

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



FeMiPol Policy Brief

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**New Migration and Integration Policies in European Countries
and their Impact on Female Migrants**

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The FeMiPol project (Integration of female migrants in labour market and society. Policy assessment and policy recommendations) is funded by the EU's 6th Framework Programme. It explores and analyses the impact of integration policies affecting new female migrants in EU countries, with the aim of developing recommendations for appropriate policies. The project spans eleven European countries: Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Despite features which reflect specific differences in national socio-economic, political and historical backgrounds, a comparative overview of the countries under consideration reveals a certain level of convergence in national policies, due to a common European policy framework as well as global migration structures and processes. This convergence, however, is largely influenced by the core dilemma of the EU migration policy's oscillating between control measures and integration rhetoric. National policies also tend to cluster along the north south division, as well as the division between old and new European countries. One common characteristic among several northern European countries is the importance placed on restructuring the welfare state, combined with the increasing preference for a temporary labour migration regime, restrictions on family reunification, as well as an upsurge in assimilationist integration policies. In southern European countries, the unstable legalization of undocumented migrants is a common trait. New member countries are, for the most part, in the early stages of migration and integration policy development. While EU policy is of great importance for their national policies, as it is shown below, it does not always improve the situation of female migrants. Based on the policy analysis conducted in the first phase of the project, in this first Policy Brief we give an overview on migration and integration policies that affect female migrants in each of the European countries under investigation, focusing particularly on the most recent political and legislative developments.

Germany

In the context of demographic changes and a commercial demand for skilled workers, at the end of the 1990s debates on the reform of the Aliens Law in force since 1995 was initiated with the aim of liberalising immigration. The new law set a mark in the history of German migration policy as it denounced the previously dominant allegation that Germany was not an immigration country, and furthermore introduced, for the first time, integration as a central issue of federal policy. However, continuously high levels of unemployment led to a departure from this line of policy and the 2005 Immigration Act introduced further restrictions on immigration. The new Act confirms the recruitment stop of 1973 and makes immigration possible only for the highly qualified, self-employed, and family members. Less qualified labour migrants that are urgently needed in specific sectors of the labour market are only granted permits on a temporary basis. After Article 16 of the Basic Law that guaranteed the right for asylum was abolished in 1993, severe restrictions were imposed on the acceptance of asylum seekers. The new Immigration Act conceives integration policy as consisting mainly of integration courses for the newcomers: language and orientation courses which impart knowledge about the different institutions and values of German society. The growing emphasis on a specific set of values in the official understanding of integration has yielded debates concerning the introduction of a clause making qualification on a test of German history mandatory for the attainment of German citizenship.

The new Immigration Act together with new labour market laws, in particular the so called Hartz IV Law in place since 2004, are crucial elements of current efforts to reduce state welfare expenditure. As a whole, they lead to the marginalisation of migrant men and women in the low salary segments of the labour market, which further degrades their already disadvantaged position vis a vis the conditions they must fulfill in order to maintain legal status. Despite these general tendencies, current migration policy takes gender issues and women's rights into account and, in 2002, the period of time immigrating spouses have to fulfill before receiving an autonomous permit of stay decreased from four to two years. Moreover, with the Asylum Procedure Act of 2005, gender specific persecution was introduced as a relevant factor in questions of asylum. Concurrently, however, the discourse on women's rights seems to have become instrumentalized for immigration restriction. On the one hand, in the name of combating forced marriages, the conditions pertaining to family member immigration, most notably the immigration of spouses, have been tightened up, and on the other hand, the

undifferentiated coupling of sex work with human trafficking has led to the instrumentalization of trafficking policy to expel undocumented migrant sex workers, whereas the protection currently being offered to victims of trafficking is insufficient. Furthermore, the same discourse is also being instrumentalized in order to legitimize an assimilationist policy, aimed particularly at Muslim migrant populations.

A restrictive immigration regime combined with the demand for cheap labour led to the immigration of a large number of undocumented men and women. Despite the efforts of NGOs to safeguard human rights by offering assistance and advice to undocumented workers, official policy is strictly shaped by the principle of immigration control.

The UK

Central to current immigration policy in the UK is the government's aim to 'make migration work' for the country, in terms of making economic sense. This has led to the establishment of a so-called 'points system' for migration, favouring migrants who possess the skills and qualifications recognised as highly desirable by the British economy, while restricting access for migrants with a less desirable labour market profile. Aside from the 'highly skilled' category, the residence permits granted on all other points-levels include time limits. There are also restrictions on a number of rights, such as those relating to family reunification and settlement. The increasingly temporary regime being implemented in relation to labour migration is currently infiltrating into the asylum regime. For example, the government is intending to substitute permanent residence permits with five-year temporary permits. After this the situation in the sending country will be reviewed. The wider political context of these changes is the transformation of the welfare system and labour market to counter benefit dependency and promote economic growth. While at one level, the benefits of migration for economic growth and competitive advantage are recognised, critics point towards a great demand in unskilled labour not catered for by the points system. This, in combination with the de-regularisation of the market, is arguably producing irregularity. Another feature of the current migration system relates to the restriction of immigration from outside the EU. Although the UK was one of three countries that did not impose transitional measures for the new EU accession countries in 2004, the government has recently announced the intention to impose restrictions on entry from Bulgaria and Romania.

In terms of integration policy, the government is strongly emphasising the importance of social cohesion, and is concerned to promote a specific set of 'common values'. A citizenship test has been introduced as part of this strategy. Migrants applying for naturalisation must prove sufficient knowledge of British culture and language, and take part in a citizenship ceremony where they vow allegiance to Britain. The wider context of the current 'integration' agenda is a growing concern with the so-called 'parallel lives' of the majority and minority populations in the UK, regarded as the negative outcome of a multicultural policy which has been seen to promote difference. Another important context relates to the anti-terrorist strategy, which has significantly transformed the British political scene. Through the 'social cohesion' agenda, the government is hoping to secure the future stability of British society. However, critics point towards a tension between the integration agenda on the one hand and the increasingly temporary (as well as selective) regime for migration on the other, arguing that the latter risks undercutting the former.

Sweden

Swedish asylum and immigration policy has historically been rather liberal and inclusive in terms of granting both residence permits and rights to newcomers. The policy has however become increasingly restrictive with time, partly as result of European harmonisation, and policy developments as well as implementation have attracted a lot of criticisms from NGOs. Sweden is one of three countries that did not adopt transitional measures for the new EU accession countries in 2004. A major issue of debate in recent years has concerned migrant workers and wage dumping, and the approach of the Swedish trade unions has been a central point of contention. While the unions have been

concerned to uphold collective agreements in order to defend the rights and position of all workers, critics have questioned the extent to which they have opted for protecting their Swedish members rather than opening up the labour market and increasing opportunities for foreign workers. A case that brought these arguments to a head was the so-called Vaxholm case, where the Swedish trade union for construction workers fought against a Latvian company importing Latvian workers for wages below Swedish collective agreements for this sector. While the union won this specific case, the issue is likely to continue to surface in the next few years as part of the process of European integration, and particularly moves towards a common migration and labour market policy.

While the issue of immigration has not been as visible on the Swedish policy scene as in countries like the UK the policy area of 'integration' has attracted a great deal of debate. In 1997 a significant move was made from a former 'immigrant' policy to one of 'integration', signifying a shift from a group-centred approach to one centred on individual rights and responsibilities. Central to the new policy was to tackle discriminatory mechanisms. There has been an increasing focus on issues of structural discrimination and the recently completed so-called 'power enquiry' on integration is a sign that issues of ethnic discrimination and exclusion have achieved high priority on the political agenda. However, there is a lack of consensus surrounding this issue, and the new right-centre government has made transforming the integration policy into one of its priorities. It has announced the closing down, by next year, of the National Integration Board, which came to life during the development of the 'integration' policy in 1997, as well as the abolition of the government committee inquiring into the future of integration policy. The new government appeals to a shift in approach to integration, and emphasises language skills and employment as the two central components of a successful integration agenda.

The wider context of this policy is the transformation of labour market and welfare policies, for which two recent proposals are significant: one, the emphasis put on promoting entrepreneurship, and two, the creation of jobs in the dependent labour market by compromising the system of social insurance through abolishing contributions to the social insurance for those employing long-term unemployed (so-called 'new start jobs'). Furthermore, through the emphasis put on language skills, the 2002 debate on citizenship language tests is expected to surface once again and more generally, critics have warned of a 'culturalist turn' in the debate on migrants and integration in Sweden.

France

French migration policy has always oscillated between economic and demographic concerns, and, depending on economic and political conjunctures, gave priority to one or the other. In the years following the 1974 migrant labour recruitment stop, the legislation previously focusing on "temporary workers" has been gradually shifting its priorities to those "who came to France to stay". The length of stay in France and family links became stronger assets than work for immigrants who wanted to obtain residence permit. In 1976 a decree made provisions for family reunification for the first time. In the same time this also provided workers for those economic sectors in need of cheap and flexible labour. In 1984 the automatically renewable ten year residence card was introduced, enabling access to the labour market in any sector and anywhere in France. The last strong manifestation of this official "preference" for families vs. single workers was the 1997-1998 regularisation targeting mainly families in contrast to the 1982-83 massive regularisation procedure which gave priority to workers.

But by the end of the 1990 already there was a renewed shift of priorities to the labour market: the Chevènement Law of 1998 introduced some elements of "selection", facilitating entry of useful elites such as students, scientists. Today the page is completely turned with the recent legislation on immigration (mainly the Laws of November 2003 and July 2006) and the underlying discourse denouncing an "endured immigration" and longing for a "chosen" one, corresponding to the needs of French economy. It is as if the families designated as "endured immigrants" have not been so far contributing to fill the gaps in various economic sectors. In line with the EU-wide recognition of the necessity of immigration for the European economy the new legislation promotes selected immigration in specific economic sectors where job supply exceeds the demand (construction, catering

and in general “where vacancies exist and difficulties in recruitment are manifest”). The immigrants can be granted either a stay permit as “salaried workers” valid one year, possibly but not automatically renewable, or as “temporary workers” aligned in duration to the work contract. In order to attract skilled workers, a “skill and talent” permit has been created, valid for three years and renewable. The beneficiaries are people capable of contributing significantly to economic development or to intellectual, cultural or sportive achievements of France. The admission of students is also facilitated, so is their stay after completion of their studies. The best ones, those who find a job immediately within six months after obtaining their diploma will be able to remain. At the same time the right to automatic regularization after ten years of residency in France no longer exists.

While promoting selected immigration, the new legislation considerably restricted the rights related to private and family life, making more difficult not only the family reunification but also the stabilisation of immigrants’ stay in France and subjecting it to more conditions. The stricter criteria for appreciation of resources and a number of restrictions relative to obtaining and renewal of residence card as well as for getting naturalisation were introduced. What used to be naturalisation by simple declaration becomes subject to conditions: henceforth the claimants have to demonstrate their knowledge of French language and their republican integration – fairly subjective criteria, left to the discretion of administrative officers. The waiting periods (to bring over family members, to obtain a residence permit, to get naturalized) were extended. The new legislation targets groups that were so far exempted of the condition of having to provide a proof of integration: from now on, the manifest willingness to integrate in the form of a compulsory “Reception and Integration Contract” is required also from the spouses of the French for getting the residence card, from all foreigners who want to bring their families and from those who are, given their family ties, entitled to a special “private and family life” residence permit. The condition of integration is thus meant to transform the “endured” immigration into a “chosen” one.

Though indeed gender neutral, the new measures target immigrant women and men differently. Women are more likely to be among the reuniting spouses and to have their status tied to that of their husband. The legislation, by increasing the number of years of marital life as a condition for obtaining the residence card or for obtaining French citizenship, increases the spouse’s, i.e. primarily women’s dependent status in the couple. Separation or divorce then become highly risky and unlikely steps.

Italy

That Italy had become an immigration country was acknowledged late by the Italian government. Initial attempts at establishing general migratory politics failed in 1990. While migration flows grew in number and intensity after the fall of the Berlin wall, a consequence of the harsh conflict between the centre-left and the right-wing political forces was the exploitation of fears concerning irregular migration for electoral reasons. This partly explains why Italian migration policies mainly focused on the urgent problems. The “urgency” approach – clearly illustrated by the amnesty processes or regularisations of undocumented immigrants that took place approximately every five years – are characteristic of Italian migratory policies at that time. It must be stressed, however, that in 1998, the centre-left government of Romano Prodi tried to draw a comprehensive political framework for both immigration control and integration through law no. 40 of 1998, the “Consolidation Act on Migration”. Still, political conflict influenced the ways in which the Law was implemented. Due to the exploitation of the immigration issue in the right-left altercation, the measures of this law concerning control were implemented more forcibly than those focusing on integration. Integration measures were frozen under the centre-right government elected in 2001. Law no. 189/ 2002, “Modifications to the regulation of asylum and immigration” bound a residence permit to a work contract, proposing the idea that an immigrant is “good if profitable”, suppressed the most interesting parts of Law 40, which would have instituted the concept of sponsorship for labour migrants, and established the fixation of entrance to Italy for labour purposes to a system of quotas. Restrictions were also introduced in matters related to family reunion. Strict border control and the battle against irregular migrants turned out to be less than effective in avoiding the arrival of newcomers, as shown by the growth of the migrant population in Italy. Furthermore, the new stricter regulations forced many migrants, who had

already been regularized through the amnesty acts, to slip back into irregularity, as they were unable to demonstrate possession of an authorized work contract. In fact, the presence of a widespread underground economy stimulates irregular immigration, a result which fully contradicts the stated interest of the migration law (control in order to integrate) and coerces migrants (even the regular ones) to participate in black market labour practices. Consequently, even the Berlusconi government was forced to enact a regularisation process, or amnesty decree, which affected over 600.000 persons.

In the absence of national integration policies, integration processes take place mainly at the local level, thanks to collaborations between local authorities and the non-profit private sector of NGOs. It must be stressed that civil institutions, both religious (CARITAS) and secular (trade unions and human rights NGOs) have been active in the field of migration, developing a role that has compensated for the absence of state measures concerning migrant reception, support and integration. The “activism” of local actors is connected to the Italian state’s policy of decentralization: in fact, according to migration policies in force through Law No. 40, a wide number of responsibilities for the implementation of integration measures are delegated to local authorities and NGOs. Civil institutions have stimulated local dynamics, producing local answers to immigration issues, which is crucial in a country with the wide regional diversification inherent to Italy. This decentralized, non-systematic delegation of responsibilities has resulted in the promotion of a wide variety of local models of integration. With the exception of integration policies, other facets of migration policies are non-existent: most astonishingly, asylum. Italy is the only country among the old 15 EU member states without an asylum law. At the moment, the issue of asylum is dealt with through a series of changes to asylum procedures introduced by immigration law no. 39 of 1990, which itself was submitted to modifications of a restrictive character through the present immigration law (no. 189 of 2002). “Good practice” is the only reference to measures to protect the victims of trafficking. Law no. 228 of 2003 "Measures against trafficking in human beings", while introducing the offence of trafficking in human beings into the Italian penal code, establishes a practice of granting a temporary residence permit “for reasons of social protection” to trafficked persons who have been sexually exploited – even if they entered the country in an irregular manner or do not testify in court against their exploiters. Other than measures on the protection of trafficked women, there are no policies which specifically address migrant women. Theoretically they should benefit from the policies now in force for the benefit of Italian women, often in response to European directives such as equal opportunity measures. However, in the specific case of migrant women, in considering the position they hold in the labour market and their confinement to certain labour market sectors such as care work, it is clear that, at the moment, they are not benefiting from the equal opportunity policies addressing women in general.

Spain

Spain is clearly experiencing a phase of growth in its foreign population, escalating from 180.000 in 1985 to 2.738.932 in 2005. Immigrants with irregular status, whose presence is not negligible, should also be added to these figures. This development corresponded to a phase of economic growth, to which the work of the immigrants has largely contributed. The good economic climate can partly explain the absence of xenophobic parties in the political landscape, but it has not guaranteed the incorporation of the foreign labour into the “formal” labour market. The main economic sectors in which migrants are employed are agriculture, construction, low skilled and labour intensive manufacturing such as textiles and garments, metalworking and leather tanneries, and services, such as housekeeping, cleaning, child care, nursing the ill and the elderly, gardening, employment in hotels and restaurants, retail trade and street vendors. Irregular work is common in all of these sectors, especially in domestic services where a high number of migrant women are employed.

The Spanish migratory policies have been trying to control the phenomenon of irregular migration since 1985, with the approval of the first Organic Law on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain. This law represented an attempt to guarantee foreigners the rights foreseen by the Constitution and, at the same time, enforces strict controls on new entries, which were now only possible with a visa obtained in the country of origin. This Law, which ignored the integration issue, was an inadequate attempt to restrain irregular migration: at the end of the nineties, according to estimations,

three out of four migrants from non-EU countries were undocumented. In order to tackle this phenomenon, amnesty appeared to be a necessary measure, and the first one was enacted in 1991. Even after the 1991 regularisation, given the fact that most permits had to be renewed on a yearly basis, one out of four regularized migrants - especially those working in agriculture and domestic services - did not succeed in renewing their residence permit in 1994, since they did not possess a regular work contract. The introduction, in 1996, of a permanent residence card after five years of stay only partially solved this problem.

In 2000 a new Organic Law was approved: The strict control policies were abandoned in favour of “comprehensive policies” that acknowledged immigration into the Spanish economy and society, gave rights to immigrants, encouraged integration and promoted cooperation with countries of origin. The Aznar government tried to introduce more repressive measures in 2003, pertaining to matters of security, domestic violence and the integration of immigrants, by introducing new articles to the penal code. Following the victory of the Socialist party led by José Luis Zapatero in the general elections 2004, migratory policy is now characterized by a pragmatic approach which recognizes immigration as a structural phenomenon. As Zapatero himself declared at a recent Ibero-american meeting, migration policy must be “rigorous, realistic and effective” and promote the integration of immigrants in Spanish society. The Zapatero government transformed the most repressive aspects of the Law 14/2003 through implementation decrees. The battle against irregular migration remains a priority, but the government recognizes that this cannot be attained solely through repressive measures. The Zapatero government promoted an exceptional amnesty in 2005 and introduced a flexible gradual system that allows for individual development from irregular to regular status under certain circumstances (three years of stay and work). All these measures represent a serious attempt to both manage and fight irregular migration by recognizing the needs of the labour markets and human rights. At the same time, the Zapatero government is establishing ad hoc agreements with the countries of origin in an attempt to manage the flows. The 2005 regularization scheme benefited 700.000 migrant workers and allowed for the regularization of their jobs: 191.570 work permits were issued to foreign migrant domestic workers (of whom 89% were women), representing 33,4% of the total number of legalized workers. This extraordinary measure was criticized by Austria and Germany in the Justice and Home Affairs Council in September 2006. This is an illustration of the conflicting views held among European countries, and the difficulties encountered in the generalization of migration policies with effective social integration results, even though these policies were accompanied by successful economic performance.

Greece

Developing from an emigration to an immigration country, a main focus of recent Greek migration legislation has been on regularizing the status of irregular migrants. The first attempt was made in 1998, the second in 2001. The main objective of the new migration law, passed in August 2005 and concerning “foreigners’ entrance, stay and work” in Greece, is twofold: on the one hand, it offers illegal migrants living in the country a third chance for legalization, in conjunction with the control and the management of future migration flows, and on the other hand, it incorporates the EU directives pertaining to the right to family reunification and the rights of “long residence migrants” into the Greek legal system. Moreover, a declared objective of the new migration law is the rationalization of administrative procedures related to the regularization and issuance of residence and work permits. However, beyond these intentions, the perseverance of strict formal preconditions, in reality, discouraged a great number of migrants from applying for regularization. Moreover, the general conditions for maintaining the legal status are actually prohibitive, these include the short duration of the permits issued, the preservation and increase of bureaucratic procedures, and high charges stemming from stipulations linked to work and residence permits which currently amount to 150 Euro annually and constitute an indirect form of taxation on foreign nationals. Substantial measures for integration have not been proposed, apart from the vague criterion of “adequate knowledge” of the Greek language and history to be assessed by a special committee. This runs the risk of arbitrariness, particularly at the expense of female migrants who, working in an informal economy, have no access to information and training structures. Thus, although the legal reforms of the last decade aimed to

regularize the status of migrants, it is not certain whether the legalization procedures have contributed to the liberation of migrants from informal arrangements and hence the general shrinkage of informal economic activities.

Various implicit exclusionary mechanisms surface through the implementation of employment policies as well as those policies which aim to combat the exclusion of specific social groups, such as migrants. As a result, the policies that aim at integrating the unemployed in the labour market prove to be limited in their effectiveness in relation to the social integration of migrants. This affects especially those who have a residence/work permit and have made plans to stay for a longer period of time.

Independent authorities and observatory institutions, such as the Greek Migrant's Ombudsman and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights – Greek Helsinki Monitor, pinpoint the types of discrimination migrants often face, in particular those concerning access to educational institutions and the public health system. As for their political rights, it was only recently announced in the press by the Minister of Interior, in conjunction with elections for local governments, that migrants will have the right to vote in the next local elections for local (2010).

Slovenia

The basic framework of migration and naturalization policies was established by the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which provides for special rights of the aliens employed in Slovenia and members of their families. There are several laws regulating the status of “foreigners” in Slovenia. The main law is the Aliens Act, which categorizes three different statuses for foreigners: temporary residence, permanent residence and permission to remain. A foreigner can apply for a permanent residence permit after five years of residing in Slovenia on the basis of temporary residence permits. According to the Citizenship Act, foreigners have the right to obtain Slovene citizenship via naturalization after ten years of residing legally in the country. Migrants who enter Slovenia illegally can apply for asylum, the right to which is provided by the Constitution. Temporary protection provisions regulate situations of mass influx of persons from another country due to armed conflict, occupation, or gross human rights violation, and are used when the asylum system cannot support a large number of applications.

In Slovenia, the official migration policy and position on integration are still in the process of interdepartmental negotiations. There have been certain official state proclamations such as the Resolution on Immigration Policy from 1999 and the 2002 Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of Slovenia, but with little or no actual realisation. Most policies in this regard lack efficient implementation in practice. The reason might be Slovenia's recent inclusion in the European Union and consequently becoming a “Schengen country”. Much attention as well as financial means was put in establishing the border control system and less to integration policies. Joining the European Union in May 2004, Slovenia has duly transposed the EU legislation into its national legal system. This resulted in the lowering of procedural standards and the level of rights particularly in asylum application procedures, but also in the area of equal opportunities for men and women. In Slovenia, the immigration and integration policies follow the EU legislative frameworks in a way that they no longer provide sufficient oversight of gender issues, or of vulnerable groups of migrants, and are not sensitive to the difficulties migrants face in everyday situations. Slovene legislation is foremost conditioned upon either citizenship or permanent residence, and is generalized in terms of gender perspective. Among the major obstacles migrants face is providing evidence of permanent employment, which is a condition for getting a permanent residence permit and, consequently, citizenship status. Migration policies often disregard groups of people who are among the most vulnerable, namely, people in transit, or without statuses, migrant women among them.

Poland

In 1997 a new law on foreigners was adopted in Poland, replacing the old one from 1963. This law was amended in 2001, and in 2003 a new law was created. Recent Polish policy towards migration and migrants developed under the strong influence of European Union policy and without much public debate. Immigration to Poland is still a small-scale phenomenon, while irregular migration is also taking place, especially involving women. The actual policy towards migration is influenced by the demographic problem of decreasing population numbers.

With the expansion of the European Union, Poland has opened its labour market to workers from Bulgaria and Romania. As of early 2007, they are able to work in Poland without restrictions. This crucial decision was taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and upheld by the Office of the Committee for European Integration on October 19th 2006. Furthermore, the law relating to Ukrainian access to the Polish labour market has been relaxed – Ukrainian nationals are now permitted to work in agriculture (later in other sectors of the labour market as well), without a work permit, for up to three months. This legislative change is expected to improve the inefficient regulations introduced in September 2006 which permit seasonal workers from Eastern Europe to be employed in agriculture.

Given that Romanians and Bulgarians are not the largest immigrant communities in Poland, increased fears that migrant workers will fill posts at the expense of native job-seekers have not materialized. Last year the Polish government granted only 200 work permits to Bulgarians and Romanians. Moreover, according to recent research, few workers from these countries work illegally in Poland. This situation changes when Ukrainians are considered, as they are the most numerous immigrant group in Poland. The government, as well as the majority of entrepreneurs and farmers, expects that workers from Eastern Europe will contribute hugely to the economy and help to overcome a serious shortage of suitable labor by filling vacancies left by Poles who have gone on to Britain or Ireland. Moreover, new regulations allow for an improvement in the situation of female migrants by encouraging them to look for a job which affords them a higher socio-economic status instead of taking illegal, 'deskilling', socially degrading and badly-paid work. The Polish government hopes that its decision will be an impetus to other countries to open their labour market to immigrants from new members of the European Union.

Cyprus

Cyprus was transformed from an emigration into immigration country in 1990. In general there is no officially agreed 'integration policy'. In fact we can refer to an 'immigration-integration conundrum' as a key characteristic of the Cyprus general policy on migrant workers, including female migrants. The regulation of entry, stay and work is done via the use of old legislation, from pre-independence times when Cyprus was a British colony, which was repeatedly amended to allow migrant workers to be employed in Cyprus.

According to the new Immigration Law which was submitted in Parliament on 23rd of March 2006, a number of preconditions must be satisfied in order for long term residence status to be granted, some of which are controversial and have received criticism from NGO. Among others, these include having stable and regular financial means for own maintenance and the maintenance of dependents, without having to resort to the state social insurance system, as well as having sufficient knowledge of the Greek language and of Cypriot history and culture. The requirement of Greek language proficiency has raised particular objections from NGOs, and some social partners such as the trade union PEO, since the government has presently made no arrangements for free language classes to be offered to migrants.

Cyprus has so far failed to transpose EU Directives but the new bill purports to transpose both the Directive 2003/109/EC on long term resident status and Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunion, as well as a number of other immigration-related EU Directives. Discussion on the bill is still in progress with the government receiving considerable criticism from MPs and NGOs for the delay in

producing the bill and in making the necessary changes, for not consulting NGOs in the process of drafting, for stepping up deportations of persons who might otherwise be entitled to long term status and for introducing conditions that make it nearly impossible for any migrant to be entitled to this status.

Domestic work and sex work in Cyprus are two sectors where almost exclusively female migrants are employed. In 2005, in response to a complaint, the National Equality Body issued an important decision that had a significant effect on the terms and conditions of employment of domestic workers. First, with regard to the standard contract used for the employment of migrant domestic workers, the Equality Body's investigation found that this contract, which was used by the immigration authorities, prohibits the employee from participating in any political activity or any trade union activity. The Report recommended that the standard contracts of all migrant workers employed in all fields should be reviewed by the Ministry of Labour and be revised to exclude the restriction of rights guaranteed by the Constitution and by international conventions. Second, the Equality Body found that the monthly salary provided in the contract of CYP 150 (approx. Euro 260) for work of forty two hours per week, and equivalent to CYP 0,82 (approx. Euro 1,41) per hour, is about five times less than the hourly wage of a Cypriot domestic helper (on average CYP 4,50 or Euro 7,75) and less than half the lowest salary fixed for six different professions. The Equality Body Report describes the disparity in the wages of Cypriots and migrants as scandalous and illegal on the basis of the Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Law as well as contrary to the policy decision of the year 1991, which sets the observance of the principle of equal pay vis-à-vis Cypriots as a condition for the employment of migrants. The report recommends taking measures for improving the salary levels of migrant domestic workers. The Minister of Interior announced that the decision for a pay increase has been made.

More on the new immigration policies that affect female migrants are published in the Working Papers of the project: www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/working_papers.html

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