



EUROPEAN NETWORK OF MIGRANT WOMEN

Open letter: 4th Ministerial Conference on Integration

The European Network of Migrant Women calls on the ministers attending the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants in Zaragoza, Spain on 15-16 April 2010 to look particularly at the situation of migrant women as key social and economic actors in the integration of immigrants.

Brussels, 14 April 2010

RE: Upcoming 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants, “Integration as an engine for development and social cohesion.”

Dear Ministers,

On the occasion of the forthcoming 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants, the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW), representing migrant women’s organisations in 20 countries of the European Union (EU), calls for a strong gender, race and class perspective in the policies on the integration of immigrants.

We recognise the multiple challenges facing the EU in this period of economic recession. At times of rising unemployment and uncertainty, it is nevertheless crucial to be able to rely on policy-makers to guarantee the social inclusion of all women and men living in the EU – especially migrant women – and to recognise the social, economic and cultural contribution of migrant women and men to our societies.

We call for actions and public policies that do not stigmatise migrant women as a category of victims but which recognise and ensure their rights.

Gender Issues with respect to civil society and integration

For many migrant families, women play an essential role in the education of their children. It is important for those women who were educated overseas to pursue an educational future for their children, to have opportunities to further their personal development, support their families and enter the work-force in order to play their role as economic actors. This in turn has a positive effect as their children can see them as role models.

We call Ministers attending the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants:

- To support the participation of civil society, particularly migrant women’s organisations, to the drafting of integration policies, through notably their consultation and the financing of their activities, which are crucial for the integration of migrant women.
- To devote 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.
- To view the integration of migrant women as a priority as many of us can bring a wealth of experience that can contribute to the overall development of Member States.

Confronting the multiple violence faced by migrant women

For migrant women, one form of violence can hide another. To the violence they can be exposed to as women in their countries of origin or in Europe is very often added the institutional violence of European administrations towards foreigners.

We call on Ministers attending the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants to:

- Put measures in place to ensure legal recognition of women's independent status, independently of family or economic ties, which is the only legal status that can guarantee the respect and implementation of individuals' fundamental rights;
- Guarantee the fundamental rights of women and notably fight against forced marriages, Female Genital Mutilation, honour crimes and sexist crimes;
- Prevent any attempt of "reclusive communitarianism" that maintains traditions violating universal norms of women's rights and our laws, and fight against the multiple discrimination experienced by these women.
- Oppose patriarchal and religious power denying sexual and reproductive rights to migrant women.

Managing diversity at the local level

It is still a matter of concern that many cities in Europe do not acknowledge and positively embrace diversity. The role of migrant women's civil society organisations in this respect must be recognised, consistently encouraged and supported, including financially, by municipal authorities. Joint cultural celebrations can be a moment for exchange, mutual learning and appreciation, integral to intercultural dialogue.

We call on Ministers attending the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants to:

- Encourage diversity and intercultural dialogue in schools and various places where communities meet at the local level, enabling people to embrace diversity from an early age and embed it in the very fabric of society.

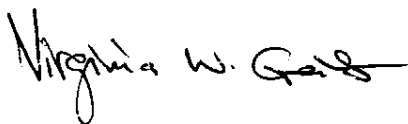
The importance of human capital

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. This entails that too many well-qualified migrant women are in positions such as 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 afford to waste human capital by an inability to act.

We call on Ministers attending the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Immigrants to:

- 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.
- Put in place transparent and prompt procedures for the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad; give access to vocational and life-long training as well as free language courses.

Yours sincerely,



Virginia Wangare Greiner

Chair of the European Network of Migrant Women