

# RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN GRANTED INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARY

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES  
OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARY  
– NIEM POLICY BRIEFS

SÁRA SOS

# SOCIAL INTEGRATION

# 6

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### **Social Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in Hungary – NIEM Policy Briefs**

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## Executive summary

Although Hungary does not have a valid integration strategy, Muslim women from third countries granted international protection can still integrate into the country. However, they may face growing xenophobia and Islamophobia, moreover, the patriarchal family model may also hinder their independence. Due to the small number of long-term immigrants in Hungary, no large immigrant communities have developed, and thus no formal or institutional system has been established to assist them. Based on interviews with social workers and women concerned, the present analysis revealed that women from third countries granted international protection have their own strategies and resources for integration. The aim of the analysis is to identify, collect and systematise these tools in order to serve as a basis for future social work with persons concerned and the development of an integration strategy. The most important resources are the connections of the family of origin and married family, the ethnocultural and religious community, language skills, dress, financial background, workplace and neighbours.

## 1. Introduction

The starting point of the research was the assumption that although Hungary does not have a valid integration strategy, Muslim women from third countries granted international protection can still integrate. Successful legal, socio-cultural and socio-economic integration enables individuals to live as culturally and socially autonomous members of the local community while preserving their own traditions. For this to happen, the legal background is in place in Hungary, but the success of integration is greatly hampered by years of political campaigns against immigrants. Although there is a seven-year migration strategy in Hungary<sup>1</sup>, which envisaged the creation and implementation of integration plans, this was only partially achieved by 2020.

A significant proportion of migrants from third countries do not wish to settle in Hungary. This is well illustrated by data from 2015. In 2015, nearly 180,000 asylum applications were registered in Hungary, more than 80 percent of which were suspended because the applicant had already travelled to another country, presumably to Western Europe.<sup>2</sup> After 2015, the number of asylum seekers and positive decisions also decreased significantly, so much so that in 2018, only 349 of the 3,590 applicants were granted international protection by

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<sup>1</sup> The Migration Strategy adopted by Government Decree 1698/2013 (X. 4) and the related seven-year strategic [planning document](#) related to the Asylum and Migration Fund to be established by the European Union in the 2014-2020 financial period

<sup>2</sup> CSO, 2016 [www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/menekult15.pdf](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/menekult15.pdf)

the Hungarian government. Most asylum seekers leave Hungary and submit their asylum application in Germany or France. In addition, in 2020, Parliament changed the rules of asylum application. According to the amendment, a person wishing to submit a new asylum application in Hungary can do so at the nearest Hungarian embassy in Serbia or the Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

Although, at the legislative level, the Hungarian legislation is in line with the European Union's migration policy, financial and social resources are not or only to a limited extent available to migrants. There is no financial security that would make the settlement in Hungary attractive or even possible for many. Due to the small number of long-term immigrants in Hungary, large migrant communities did not develop and thus the institutional system serving them is not set up. Due to the circumstances listed above, and as Hungary is located on the periphery of the European Union, secondary migration is common. Despite all this, many of those who choose to live in Hungary and want to settle here permanently are successfully integrated. It is also particularly important for social work with persons concerned and for the development of a coherent strategy to explore the opportunities and resources that directly or indirectly promote integration into the majority society.

This analysis gathers and examines the resources of Muslim women from third countries granted international protection that can assist their integration. During the analysis, this group was chosen because Muslim women living in Hungary have fewer opportunities to interact with the majority society due to patriarchal family arrangements. Furthermore, traditional Muslim religious wear may provoke resentment in members of the majority society, thus making acceptance and integration difficult. Policy analysis relies on interviews with support workers and persons concerned during data collection.

## 2. Definition and measurement of integration

### 2.1. Definition of integration

*"I can't get around clarifying what you consider to be integration",* answered one of the support workers in response to the question of what kind of own resources Muslim women coming to Hungary have for successful integration. In course of the interviews with several social workers, the question was often raised of what integration is. Sociological and anthropological literature mostly interprets the dynamic interaction between immigrant individuals

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<sup>3</sup> Menedék Association, 2020 [www.menedek.hu/hirek/uj-menekultugyi-szabalyok](http://www.menedek.hu/hirek/uj-menekultugyi-szabalyok)

and communities and representatives of the majority society in the conceptual framework of assimilation, whereas cultural and socio-psychological approaches often focus on acculturation.<sup>4</sup> According to a social worker interviewed during the research *“It is a very diverse subject, who is what kind of person and how he is integrated. Integration is a process of growth and varies greatly. It should be a two-way process and it would be important for them to maintain their integrity in their own culture.”* Based on practical experience and sociology definitions, the kind of integration expected by the majority society is closer to assimilation, i.e. to the abandonment of one’s own religious and cultural values with full integration into the majority society.

An important question for examining available own resources is where an individual integrates. After all, a person may fit perfectly into the Muslim community in Hungary, without becoming an active member of the majority society. In this case, integration takes place, but not in the majority society, but in a subculture. This phenomenon is called segmented assimilation in the literature. Assimilation is not necessarily a linear process but can have multiple directions and occur in a variety of patterns.

## 2.2. Measuring integration

Integration was measured based on the indicators of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (hereinafter NIEM). Indicators related to the socio-cultural and socio-economic integration of persons concerned are of paramount importance for the present research, as they can be used to discover most of one’s own resources or to activate existing ones. In the present policy analysis, the own strategies and resources of Muslim women with international protection are examined that are used in language learning and orientation in society, in educating their children, in strengthening their social participation and in their employment in the labour market.

## 3. Structure of the research

### 3.1. Outlines of the research

Personal in-depth interviews are the most appropriate way to present this topic because this enables us to get first-hand information that would be

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<sup>4</sup> Kováts András: A bevándorlók társadalmi integrációja – koncepciók és indikátorok. In Kováts András (szerk.): *Bevándorlás és integráció – Magyarországi adatok, európai indikátorok*, Budapest, MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont, Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2013, 9.

otherwise difficult to measure with methods suitable for collecting representative data. Central to the selection of the interviewees was their direct professional contact with Muslim women from third countries granted international protection, and that women concerned cover the groups the research was conducted on. In other words, among the respondents, there should be some who came alone, some who arrived in Hungary with their married family (into which we enter) or the family of origin (into which we are born).

Due to COVID-19, most of the interviews were conducted online, with only one in person interview. Four support workers, a legal counsel, and four women concerned were interviewed between August and September 2020. Of the interviews with the persons concerned, two were conducted in Hungarian, one in English, and one in the interviewee's mother tongue, with the assistance of an interpreter.

The women interviewed are between the ages of 22 and 55, one single, two married and one widowed. According to them, they are all Muslim, and they also practice their religion. Two of them wear headscarf in accordance with traditional Muslim religious attire. One of them lives alone, two with their husbands and children, and one with her family of origin. One of them took a job offered in the open labour market, two run the household and raise their children, and one of them lost her job just days before the interview. They are all affiliated with the Menedék Association through the Association's programs: three participate in programs organised by the women's club and one by the youth club.

### 3.2. Areas of integration where persons concerned encounter obstacles

Interviews with support workers highlighted four contexts in which difficulties emerged in the integration of Muslim women from third countries granted international protection. These include:

#### ► **A hostile attitude from the majority society**

Following the migration crisis in 2015, resentment towards foreigners increased significantly in Hungary as a result of the government communication, which indirectly hinders the integration of those arriving here.

#### ► **The impact of family of origin and married family and religious communities on integration**

Female members of families following conservative values are less likely to build closer relationships with members of the majority society than those living in modern families.



► **There is equality of rights, but there is no equality of opportunity**

Hungarian citizens and beneficiaries of international protection have (with a few exceptions) the same rights, but in practice the effectiveness of law enforcement differs.

► **Institutional dimension**

Bureaucracy, language barriers and lack of communication between institutions can in some cases create barriers to integration.

### **3.2.1. A hostile attitude from the majority society**

In Hungary, the percentage of the population with resentment towards foreigners has ranged between 20-40% since the early 2000s. The government's 2015 communication intensified this rejection, bringing it to 67% by 2018, writes Endre Sik, senior researcher at Tárki, in an article published in the 24.hu in 2018.<sup>5</sup> *“Several studies show that in the 2014–2018 government cycle, there was a significant increase in xenophobia in Hungary and especially in the rejection of those arriving from poorer countries outside Europe.”*<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the acceptance of Islam began to decline significantly. Until 2015, there was no, or very little Islamophobia in Hungary, given the size of the Muslim population in Hungary, which did not exceed 0.3% of the total population. Following the 2015 wave of refugees, the government's openly xenophobic and anti-immigration policy reshaped public opinion and created an image of an enemy that was embodied by a presumably Muslim man or woman from a foreign culture. They linked the concepts of Islam and terrorism, thereby increasing Islamophobia and enhancing prejudice among receptive members of the majority society.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.2.2. The impact of family of origin and married family as well as religious communities on integration**

Integration into the majority society is more difficult for Muslim women living with a family of origin or married family based on a patriarchal form than for those living in a more modern environment. In conservative communities, it is not the job of women to engage in employment unless the family needs

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5 [Sik Endre: Nyomkodja a kormány a pánikgombot, így egyre jobban irtózunk az idegenektől](#) 24. hu, 2018.

6 Bíró-Nagy András: Politikai lottóötös: a migráció jelentősége a magyar politikában, 2014–2018. In *Várakozások és valóságok. Parlamenti választás 2018*, Budapest. Napvilág Kiadó; MTA TK PTI, 2018., 269-291.

7 Vidra, Zsuzsanna Dr.: [Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Hungary](#). (Counter Islamophobia Kit Project) Leeds, Centre for Ethnicity & Racism Studies, 2017, 12.

it financially. According to the support workers interviewed, it is common for women not to have sufficient time to learn Hungarian in addition to raising children, or even if take Hungarian classes, they cannot practice or prepare at home. The lack of Hungarian language skills narrows the possibilities of contact with the majority society. These women were also in a significantly more difficult situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the closure of schools and kindergartens, they are burdened with home-schooling their children. This is further complicated by communication with teachers in the absence of a common language.

*“I remember a client who has lived in Hungary like this for about 15 years and speaks little Hungarian... there are several of them, and it’s very interesting that they can live like this for this long.”* In this case, the support worker refers to women who did not come to Hungary at the same time as their husbands. In these cases, the husband, who had previously been recognised as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, had lived in Hungary for years and chose a spouse from his country of origin. The wife will then receive a residence permit for *Family Unification*<sup>8</sup> which allows her to move to Hungary. Later, in Hungary, she can apply for international protection by invoking the status of her spouse, who is already living here and is recognised as a refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection.

Although a religious community may be important for a sense of security, it is common for Muslim immigrants arriving in Hungary not to attend mosques here. Based on interviews with persons concerned, this may be due to overly conservative values or ethnic and/or political differences that already exist in the countries of origin. According to one person concerned, her husband does not visit the mosque because he would have to pray there with people from whom he had fled his country. Another interviewee talked about the fact that in some mosques in Budapest, too much emphasis is placed on strict and sometimes meaningless rules instead of the spiritual beauty of Islam.

### **3.2.3. There is equality of rights, but there is no equal opportunities**

In the European Union, the member states want to avoid the creation of ‘integration factories’ that build on the same schemes and methods, and everyone is encouraged to integrate with the same means. Perhaps there is no perfect ‘recipe’ for integration. According to the legal adviser interviewed during the research, there has been no real integration strategy in

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<sup>8</sup> OIF: Residence permit for family unification...in the case of the spouse of a person recognized as a refugee, the spouse may obtain a residence permit for the purpose of ensuring family cohabitation if [the marriage was concluded before the person recognized as a refugee entered the territory of Hungary](#).

place in Hungary in recent years. Before 2014, there were sporadic subsidies that helped newcomers to Hungary in housing or education. These were replaced by the integration agreement introduced in 2014, which made financial support subject to certain conditions. The contract provided for a two-year grant amount, taking into account individual circumstances and needs. In addition to the financial support, beneficiaries of international protection could spend two additional months at the reception centre after the decision on their status. Participation in state-funded Hungarian lessons was one of the conditions of the agreement.<sup>9</sup> Later, in 2016, the Hungarian government decided to abolish this as well on the grounds that no immigrant should have more rights than Hungarian citizens. Thus, those who come here “*had to rely on NGOs or themselves,*” stated one of the support workers interviewed. The website of the National Directorate General of Alien Policing states that “International protection of refugees and beneficiaries of international also means, that these persons will have the opportunity for social integration in Hungary in the long run, their status confers on them rights similar to those of Hungarian citizens and imposes obligations on them.<sup>10</sup> That is, Hungary ensures equality of rights. For a person granted international protection to be able to exercise his or her rights, which are the same as for Hungarian citizens, he or she must overcome obstacles such as lack of language skills, prejudice in the majority society and difficulties arising from cultural differences. Thus, there is equality at the level of legislation, but no equal opportunities.

#### **3.2.4. Institutional dimension**

Authorities and support institutions, such as government windows, family support centres and employment centres, or the services of specialist clinics are used in large numbers by those subject of this research. Bureaucracy and language barriers pose various difficulties in public administration; enrolling children in schools, accessing health care services, and communicating with authorities. To overcome these difficulties, they request help from the local family support centre, the local council or NGOs working with migrants. Lack of communication and cooperation between the various organisations gives way to games<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Migration Strategy adopted by Government Decree 1698/2013 (X. 4) and the related seven-year strategic [planning document](#) related to the Asylum and Migration Fund to be established by the European Union in the 2014-2020 financial period

<sup>10</sup> OIF: [Subsidies for refugees and protected persons](#)

<sup>11</sup> A game is an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions progressing to a well-defined, predictable outcome: Games people play, Budapest, Hättér Kiadó, 2013, 55.

and institutional dependence<sup>12</sup>. According to the support workers, sometimes clients ask several helpers and organisations to solve the same problem at the same time, thus, these institutions work in parallel on the same case, extinguishing each other's efforts.

## **4. Own resources and strategies of Muslim women granted international protection for their integration**

It is difficult to make general statements on how to integrate a person successfully. Nonetheless, the results of the research show that coherent strategies can be outlined that help the integration of Muslim women from third countries granted international protection.

The findings for each topic are not applicable generally either, some experience may be different. The resources and strategies listed are based on the experience of the support workers and interviewees involved in the research. Any social, spiritual, physical or material means can be considered as a resource that immigrants consciously or instinctively use to integrate into the majority society.

### **4.1. Family of origin and married family**

Integration into the majority society is sometimes hampered by a strongly patriarchal family model. However, Muslim women living with their families can have wider contact with the local population and their immediate environment, through their children, husband, father or a male family member. Both social workers and persons concerned mentioned educational institutions as a platform to meet with members of the majority society. In this environment, they can connect with the parents of other children and the professional involved in educating the children.

According to the interviewees, they have several Hungarian acquaintances through their husbands or fathers, who work with Hungarians, but they are mostly referred to as friends of their husbands, fathers. Deep relationships do not always develop, but persons concerned still have the opportunity to receive information about the majority society and find their own place in the community. One married interviewee put it this way:

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<sup>12</sup> Institutional addiction in a broader sense is a behavioural disorder that can be traced back to a longer institutional stay (hospital, foster home, social home, institute, reception centre).

*"I have acquaintances through my husband. My husband works with Hungarians. I also know Hungarians through my children."*

And the interviewee living with her family of origin said the following:

*"My dad is currently a car broker. He works with truck dealers. He is the one who closes the deal. If someone needs a car, my dad happens to know one, then my dad connects them and he has a business out of it."*

*Interviewer: Does he know many Hungarians like this?*

*Interviewee: Yes, yes."*

The duality that can be found in the majority society can also be observed among Muslim women granted international protection living in Hungary. Muslim women living in families and single Muslim women follow different strategies in Hungary. Regarding single Muslim women, financial insecurity and lack of cultural attachments can facilitate integration; it is possible to bring something good out of a disadvantage or shortcoming. If an individual does not have a support network and cannot be supported by her family of origin either, she is forced to take a job to make a living. An excerpt from an interview with one of the support workers also suggests this.

*"For single women, it is perhaps clearer that there is no other way than to work. There are a lot of women, even if strongly or seriously religious, who are alone or raising their children alone, even if supported by a community or if their family helps from home or receives some outside help, they are also much more likely to fit into the job market because they are financially in need."*

On the other hand, if she does not have a supportive environment, her family, or her own community, she may run into difficulties, especially at the beginning of her stay in Hungary, thus her social and economic security may be at risk.

## 4.2. Dress as a resource

During interviews with support workers and persons concerned, it was discussed whether wearing a headscarf helps or hinders integration. It may be that the traditional religious wear of Muslim women provokes resentment or distancing from members of the majority society, but helps them to integrate into the Muslim community in Hungary. Recognising these possibilities and consciously reflecting on them can be a resource. The following interview excerpt is an example of when it was a resource and an advantage for a Muslim woman to wear a headscarf because that is how she made friends.

*"Interviewer: Do you know her from the Muslim community and is she Hungarian?"*

*Interviewee: I do not know her because of the Muslim community, but because*

*of the religion. Because she was in a headscarf, too. We met on the street. On the tram, there was a conversation between three or two stops. And she then gave me her phone number.*

*Interviewer: The headscarf has brought you friends.*

*Interviewee: Yes, the scarf can be an advantage.”*

Passive opposition to Islam, which has intensified since the 2015 refugee crisis, prompted one of the young women living with her family of origin to stop wearing her headscarf because she felt that it hindered her in her daily life. She said members of the majority society were hostile to her, making comments about her.

*“Then, for some reason, I started to wear a headscarf just when this influx of refugees started here in Hungary. And then it made my life very difficult and then I decided to let it go because it’s too much and it really hindered me in everything and people spoke contemptuously to me.”* An interview with a support worker revealed a case when a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf for religious reasons was not hired in a restaurant just because of her attire. Later, the same woman decided, suppressing her own culture, to give up wearing a headscarf to get a job more easily. She was soon employed as a kitchen assistant in a restaurant.

### 4.3. Financial background

In discussions with social workers, it has often been suggested that lack of money can facilitate integration. This is because it forces single or married women to start working as soon as possible, thus, they meet the majority society sooner and more frequently. On the other hand, women with a solid financial background can focus on other areas of integration, such as language learning.

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded, that those arriving alone are forced to find a job as soon as possible. However, it is not clear that this would really speed up integration into the majority society. This is because they find work in a segment of the labour market where there is no scope for advancement, so they get stuck on a level, and although they can change jobs, the type of job does not change. This was also reported by one of the social workers:

*“It’s good that and now I am talking about the times before Covid, but it was easy for anyone to find a job, but these are jobs that you get stuck in and I don’t mean that you have to work there forever. Because it’s easy to go somewhere else, but there’s no chance to advance. And this is precisely due to the lack of the opportunity for them to learn Hungarian before or while trying to integrate into the labour market.”*

#### 4.4. Ethnocultural community

This is one of the most interesting resources in terms of the direction of integration. The individual is often perfectly integrated into his or her own community in Hungary, but not or only to a very small extent into the majority society. Keeping in touch with their own community can help create the resources that provide a solid foundation for integration.

The research revealed that beneficiaries of international protection living in Hungary receive a sense of security and a lot of help from their own community living here, whether it is for work or housing.

*“My first job, of course, was cleaning. But I did not clean cars, but for an Arab family, who work at the Saudi embassy, I cleaned their flat.”*

*“I found [an apartment] alone, but of course I had help. You can’t always start from scratch. An Arab man who now lives in the flat below us helped. He has a phone shop in an underpass and I knew he was Arabic and I once asked him if he knew a flat I could rent. He said he has a flat of his own that he now lives in, but he will move because he bought another one. It just needed to be renovated. He said I could move in a month or two. I waited and now I live here.”*

#### 4.5. Religious community

Most mosques in Hungary are attended not only by devotees with a migrant background, but also new converts to the Islamic religion. In mosques, women also have the opportunity to meet members of their own religious community and majority society. It is also common for community members to help each other with favourable housing.

During the conversations, however, it was revealed that most of the respondents rarely or never go to the mosque. There are various reasons for this, which are described in the interview quotes below.

One of the respondents, under the pressure of her husband, only goes to the mosque during major Muslim holidays:

*“I only go to the mosque during the holidays, and I am the only one from my family (during Eid) [...] My husband doesn’t like the people who go to the mosque. I do not know why. Maybe because they are Qataris and Saudis. My husband thinks the Saudis support the war in Syria. That’s why only I go there and only to pray at holidays.”*

Another interviewee could not or did not want to share the reason why she did not join the religious community in Budapest:

*"I'm not going to [the mosque] right now because it's very far from us. [...] We didn't go to the mosque before either. There's no particular reason for this, I didn't think about it because it doesn't matter much, we just didn't consider it important. We didn't have time for it either."*

Another young respondent, referring to the community, explains why she does not like going to the mosque:

*"No. [refers to not going to the mosque] I don't like the community there."*

However, among the interviewees there was also a person for whom the mosque is a safe place, she is happy to go there and makes friends and acquaintances there. The following quote also refers to this:

*"They also help me from the mosque, so I got help everywhere. During Ramadan and also before [...] Through me, the mosque found people who were poor or have nothing to eat or had become unemployed."*

#### 4.6. Language skills

Knowledge of Hungarian is clearly an advantage in the integration into the majority society. However, learning Hungarian as a foreign language is not always easily and equally accessible for everyone.

Their Hungarian language learning depends on their family and financial background. Several language schools offer Hungarian language courses, but not everyone can afford them. At present, in Hungary, apart from the project-based language teaching organised by non-governmental organisations, there is no language course that the Hungarian state would provide free or at a reduced price to those in need. Free language lessons are often not attended by those concerned because they are unable to break away from home due to their duties with children or running a household, or the class may be at an inconvenient time for them. Here the family, the husband, the parents play an important role in supporting them to be able to take time to learn Hungarian.

The knowledge gained in previous learning situation significantly influences the success of learning the Hungarian language. Muslim women from third countries who know the letters of the Latin alphabet and already have language learning experience are more likely to cope with the challenges of learning.



Furthermore, their future goals also influence the way they learn Hungarian. Those who want to study in Hungarian or find a job in the labour market, put more effort into learning the language.

The information gathered during the interviews confirmed the assumption that a person who speaks Hungarian confidently can find a job or housing more easily. The interviews revealed that the respondents wanted to learn Hungarian, but they did not have time for it because of raising children or working. It also happens that their lack of knowledge of Latin letters or illiteracy hinders them from learning Hungarian. Two of the four interviewees speak Hungarian well and were able to take up work in the open labour market. They are more easily connected to members of the majority society.

#### 4.7. Workplace

Based on the information obtained from the research, jobs can be divided into two categories according to the origin of the majority of those working there: the first one, where almost only Hungarians work, the second includes businesses operated by members of the diaspora. Jobs where the majority of workers are Hungarian support integration. Working here gives them the opportunity to build relationships with members of the majority society and, thus, learn about local culture and norms.

Enterprises run by immigrants, where immigrants work with those from their country of origin, provide an excellent opportunity to integrate into their own diaspora in Hungary. But in this case, there is a risk (if we can consider it a risk) that they will become too dependent on their own community and will not have the opportunity to develop a broader network of relations, including members of the majority society. It is easier to get into these jobs, as there are no language barriers in this case. Integration into the majority society is indirectly supported by these jobs by helping their employees to establish financial security. However, the acquisition of the Hungarian language is thus not very effective, because *“employees working within migrant economic clusters without external relations are also linguistically segregated.”*<sup>13</sup>

The research did not make a general finding about Muslim women from third countries granted international protection. Their employment is very varied and often depends on their knowledge of Hungarian.

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<sup>13</sup> Tóth Lilla: [Mit tudunk a bevándorlókról Magyarországon?](#) Magyar Tudomány, 175. évf., 2014/5, 634–639.

## 4.8. Neighbours

During the interviews with migrants, neighbours were often identified as a resource and connection with the majority society. The interviews revealed that most interviewees received the most positive feedback from their immediate environment. Respondents have a friendly relationship with the neighbours, sometimes have a closer relationship and entertain each other, or the neighbours replace a family left in the country of origin.

*"We have had a very good relationship with our neighbours. With our neighbour opposite us, from day one. It's a great neighbourhood. They know we are foreigners, but no one has any problem with that. Now a Hungarian mother and her child from the neighbourhood live with us. They were in a very difficult situation, so we took them in."*

*"It's funny, but I didn't really have friends until secondary school. There were a couple of girls I talked to, but we weren't really friends, we only met when they had nothing else to do. But we weren't friends. However, I had an exceptionally good relationship with the neighbours, and they were all elderly ladies and gentlemen, so for me, they were my friends at the time. And then, after secondary school, I had friends from my peers."*

It is hard to define what the concept of friendship means to various people. It may be that the openness of older people has replaced the security provided by the extended family (grandparents, aunts). Or she could discuss topics she heard at school with neighbours belonging to the majority society, that she did not want to or could not with her own parents because of the cultural differences.

However, it also happens that the relationship remains at the level of friendly neighbours and does not become closer.

*"They are all very kind and friendly and human. Everyone is cool. But we don't do anything together because everyone has small children. I don't have any (little ones). There are families with small children. We greet each other and ask how we are, give each other cakes, but that's it"*

**Table 1.** The role of resources in helping and hindering integration

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Helps integration</b>	<b>Hinders integration</b>
Family of origin and married family	contact with the majority society through family members (children, husband, father)	patriarchal family model
Attire	integration into the Muslim community in Hungary	the resentment of the majority society of traditional Muslim religious wear
Financial background	financial insecurity encourages the person to work	getting stuck in a job
Ethnocultural community	networking and establishing basic conditions	they only integrate here
Religious community	mutual support among group members	the group is very diverse, usually religion is the only common interest
Language skills	knowledge of Hungarian clearly facilitates integration	not available to all
Workplace	learning Hungarian and contact with the majority society in addition to financial security	employed in an enterprise run by a migrant where there are only people from her own ethnocultural environment
Neighbours	quick feedback on how the majority society perceives the person	superficial relationship

Source: own compilation based on interviews

## 5. Policy recommendations

Integration reduces the social exclusion of migrants and helps to create an inclusive community. Even though Hungary does not have a strategy for integration that provides concrete steps or tools, migrants living here are embarking on the path of integration using their own resources. Through successful integration, the women concerned can fulfil the responsibilities required by their own culture, can practice their religion if they want to, but also find a place in the majority society. To achieve all this, they need a supportive family, a community, knowledge of Hungarian and a solid financial background which also ensures their housing. By consciously using these resources, it would be possible to build a loosely framed informal strategy.

- ▶ Muslim women living here are best reached through their husbands and children and neighbours, therefore it is expedient to focus on programs and efforts suitable for integration connected to the family and the residential community.
- ▶ Regular children's programs and women's clubs, organised in Budapest at district level and in rural cities at municipal level, could increase the frequency of interaction between members of the majority society and migrant communities. In order to develop a closer relationship between the members of these two groups, it is important to know the common language, which in most cases is Hungarian.
- ▶ Free or discounted Hungarian language courses provided by the government and organised by local governments would ensure significant progress in integration.
- ▶ As integration is a two-way process and depends to a large extent on the openness of the host society,<sup>14</sup> it would be very important to change the current attitude of the majority society, which can be achieved by the cooperation of professionals, NGOs, local governments and the central government.

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<sup>14</sup> Kováts András: A bevándorlók társadalmi integrációja – koncepciók és indikátorok. In Kováts András (szerk.): *Bevándorlás és integráció – Magyarországi adatok, európai indikátorok*, Budapest, MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont, Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2013, 10.