



*Promoting and
Facilitating the Self-
organisation of Migrant
Women in Cyprus*

Mapping the situation

- 23.2 % of the total population of Cyprus in 2013 was migrants in Cyprus. Third country nationals were 6.6% of the total population. (Eurostat)
- Migrant women is the vast majority of migrants in Cyprus.
 - Domestic workers
 - Members of the family of EU/Cy citizens
 - Students
 - Refugees
 - Undocumented

- **Marginalisation of migrants**
 - Strict migration model
 - Strict migration policies even for the members of the family of EU/Cypriot citizens
- **Migrants have no access to:**
 - state benefits (including the social insurance)
 - health services
- **Domestic workers**
 - private sphere
 - employment contracts

- Migrant women especially marginalised. They are forced to depend either on their husbands, or on their employers.
- Migrant women experience multiple discrimination (sexism, racism and also, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, and other kinds of discrimination → multiple kinds of violence: gender violence, racist violence, as well as other kinds of violence, including trafficking.
Perpetrators:

- Partners
- Employers

Often, domestic violence and/or sexual violence.

- **Difficulties in reporting violence**

- Humiliation/indifference by police officers
- domestic workers
- married to EU/Cypriot citizens
- undocumented migrant women

- **Institutional violence**

- Employment contracts of domestic workers
- No access to other employment sectors
- Reinforcing dependency relations
- Reporting is difficult to impossible
- No access to state benefits
- No access to health care

- Arrest, detention, deportation:
 - Detention conditions are much worse for migrant women
 - Often used as pressure mechanism
- Marginilisation → exclusion

No participation of migrants in public dialogue regarding the migration model, employment policies, integration plan.

- In 2010, the Republic of Cyprus adopted an ambitious plan for the integration of migrants for the period 2010-2012: “Multi annual programme of the government for the integration of third country nationals for the period 2007-2013.” The Plan was developed by a special experts’ committee and focused on eight pillars: **1) Information – Service – Transparency, 2) Employment – Training – Trade Unions, 3) Education and Language Learning, 4) Health, 5) Housing - Improving quality of life – social protection and interaction, 6) Culture – Civic – key elements of political and social reality, 7) Inclusiveness, and 8) Evaluation - Annual and Total.**

This plan has never been fully implemented.

→ Organisation of migrant communities is difficult. For women, it’s been almost impossible.

The pilot project

Aims of the pilot project:

- Self-representation of migrant women.
- Empowerment of migrant women.
- Active participation of migrant women in all spheres of public life, including full and equal participation in the labour market, education (for both children and adults), and political participation, especially in the formulation and implementation of integration measures and policies.
- Build the capacity of migrant women in order to enable them to be a key stakeholder in the field of integration, accessing their rights to long-term resident status and citizenship.

- Support migrant women in becoming aware of and claiming their rights.
- Self-organisation of migrant women.
- Creating a sustainable and empowering community for migrant women.
- Fight to stop the exploitation of domestic workers and other female migrant workers, applying anti-discrimination law and policies in employment.
- Improve the working and living conditions of migrant women, including respect to family life and the right to family (re)union.
- Raise awareness about and fight to stop multiple discrimination and gendered violence against migrant women.

Innovation of the pilot project:

- Empowering migrant women to become active community members, both in their own migrant communities and also in the Cypriot society as a whole, through self-representation.
- Intersectional approach

Actions

Implementing the pilot project:

- Mapping of the situation
- Meetings with migrants, migrant groups, and migrant communities
- Stakeholders meetings (migrant informal groups & migrant associations and organisations; migrants; women's groups; trade unions; local authorities; think tanks; NGOs; government; independent bodies; academics; activists)
- Roundtable discussions
- Result: Migrant Women's Forum

Challenges:

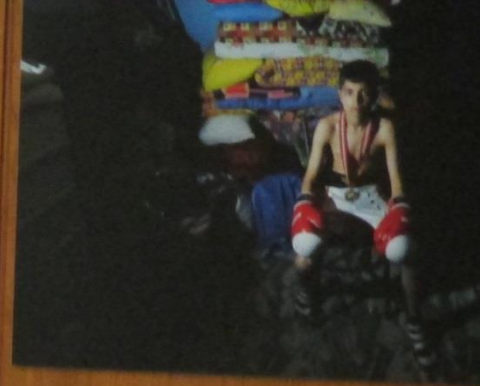
- Difficult for migrant women (majority: domestic workers) to attend meetings/discussions/seminars, etc. → we scheduled most of them on a Sunday.
- Strong patriarchal structures - determine women's space to be in the domestic sphere → certain communities are under/not represented.
- Difficulties for women with families and especially with young children and/or other dependents to attend → Provided child care services
- State authorities are difficult to be convinced to participate in meetings/discussions/seminars, etc, especially if they are not scheduled in working hours → This created further complications when combined with the fact that domestic workers are only available to attend such events on Sundays.
- Working language → English → some migrant women cannot attend
- Lack of organisational experience → self-representation becomes difficult

Migrant Women's Forum

- Setting up the migrant women's forum
- Working to establish new bonds and maintain the already existing bonds with the migrant communities.
- Discussions with migrant women and their communities to:
 - Formulate the aims and objectives of the Forum
 - Develop an action plan
 - Plan the forum's sustainability beyond the pilot project
 - To have a strong political character – advocacy
- Training, seminar, workshops
- First Annual Assembly

Priorities of the Forum:

- Social and Labour Rights
- Violence
- Family
- Setting up working groups
- Setting the priorities within each working group
 - (Social and Labour Rights: access to state benefits
 - Violence: access of undocumented migrant women to reporting mechanisms and to support and protection services; violence experienced by DW to be recognised as domestic violence
 - Family: undocumented families)
- Developing action plans for each working group



Small notices or posters pinned to the wall, including one with a red and white logo.

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Roundtable Discussion on the
Integration of Third-Country
Nationals in Cyprus



European Union (EU)
House in Cyprus,
02.10.2014



Integration
on the ground



Cyprus Assisted by the European Union



House in Cyprus,

02.10.2014

Integration
on the ground



Co-funded by the European Union



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