



Sixth Framework Programme
for Research and Technological Development



Integration of Female ImMigrants in Labour Market and Society. Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations

This study explored and analysed the impact of integration policies, national and EU, on the position of migrant women within EU countries in the last decade, and on this basis will formulate recommendations for appropriate policy that fosters their integration and produces greater social cohesion. The focus was on social integration processes understood as participation, access and belonging. A central assumption was that integration policies should attend to the agency of the persons involved. The analysis of the integration processes therefore focused not only on barriers for social integration and on their removal, but also on the migration strategies and life plans of the female migrants. The project employed a four stage analysis: first, analyzing policies affecting the integration of female migrants, second, analyzing the migration flows as well as the demand for the labour of female migrants, third, analyzing integration processes in relation

to female migrants and fourth, analyzing processes relating to the implementation of social policies. The project employed a combination of methods. Statistical quantitative methods were used to outline the character and forms of migration, employment and stay. However, a biographically based and agency-sensitive evaluation was at the core of the analysis. On the basis of this agency-sensitive biographical evaluation of policy, the project formulated recommendations for better policies both on the national and EU level aimed at the integration of female migrants in a socially cohesive manner. The analysis covered 11 national cases that comprise typical cases in relation to migration policy (highly regulated versus unregulated immigration), in relation to welfare systems (North versus South European countries) and in relation to member status in the EU (old versus new member states).

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FeMiPol: Conclusions from the Conference held in Brussels on 31st March 2008

1. Migration, both globally and to the EU, has increased significantly in the last decade and women make up approximately half of all migrants. Virtually all EU countries face labour shortages and although this may be moderated by economic recession, there is no indication that the need for female migrant labour will abate in the medium term. Moreover, while global income inequalities remain at the present level it is likely that there will continue to be a stream of migrants wanting to enter the EU.
2. The EU is concerned to ensure that migrant labour is integrated into the labour market and society as part of the social cohesion agenda. Most of the women in our sample have indicated a willingness or desire to integrate but they face a variety of obstacles. Moreover, the narratives of the women interviewed indicate that some of the migration and labour market policies passed in recent years in the EU have made integration more difficult. Nevertheless, migrant women are not passive but on the contrary have adopted a number of strategies (agency) to tackle their discrimination and inferior labour market position.
3. Attempts to manage migration have resulted in at least a degree of failure. Controls on immigration have led to the growth of irregular, often short-term, undocumented female labour into informal employment which has added to the problems of integration. Female migration into informal employment was mainly a Southern European phenomenon but in recent years it has become a more common feature of the labour markets in the UK, Sweden and France.
4. The possession of residence rights and a work permit facilitate integration but they are not sufficient. Integration into the labour market is a first step and highly desired but many female migrants enter into one of the bottom rungs. De-regulation and flexibilisation have resulted in female migrants being concentrated in low paid, low status jobs, suffering insecurity and exploitation on the margins of the labour market and society. Moreover, a large number of female migrants experience de-skilling and downward social mobility. In the case of asylum seekers, they are generally not legally allowed to work and many of them are forced into the informal sector with adverse consequences.
5. There is a need to give explicit recognition to the diversity amongst migrant women. Many female migrants to Europe from outside experience exclusion, frustration and demoralisation as they become de-skilled and lose their competencies. There is a perception that the future costs of ignoring this problem could be immense and much greater than if it is addressed without delay.
6. Large numbers of female migrants are employed in the informal sector. Many are irregular migrants or from third countries. Sub-contracting often results in informal contracts and workers' rights may be severely constrained. Labour market segmentation and the creation of ethnic niches limit access to the majority society. Institutional and structural discrimination perpetuates inequality.
7. Many domestic and care workers in Southern Europe have informal contracts and an unstable legal status. In the UK only part of care work is in-house and most of it is provided by female migrants in care homes for the elderly. Domestic work may be a stepping stone to residence and/or other work or study but many migrant women remain trapped in this sector. There is widespread support from NGOs and self-help groups for the professionalisation of this work.



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8. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the regularisation of domestic and care work would be sufficient to improve integration as, in the case of Germany at least, it might become too expensive for middle class households. Other measures are required to empower and emancipate these workers and the role of trade unions, NGOs and other self-help groups could be central to this. Nevertheless the promotion and support for self-help groups is not seen as a priority in the EU.

9. There is evidence that the prostitution and entertainment sector is expanding and highly organised. There has been a growing presence of foreign women, many from outside the EU, since the early 1990s. The reasons why migrant women enter this sector are varied: it can be a source of fast income; it may be an escape from low income and undesirable jobs; or it may be viewed as a gate opener to the EU. Some of the women in our sample worked as

prostitutes in their own country. Most prostitutes enter the EU autonomously although within the sample some were smuggled or trafficked. The terms, conditions and place of work vary, often depending on legal status. Dancers and strippers generally enter on visas or work permits. Apart from the victims of trafficking few prostitutes appear to have any urgency about leaving this line of work.

10. Policies for promoting the integration of migrants vary within and between countries in the EU and there is evidence that national policies in some member states may in reverse. Governments have a key role in terms of policy-making but the raft of policies on migration, equality and integration often collide and are in conflict. There is a view that migration is being used as a short-term strategy for filling labour shortages but it is creating problems of integration.



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Key proposals:

- i Review the gendered effects of the increased stratification of entry and other rights relating to migrants within the EU.
- ii It is impossible to prevent unregulated work therefore there may be a role for a rights-based approach to work and employment irrespective of legal status and the diverse personal characteristics of migrants.
- iii The EU should consider providing financial and other assistance for self-help organisations supporting migrant workers.
- iv Asylum seekers should be given the right to work until a decision has been reached on their application rather than vice-versa.
- v Establish the professionalisation of domestic and care work.
- vi To improve opportunities there should be recognition of migrant skills (including the 'softer' skills) and qualifications and access to training, including free language courses and employability skills.
- vii Facilitate the provision of support for the most disadvantaged groups, including mentoring; trade union representation; combating discrimination at all levels.
- viii Provide exit strategies for irregular workers.
- ix Provide better information for migrant workers about their rights and conditions of employment.
- x Review policies to improve conditions and support for sex workers and to address the root causes.
- xi Review the criminalisation of commercial sex activities and the tying of work permits to specific employers.
- xii Promote an integrated set of EU policies on trafficking based on the tools developed in Italian law.
- xiii Review legal and social measures introduced for protecting the victims of trafficking and extend best practice to all victims.
- xiv Review the policy of resettling victims in country of origin and where applicable monitor assisted returns.
- xv Promote the civic participation of migrants, particularly women.
- xvi Encourage the enfranchisement of migrant groups without national citizenship in a variety of forms at the municipal and regional levels.
- xvii Introduce independent legalisation and processing mechanism for all female migrants, including asylum seekers and re-uniting family members.
- xviii Provide comprehensive information on immigration, residence and citizen laws and integration measures.
- xix Review work permit regulations for family reunion.
- xx Timely, transparent asylum decisions based on fairness and a recognition of the rights of the children of asylum seekers.
- xxi Review the link between work and residence permits.
- xxii Review the need for integration as a pre-condition for residence.