“Social Integration of Ethnic Minority Women: Policy Proposals”
FEMM Committee hearing, 7 April 2010 – Speaking notes

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Let me first thank the FEMM Committee and the rapporteur of the upcoming report Ms Parvanova for having invited us to this very important hearing that comes at a very good time in the drafting of different European policies and legislations that will have a direct impact on social integration of ethnic minority women e.g. the EU 2020 strategy, the new EU Gender Equality Strategy (ex Roadmap), the action plan of the Stockholm Programme and the new 5-year strategy on integration (planned Communication of the EC by the end of this year).

We are pleased to be able to contribute to this upcoming EP report and welcome again the willingness and openness of MEPs to contributions of the civil society. We think indeed that the EC and governments would benefit from an increased dialogue with us as the expertise developed by civil society organizations could be better used to see the impact of current policies on the ground.

**Before going further, I would like quickly to explain what is the European Women’s Lobby.** The European Women’s Lobby, created in 1990, regroups more than 2000 women’s associations in the EU with a permanent secretariat in Brussels. EWL is structured in national coordination in 30 countries and in 20 European wide organisations. Our main goal is to work with our member organizations throughout Europe to lobby EU institutions for the realization of equality between women and men. We work therefore on different areas including:

- European policies and legislation related to equality between women and men including gender mainstreaming and anti-discrimination;
- Employment and social policies;
- Immigration, integration and asylum policies;
- Violence against women and women’s human rights;
- Women in decision-making and the promotion of parity democracy.

As you can see, all these areas relate directly to the topic we are discussing today. Parallel to our policy work, we have been running a project that is aiming at making migrant women’s organizations heard at the European level in all these different issues. One of the great success of this project has been the setting up of a European Network of Migrant Women, that will be officially launched on the 18 June 2010 at the EESC to which you are all invited. Our role as EWL has been to facilitate this process but also to provide them opportunities to engage with decision-makers and to meet with other networks. This hearing is one example out of many since 2007.

After this overview of our work, **let me now come to the crucial topic of my speech today: policy proposals to ensure the social integration of women belonging to ethnic minority groups.** At EWL, we believe that the main step is that each one of us, in our different locations, NGOs such as EWL, citizens’ representatives at all levels, functionnaires of the
European institutions, members of governments, strive to ENSURE that in our work on all policy areas, we work with what the academic world calls an intersectional perspective.

This means that whether we are talking about women in decision-making, violence, discrimination at the workplace, sexual and reproductive rights or prostitution, sexist oppression should not be apprehended through the abstract concept of the universal and unhistorical “woman”, but within a particular social context characterized by other forms of oppression. The same goes for racism: racism, as EWL has stated many times, is not towards an abstract and non-gendered “other”. Racist discrimination or discourses are grounded in the patriarchal system, they are therefore built by sexism. This does not mean that sexism is prior to racism, but that sexism will always have a particular impact on racism. What I’m saying today is not new: Black feminism, Chicana feminism, Third World Feminism and post-colonial academics have been leading figures in the feminist movement and academia in their attempt to deconstruct the universal figure of “women”. This has led many feminists to put at the center of their activism and thinking the intersectionality of oppression systems.

Intersectionality has however been recognized beyond the feminist movement and the academic arena: commitments exist at the international level (CEDAW (1979); Durban (2001)):

- CEDAW (1979) states that “the eradication of apartheid, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women”.
- Despite the harsh experience of feminist and women’s organizations in Durban in the NGO forum, the governmental conference recognized the gendered nature of discrimination and urged Member States to incorporate a gender perspective in all programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to involve women, especially women victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in decision-making at all levels.

What does this mean in practice at the policy-making level?, may many of you ask. An easy way is by asking yourself question such as:

- Do asylum policies and legislation enable women to integrate in the host society?
- Do family reunification policies and legislation enable women to integrate?
- Do employment policies take into account migrant women’s situation?

For this, evidence gathering and research are key. And in this process, the voices of migrant and ethnic minority women have also to be heard. We are really pleased in this regard that the first panel had 2 representatives of migrant women’s organisations and Roma organisations, this is not common in EU policy-making!

We however are not in a policy vacuum: we have to build on already existing legislation and policies and go a step further: translate all these commitments in actions!

- At the European Commission level, we have seen an increased attention to the need to incorporate gender in integration policies.

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1 See for an evaluation of Durban : CLEF and MAPP (2001) Durban et après, actes de la conférence du 7 décembre 2001
- At the European Parliament, the Kratsa report was adopted in 2006 by the F Emm Committee on Immigrant women in the EU that called Member States to guarantee respect for the fundamental rights of immigrant women, and their integration in economic and social life.
- At the Council of Europe, the Resolution 1478 (2006) of the Council of Europe on the integration of Immigrant Women in Europe emphasize the need to pay particular attention to ensure the specific needs of women migrants are taken into account and distinguished from men in line.
- Last but not least, the recent Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on integration that took place in Vichy on 3rd and 4th of November devotes a whole section on migrant women and states that migrant women should be a priority target group of integration policies.

I will pinpoint different recommendations, first cross-cutting recommendations and then by policy areas.

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1) DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH
   - Systematically collect disaggregated data by gender and ethnicity and other article 19 TFEU grounds: This will lead to better evidence-based policy-making. It is crucial that data collection is disaggregated, we have been striving for many years for gender-disaggregated data, it is essential but we desperately need to cross gender data with other data such as ethnic data, all article 13 grounds data should be collected (in the countries they are available). This will highlight the visibility of certain groups such as ethnic minority women or TCNs women.
   - The same in any research initiatives, we should encourage an intersectional perspective in research financed by DG research for example (very good example is the QUING project looking at equality policies from an intersectional perspective).

2) FUNDING, funding, funding... “le nerf de la guerre” as we say in French, 2 sides of the coin:
   - on the one hand, we need funding for social policies (including care), crucial in times of economic crisis, where social and anti-discrimination policies have been seen as a luxury (see EWL and OXFAM report on the economic crisis and its gender implications, available here: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/economic_crisis/economic-crisis-women-poverty-exclusion-eu.html ) and we need funding also for targeted initiatives for structurally disadvantaged groups.
   - e.g. in the case of the EU, we need a specific budget for the future European action plan on gender equality to ensure its effectiveness!
   - On the other hand, we need funding for NGOs that have been playing a crucial role in the integration of ethnic minority women, which has been now recognised BUT funding remains a key challenge whether it is for providing services at the local level
such as health services, shelters or legal aid or for research and advocacy work at the national, regional or European level.

e.g. Evaluation of the INTI programme states that Migrant organisations, i.e. organisations set up by migrants, were clearly underrepresented and counted only for 2% of the partners in INTI projects (2003-2008) while more than two third (70%) of the partners in INTI projects belonged to Non-Governmental-Organisations (NGOs)! And no projects had them as project leaders, their participation was rather focused on the implementation of project activities and the dissemination of results

The next question would be then: How do we ensure that migrant women’s organisations whose expertise has been recognised have access to EU funding that has as a specific target TCNs, and specifically migrant women?

Being in the EP, you have a key role to play in relation to your power over EC budget:
  - We have been asking for positive action measures in terms of funding for migrant women and ethnic minority organisations that compensate the existing structural inequality between NGOs, this could be translated in specific budget lines for ethnic minority and migrant women’s NGOs, less co-funding requirement (the 20% current co-funding at EU level is impossible to reach especially in times of economic crisis where funding has decreased substantially in many MS), lesser amount of funding (the bigger the full amount is, the bigger the co-financing and the harder to meet it).
  - Promote migrant women and ethnic minority organisation as project leaders and not as beneficiaries: this has been acknowledged by the EC following our interventions at the EIF as you can read in the EC communication to the Zaragoza conference.
  - Specific training to structurally disadvantaged NGOs that represent the target group of the funding in order to ensure their access to funding at the national level.

3) Consultation of civil society organisations, especially organisations representing the target groups of social integration policies. Their consultation is essential to hear the impact of policies on the ground.

BY POLICY AREA:
I am highlighting in each policy area crucial to social integration one specific policy recommendation linked to the EU agenda because of time constraint, but more can be found in EWL publications and positions as well as in the former speeches of the hearing.

1) DISCRIMINATION
Whether you are a third Country national or a Roma woman or a French woman of Moroccan origin, you might be exposed to discrimination because of your skin colour, discrimination is unfortunately a common feature of all the different groups.
  - Advocating for multiple discrimination clause to be included in European and national legislation (as it is in the case of Canadian and South-African legislation).
Example: Recently, we have been with the anti-discrimination networks strongly advocating the importance for multiple discrimination to be included in a consistent
way in the future anti-discrimination directive that the EC tabled in July 2008 and thank the MEPs to have included this in the report adopted in plenary in March 2009. See more recommendations in EWL publication on anti-discrimination: www.womenlobby.org

2) IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICIES:
I will not hide from you our serious concerns regarding the way integration policies have been recently moving ahead without us, especially under the French Presidency (we regret here the absence of any representative of the French Presidency who has since the beginning of the presidency refused any dialogue with NGOs on immigration and integration policies). Most national integration policies have been characterised by an overwhelmingly negative dialogue portraying migrants a “burden” to our societies that had led to the stereotyping and stigmatisation of migrants while not acknowledging the economic, social and cultural contribution that migrant women and men are bringing to European societies; WE TEND MORE AND MORE TO FORGET THE COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES ON INTEGRATION as it is more and more a one-way process! We tend more and more to put the responsibility on the migrants, and especially on migrant women, insisting on their needs to learn the language, get trained etc., but the other way, the host society in which migrants live tend to be more and more forgotten.

Example: FAMILY REUNIFICATION: MEPs should use the opportunity of the upcoming evaluation of the family reunification directive stated in the Stockholm programme to ensure that family reunification policies do not discriminate women and do not impede their integration.

➢ To grant migrant women an independent legal status, whatever the reasons of their stay, in accordance with Resolution 1478 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The EP report on women’s immigration had also stressed the need to revise the Directive 2003/86/EC and reduce significantly (if possible within one year of their arrival) the time required for a spouse to acquire autonomous and independent status. Migrant women organizations see this as one of the most crucial issues as they are confronted every day with women victims of domestic violence who can not leave their spouse because it would mean being expelled from the country.

➢ Ensure that the criteria used do not discriminate indirectly women e.g. do language and integration tests take into account the lower level of literacy of women in certain regions?

3) ASYLUM:
The asylum system in place in a country can also impede women’s integration. How can a woman integrate if she has to wait 5 years for her asylum application to be processed without the right to work and get further trainings?
See for more information: AkidWA report on the impact of the new asylum system in Ireland on women asylum seekers and refugees integration, available here: http://www.akidwa.ie/AmOnlySayingItNowAkiDwA.pdf
4) **EMPLOYMENT:** 2020 strategy, e.g. key to have specific measures to enable increased migrant women’s participation in employment (with targets), and access to childcare benefits as well!

5) **Violence against women**
1. **Proposals of the Spanish Presidency:**
   - **European protection order:** ensure that the European protection order apply for all women in Europe, whatever their migration status, marital status or nationality (no ground of discrimination should interfere anyway)
   - **European Observatory:** ensure that this Observatory is a strong branch of the European Gender Institute, that it works on the collection of data at EU level based on a feminist definition of male violence against women, comprising all forms of male violence against women, and that its work is based on a set of concrete and efficient indicators to monitor EU and Member States policies on the issue of combating all forms of male violence against women (the EWL has delivered a set of indicators establishing a framework to monitor progress on combating all forms of male violence against women); ensure that these indicators take into account all women, including those made vulnerable to male violence against women such as migrant women or women from ethnic minorities
   - **European phone line:** ensure that the European phone line is created in consultation with national and NGO services in all member states and includes the complementary support of existing local and regional phone lines and services providers; ensure that such phone lines, including the European one, are accessible to all women, including those made vulnerable to male violence against women (women from ethnic minorities, etc.), through adequate languages, information, access, etc.

**EWL demands:**
- **A directive and a European Action Plan on preventing and combating all forms of male violence against women**
- **A monitoring mechanism** that would ensure that the issue of male violence against women is ‘mainstreamed’ into all policy areas, including integration and inclusion policies, and that would take into consideration all women including those made vulnerable to male violence against women (women from ethnic minorities, but also old women, women with disabilities, lesbians, etc.)
- **Right to access to women’s shelters for migrant women, including undocumented women victims of violence.**
   It is unacceptable that in many countries migrant women, including undocumented, are denied access to women’s shelters. Many partners organizations have reported cases of women coming to them to ask help as they wanted to flee from their spouse, but they could not respond to this call as shelters were not accepting them as they were undocumented and even in some countries as they were third country national.

6) **RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE, INCLUDING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS.**
Access to health care is a crucial issue as demonstrated by PICUM project on this issue, it should be guaranteed to all migrants, independent of their status as specified in different human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The situation in the different member states differ greatly. Even in the member states, where the access is in theory granted by the law, it turns out to be different in practice as undocumented migrants face lots of obstacles. Being based in Belgium, I could testify how hard it is in practice for undocumented to be granted the right to emergency health care and how most of undocumented migrants are afraid and discouraged to do so, which results in many contracting debts to the hospitals. We believe that this right should be granted in all MS and should not be differentiated.

CONCLUSION
It is and will remain as well an everyday challenge for policy-makers and NGOs advocating for equality to look at a specific policy from a multiplicity of “entry points”, but it is essential to reach equal opportunities for all and not only for a few. For this to happen, and for equality between all women and men to materialize, we need strong political will, but also actions. That is why we particularly welcome the drafting of this report and look forward to working together to change the face of today’s Europe.