they face barriers that prevent them from participating fully and equally in social, political and economic life. In order to create an inclusive society, prioritizing the needs of migrant women and helping them to fully integrate is crucial.

- The number of single women is growing fast, previously the migration problem was mainly about men, now it is increasingly about single women

Migration is of all times. However, the causes that lead to migration and the composition of migration flows have changed over the years. While in the past women often migrated with their families and were together with family members, they increasingly migrate on their own for study or work. In 2020, just under half (48 per cent) of all international migrants worldwide were women or girls. The proportion of single migrant women is expected to rise in the future. In conclusion, the amount of migrant women is increasing and migrant women remain among the most vulnerable members of society. This would mean the amount of migration women facing social exclusion could possibly continue to grow if we do not take action.

- Migrant women tend to live in small groups with like-minded people, creating a bubble
- Low socio-economic status
- Doing many tasks (for example around motherhood and work) leaving no time for selfcare
- Lack of self-confidence and not being able to speak the language are the two main things that make it difficult for this group to move forward
- What we thought was striking was that needs of children always come before their own, this is leading in everything they do

Although there are dangers for the inclusive society in the described future perspective, where the amount of single migrant women will increase, there are also opportunities.

Migrant women are important agents of change. They transform social, cultural and political norms and promote positive social change across households and communities (UN Women, 2017). Women with a migrant background can contribute to the development of the economics in the country where they now live and in the country from which they emigrated.

If we could increase the bargaining power for women in households and create more opportunities for female employment, we could promote gender equality and the empowerment for women in both countries of origin and destination.

We are glad to have the opportunity to address the importance of the problems migrant woman are facing today within a COVID-19 restricted society. The problems migrant women are facing a complex matter and a big challenge for countries to manage. What can countries, regions and municipalities do to include migrant women into society and to help migrant women to move forward?

We have spoken with a lot of organisations and we have done a lot of research to found out more about the knowledge there already is about migrant women. We found that the most helpful steps to help the migrant mothers to be included in society are:

- To learn the language
- To be empowered
- To be valued by society
- To be able to contribute to society
- To get out of their bubble and talk to different-minded people
- To expand the mind in a cultural and creative matter.

We have noticed that the depiction of migrant woman varies among society. The qualities and skills female migrant women hold, are not always being valued nor seen by societies and governments right now. We as a project group believe that by starting to recognize these qualities and skills, these women could get the opportunity to change their lives.

As a first step, we want the problems migrant women are facing to be acknowledged by society. We want the qualities, the skills, the beautiful hopes and dreams the migrant women have, to be acknowledged by society. We want these women to be seen and acknowledged. Let's start the conversation.