



## **Re: 10 key recommendations to be included in the Second European Agenda for Integration**

Brussels, 31 August 2010

The European Network of Migrant Women and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) have been closely following integration policies at the local, regional, national and European level. We have focused our work on the gendered dimension of integration policies and have strived to ensure that integration policies lead to an improvement of migrant women's lives. We aim to bring to this debate the experience of migrant women's and women's organisations on the ground.

You will find below 10 key recommendations to be included in the second European Agenda for Integration in order to ensure that integration policies take into account migrant women's specific situations and needs.

### **1. Integration policies and measures should include a gender equality perspective and pay attention to the specific needs of migrant women**

While particular attention to the specific needs of migrant women need to be looked at in the different measures that will be put into place, the integration of a gender equality perspective should also be an overarching objective of the second European agenda for integration. This is an obligation foreseen in the EC Treaties.

### **2. Policy coherence and effectiveness should be ensured at all levels**

While the Second European Agenda for Integration will represent a key milestone in the European integration policies, it is crucial that integration issues are mainstreamed in all relevant policies such as social inclusion, anti-discrimination and gender equality for example. Key links need to be made between these policies to ensure that a coherent framework is put into place. We call notably for the future new European Gender Equality strategy to pay particular attention to the integration of migrant women. The future European strategy on Violence against Women should also include measures to tackle the specific forms of violence experienced by migrant women such as Female Genital Mutilation and remove the legal obstacles faced by migrant women to access protection. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) should also be involved in the implementation of the Second European Agenda on integration.

### **3. The impact of immigration and asylum policies and legislation on the integration and fundamental rights of migrant women and men should be evaluated at European and national level and legal obstacles to integration and access to fundamental rights should be removed.**

Ministers have agreed at the Zaragoza Ministerial Conference on 15-16 April 2010 that integration issues should be incorporated in a comprehensive way in all relevant policy fields.

Mainstreaming integration issues also means that other policies should not impede integration. Our experience has nevertheless shown that current immigration and asylum policies can be strong obstacles to migrant women and men's integration and fundamental rights, especially when they impose restrictions on the access to the labour market and social services. The Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) should be systematically consulted and their opinion taken into account in the drafting process of new legislative and policy proposals that have an impact on integration, including immigration and asylum legislation.

For example, in most EU Member States, a woman who came with a sponsor's visa (for family reunion) has to wait many years to be able to acquire a status autonomous and independent of her spouse. If she is victim of domestic violence during this period, she is not entitled to a residence permit, nor does she have access to shelters. Leaving an abusive relationship would therefore mean becoming undocumented with very limited rights and being at risk of deportation. This represents a violation of women's fundamental rights as well as a main obstacle to their integration. Moreover, the increasing restrictions for family reunification and the fear of rejection has had a negative impact on the psychological well-being of many migrant women and men and their children with some of them falling into depression and prevent them from integrating into European societies.

**4. Civil society organisations, including migrant organisations, should be consulted in the development, follow-up and evaluation of integration policies at local, regional, national and European level.**

As recalled in the Conclusions of the Zaragoza Ministerial conference, 2 of the Common Basic Principles stress the importance of participative mechanisms that should involve both immigrants and citizens of EU Member States. The role of migrant associations as members of civil society has been highlighted at the Zaragoza Ministerial Conference. Particular attention should be paid to giving a role to civil society and migrant women's organisations in the elaboration and the implementation of the integration 'modules' discussed at the European level and already in place in some Member States. This is needed to fight against mutual stereotypes, to show diversity as enriching rather than threatening and to contribute to social cohesion.

**5. Initiatives for and by migrants, including migrant women's organisations, should be supported with specific funding lines and measures should be taken to increase the access to EU funding to migrants' organisations.**

The role of migrants' associations has been recognized in the integration process, but our experience has shown that they are increasingly struggling for their existence. The role of the European Integration Fund is crucial in this regard, but the co-financing requirements should be evaluated and reduced both for European and national-level projects, as funding from governments and foundations has been cut in the context of the economic crisis, which paradoxically renders such projects all the more necessary. Furthermore, based on the INTI evaluation<sup>1</sup> that showed how little migrant organisations were involved in INTI projects, it should become a requirement to have migrants' organisations, including migrant women's organisations, involved as leaders in all the projects supported by the European Integration Fund in cooperation with other stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> See final report: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/integration/docs/report\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration/docs/report_2009_en.pdf)

## **6. Specific measures should be taken to increase migrant women's participation in employment**

Ministers have agreed as part of the EU 2020 strategy to raise the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 from the current 69% to at least 75%. Ministers have also agreed at the Zaragoza Ministerial Conference that the gap between migrant women and men's employment should be monitored and that early assistance to migrants, women in particular, should be provided. We would like to call the attention of the European Commission and Member States that many migrant women and men are denied the right to work in the formal labour market because of their legal status (as asylum-seekers, joining spouse or undocumented): enabling them to work legally would enable them to contribute to European welfare states and lead to their economic independence, which is key to migrant women's integration. We have seen especially that:

- Long periods of denial of the right to work, as it is the case for asylum-seekers in Ireland, have proven to be a huge obstacle to their future integration into the labour market.
- Many migrant women, some of whom undocumented, working in the informal care and domestic sector are living and working within the European Union without any kind of protection and with very limited access to rights and services.

The lack, in many Member States of efficient systems for recognition of qualifications obtained in third countries and of top-up training opportunities for those lacking certain competencies entails that too many well-qualified migrant women are employed in low paid jobs, especially in cleaning and caring, a situation which, despite the importance of these roles, denies society the benefit of migrant women's skills and qualifications. Similarly, migrant women returning to the work-place after having children are often under-employed or discriminated against by employers. The EU and its Member States cannot tolerate such violations of basic labour and human rights and afford to waste human capital. We would also like to draw the attention to the need to remove the barriers to access affordable childcare as migrant women might have no access to subsidised childcare, which is often dependent on having long-term residence status and hence not be able to work.

To reach this goal, key efforts need in particular to be made in:

- Enabling and providing all migrant women to take affordable trainings and language courses and enabling them to work upon their arrival.
- Ensure that all migrant women and men workers, independently of their legal status, are granted the same rights than all workers.
- Provide legal labour migration channels
- The provision of care services to migrant women, irrespective of their legal status.
- Recognising the qualifications of migrant women and men.
- Providing opportunities for life-long learning for migrant women and ensuring equal access to education, including special assistance, for migrant girls.
- Implementing gender equality legislation including for migrant women.
- Ensuring that non-discrimination policies have a strong gendered perspective.
- Monitor the gap between migrant women and men's employment, in terms of their participation rate in the labour market, but also the quality of employment i.e. income, flexibility of hours etc.

- Provide appropriate support for migrant women and men who want to set up or develop their businesses; recognise that by contributing to local economies migrants are able to demonstrate true integration.
- Developing positive action measures aiming at having more migrant women into decision making positions

**7. The individualisation of rights and benefits is a core instrument to ensure the equal position of migrant women and men.**

It is essential that at every stage of the migration process immigrant women obtain rights and entitlements in their own right. The dependency created by immigration legislation such as family reunion for women is a strong obstacle to their integration process and represent a violation of their human rights and of the right to equality between women and men enshrined in the EU treaties.

**8. Develop research on the evaluation of integration policies that should be gendered, quantitative and qualitative and conducted in cooperation with civil Society organisations, including migrants organisations.**

Since the adoption of the Hague Programme in 2004, the importance of evaluating integration policies has been stressed. Research, should be developed, notably through FP7 and the European Integration Fund, on the impact of integration policies and measures on migrants and their everyday life and policies and legislation should be reviewed accordingly.

The Stockholm Programme calls for the development of core indicators in a limited number of relevant policy areas (e.g. employment, education and social inclusion) for monitoring the results of integration policies. Having looked at the conclusions of the expert meeting organized by the Swedish Presidency in Malmö on 14-16 December 2010, we welcome the mentioning of the need to have data by gender and age as well as socio-economic situation. We call nevertheless for evaluations to:

- Be Quantitative (with indicators) but also qualitative
- Integrate always a gender approach in the mechanisms, but also in the results and the analysis of the results.
- Be devised, conducted and analysed in close cooperation with civil society organizations, including migrants organisations

**9. Clarify and enhance the role of National Contact Points on Integration in organising and engaging in a consultation process with Civil society organisations, including migrant women's organisations, on the national level**

The National Contact Points on Integration's role should be clarified and they should be encouraged to engage in a consultation process with civil society organizations at the national level. A list of the NCPs should be regularly updated and be publicly available.

**10. Improve the functioning of the European Integration Forum and the link between the European Integration Forum and the Council**

The European Integration Forum represents one of the great achievement of the former European Agenda for Integration. Its use as a consultative forum should be enhanced by taking

some measures such as sending consultation papers at least one month in advance of the forum to enable the participants to consult their members or other organizations based in their country. The agenda of the forum needs to be systematically linked to the current discussions on integration at the European level to enable the discussions of the forum to feed with their expertise the debate on integration. It is also key that EIF representatives are invited to the EU ministerial conferences on integration to present the discussions and recommendations coming out of the forum.