

CYPRUS

Population of Cyprus: 873,300 (2004 census)

Number of domestic workers in Cyprus: according to the Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department (Ministry of Interior) there are currently 22,500 female migrant domestic workers in Cyprus
% of the country population: 2.57% (22,500 out of 873,300)

% of the migrant population according to the 2004 Census: 22.93% (22,500 out of 98,100)

Findings

Employment:

- The wages of migrant domestic workers have remained at the level first set in 1990 for the last 17 years [150 CYP/257 EU], and are well below the current minimum wage in Cyprus [362 CYP/620 EU].
- Domestic workers, as all other migrants in Cyprus, are treated as “guest workers”; their stay and employment in Cyprus is treated as temporary, linked to a specific employment sector and a specific employer. The work permits granted are valid for a maximum period of four years.
- The employment contract for domestic workers was drafted by the Cyprus Civil Registry and Migration Department, unlike the standard employment contract that applies to migrant workers in general, which was prepared by the Cyprus Labour Department (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance).
- The employment contract for migrant domestic workers is available in two versions, a Greek and an English version with evident discrepancies between the two. Specifically the Greek version is more restrictive than its English equivalent, and in violation of certain basic human rights, such as prohibiting any kind of participation in social life.
- It is the norm that the domestic worker resides with her employer who is responsible for providing suitable accommodation and food. Very few domestic workers have their own place of residence.
- There is currently no state mechanism to ensure that the working and living conditions of female migrant domestic workers are complied with as specified in their contracts. This lack of accountability is mostly attributed to the fact that most domestic workers reside with their employers, within the ‘private sphere’, to which the authorities have no access.

Civic Participation:

- Although a domestic worker’s contract stipulates that the employee shall work for 7 hours per day (for 6 days a week) it fails to specify an exact time schedule. Therefore, unless a specific work schedule between the employer and employee is agreed upon, the domestic worker is “on call” virtually throughout the day and night, inevitably confining her to the house of her employer, excluding her from the “outside” world and Cypriot society in general.
- The absence of an integration policy for migrants combined with the specific immigration model that the Cyprus state has chosen to adopt fosters racism, xenophobia and discrimination against migrants. In the case of female migrant domestic workers, gender inequality is additionally reinforced by the specific employment contracts used, which restrict their rights even further.

What can be done to strengthen policies for employment and civic participation for Female Migrant Domestic Workers at a European level?

- Ensure that migration laws and policies are gender specific and that the gender dimension is included in all migration laws, policies, directives, regulations and strategies.
- Address the precarious legality of female migrant domestic workers’ employment and reform those structures of migration and employment systems that produce illegality by setting up, for example, an open and continuous system of regularization for undocumented female migrant domestic workers.
- Promote flexible forms of employment that facilitate full-time employment and therefore ensure full work insurance benefits for those female migrant domestic workers who are employed in multiple households.
- Promote and institutionalize, in legally binding ways, the recognition of female migrant domestic workers as employees and not as “family members” or “family dependents”.
- Encourage the participation of female migrant domestic workers in the public sphere through their inclusion in local councils and eligibility for local elections (to vote and to be a candidate in an election).
- Introduce orientation courses for newly arrived migrants that provide information for health services, social insurance, maternity rights, workers’ collective agreements, etc.
- Promote the reconciliation of work and family life for female migrant domestic workers using a holistic approach that takes into consideration all policies and/or regulations relevant to employment, social insurance and welfare.
- Increase minimum wages for female migrant domestic workers and implement domestic labour as well national regulations for minimum wages.

More specific information on policy recommendations for the integration of female migrant domestic workers will be included in the Resource Book to be published early 2008.

Coordinating Institutes



Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies [M.I.G.S]

46 Makedonitissas Avenue, P.O.Box 24005, Nicosia 1703, Cyprus
Tel + 357 22 351274 (ext.115) Fax +357 22 353682

E-mail josie@medinstgenderstudies.org
Website <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org>

Partner Organizations



Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers:

Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies [MIGS] [www.medinstgenderstudies.org] in collaboration with Intercollege [www.intercollege.ac.cy] is coordinating a transnational project entitled “Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers: Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation”, funded under the INTI Preparatory Actions 2005 of the European Commission. The partners of the project are ANTIGONE [Greece], CREA [Spain], ISIS [Germany], LAI MOMO [Italy] and the Filipino National Workers Association [Cyprus].

In today’s world of massive migration flows and globalization, women’s place is changing both quantitatively, as in several countries they already constitute the majority of migrants, and qualitatively as more and more women are now migrating independently of their male partners. The Europe Union is no exception to this phenomenon which has come to be called the feminization of migration. However, the choices and employment opportunities available to immigrant women are limited by current patriarchal structures and cultural practices both in the host and the receiving countries, confining them to low paid industries and occupations traditionally reserved for women. As the International Labour Organisation points out “Gender based discrimination intersects with discrimination based on other forms of “otherness” such as non-national/foreigner status, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status – placing women in a situation of double, triple and even fourfold discrimination, disadvantage, marginalisation and/or vulnerability”.

Given the above, the main aim of the project is to stimulate transnational cooperation involving a wide range of actors at the local, regional and EU level, and consisting of the transfer of information, lessons learned, and best practices in order to develop recommendations for an integration model responding to the specific needs of female migrant domestic workers, and adaptable to different contexts.

Within the framework of this project, a mapping survey was conducted by partner organizations on existing integration services and policies, best practices and strategies adopted in all partner countries. The information collected for the country reports relate to the situation of female migrant domestic workers in each of the aforementioned countries, while focusing particularly on the areas of employment and civic participation. Some of the main findings in each country are summarized below.

GERMANY

Population: 82.314.900 (31.12.2006, see: www.destatis.de)

Number of domestic workers in Germany:

Although no official statistics exist, it is estimated that 10% (4 million) of Germany's private households employ female migrants as domestic workers.

Findings

Employment:

- The employment relations of female migrant domestic workers differ significantly among others regarding the kind of work, employment conditions, recruitment and legal status.
- A large number of female migrant domestic workers in Germany migrate from new European member states but also from third countries. Many pursue hourly cleaning jobs in several households; others work as live-ins for a single employer and care for the elderly or people with medical needs.
- The legal status of the majority of migrant domestic workers is uncertain both in terms of their residence as well as their employment which is why migrant domestic work is largely undocumented. On the one hand, this double illegalization can be an advantage on the domestic labour market, but on the other, excludes female migrant domestic workers from accessing employment and social rights.
- The uncertainty and insecurity of migrant domestic work and care work is strongly shaped by the German welfare state's policies which can be characterized by political indifference and acceptance. This has resulted in the increasing criminalization of undocumented employment and illegal residence. The German welfare state is therefore responsible for keeping female migrant domestic workers available to compensate for cut-backs, especially as marginalized and/or illegalized cheap labour.

Civic Participation:

- The German Federal Government's recent efforts towards the integration and civic participation of migrants are restricted to legal migration. Against this backdrop the government's previous responses to the double illegalized field of migrant domestic work focused on political measures regarding employment and lacked real, long-term perspective for the legalisation of female migrant domestic workers' residence status which is vital for their civic participation.
- Activities by migrant organizations engaged in the fight for female migrant domestic workers' civic participation has recently decreased, mainly due to the lack of realistic prospects for legalization as well as the lack of working alliances with trade unions and other societal stakeholders.

GREECE

Population: 10.964.020 according to the 2001 Census.

Number of domestic workers in Greece:

This number is difficult to estimate because of the high percentage of informal work. There is divergent official data concerning the number of domestic workers in Greece.

% of the country population: according to the Social Insurance Institute (IKA), 17,406 foreign women were insured in 2004 as workers in private households. According to recent data from the 2007 SOPEMI – Annual Report of the Continuous Reporting System on Migration of OECD, 13.2% of documented migrants in Greece are domestic workers (55,440 individuals, mostly, if not exclusively, women).

% of the migrant population: according to the 2001 Census, 62,678 migrant women (51.8% of the total female migrant population which numbers 120,903 women) were registered under the category "services".

Findings

Employment:

- Most migrant women work as domestic workers in Greece. Domestic work is largely informal and unregulated. Insurance is rarely, if ever, provided to domestic workers who are therefore obliged to pay their own social insurance contributions.
- Domestic workers do not have to present the authorities with a labour contract in order to renew their residence permit (according to Law 3536/2007, art. 6, § Nevertheless, they have to prove to the authorities that they have been insured for 150 days.
- Inspection of labour conditions is impossible because households are protected by family asylum regulations. Domestic workers depend merely upon the good will of their employers.
- The labour rights of the vast majority of migrant domestic workers are ignored such as the 13th salary, the right to vacation, among others. Very rarely, trade unions or grassroots networks are successful in assisting immigrants seeking protection of their labour rights.

Civic Participation:

- The State has not made any serious attempts to promote the civic participation of migrants in general and of female migrant domestic workers in particular. Some initiatives have been funded, mainly through European programmes, but without much success or sustainable results.
- The Ministry of Interior has recently released an Integrated Action Plan for the Regular Adjustment of Third Country Nationals into Greek Society. This Plan does not take into account the gender specificities of migrant domestic work.
- A National Committee for the Social Integration of Migrants has been introduced by the law 3536/2007 passed in February 2007 in order to promote the integration and social participation of migrants. However, migrant associations were not invited to participate in this Committee.
- Administrative and political shortcomings, such as strict and costly provisions for residence permit renewals and applications for citizenship and excessive requirements for long-term residence permits, such as certified 'good knowledge of Greek language and culture', hinder the social participation of migrants in general and of female migrants in particular.
- Migrant women are only visible in the public sphere through migrant women's associations which organise activities such as the "No to racism from baby's cot" campaign. This campaign draws attention to the fact that the children of migrants do not have Greek citizenship; what's worse, these children don't even have the right to be registered with the municipal authorities, the competent body for issuing birth certificates.

ITALY

Population: 59.131.287 people live in Italy (last estimate made by ISTAT 2006)

Number of domestic workers in Italy: according to the Italian Social Security System (INPS), approximately 745 thousand regular domestic workers resided in Italy by the end of 2006. According to estimations by the Italian Institute for Social Research, the number of migrant domestic workers amounts to 600 thousand, of which 38% have no residence permits and only 40% have regular contracts. These numbers vary significantly when taking into consideration the black market labour.

% of the country population: regular domestic workers constitute about 1% of the Italian population. **% of the migrant population:** according to the Caritas Dossier 2006, around 15% of migrants regularly living in Italy are employed in the domestic sector. By the end of 2005, the official number of migrants living in Italy was 3.035.144.

Findings

Employment:

- A new law was proposed by the present government in April 2007 known as the Amato-Ferrero law, which introduces important changes for migrant workers, especially for domestic workers. The law in particular lengthens the duration of the residence permit; allows for three-yearly quota systems; and eliminates the quota system for domestic workers due to the large demand for domestic work in Italy.
- A new collective agreement for domestic workers has been in force for the period March 1, 2007 to February 28, 2011. This agreement recognizes eight different categories of domestic workers based on the services provided and the competencies acquired.
- The new contract sets an increase of the wages in the range of 8% to 39%, with salaries starting from 1,000 Euro for workers with professional diplomas.
- In Italy the excessive size of the black market of labour renders the contract for a domestic worker a mere formality, a situation that leads to precarious working conditions and violations of workers' rights.

Civic Participation:

- The Amato – Ferrero law institutionalizes active and passive rights for migrants with long residence permits, such as the right to vote in the local elections as defined by the C Chapter of the Convention on Migrants' Participation in Public and Social Life, signed in Strasbourg on the 5th of February, 1992.
- There are special measures for migrants' civic participation at a regional level. In the Emilia Romagna Region, for example, Regional Law 5/2004 sets the establishment of a regional body (Consulta Regionale) responsible for the integration of foreign citizens which consists of 18 representatives of migrants (9 female and 9 male, thereby establishing a gender balance).
- Finally, excessive work load, limited autonomy and limited spare time, exclusion from social life, and a general absence of opportunities render civic participation particularly difficult for female migrant domestic workers.

SPAIN

Population: 44.708.964

Number of domestic workers in Spain: 165.835 according to the 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (Permanent Observatory of the Immigration). It is important to note that a great number of female migrant domestic workers are not registered in the Social Security Register and therefore there are no reliable statistics or data regarding their situation.

% of the country population: 0, 57%

% of the migrant population: 5, 48%

Findings

Employment:

- Domestic work in Spain continues to be highly feminised, and is also characterised by both instability and illegality. Many migrant women who are not registered carry out domestic work without having access to the healthcare system. This is also the sector in which the highest numbers of applications were approved as part of the regularisation process for migrants in 2005.
- The domestic work sector is not part of the Régimen General de Trabajadores (General Regime for Workers) in the Social Security system. The regulations for the Special Regime for Workers in the Home have not been modified since its first implementation in 1985. Characteristics of this regime include the fact that the contract can either be verbal or written; there are fewer holidays than in other regimes; there is no insurance against unemployment; the notice period provided before dismissal is shorter, etc. Unions, organisations and social movements insist that the various degrees of discrimination contained in the Social Security affiliation to this Special Regime have to be eliminated.
- In practice, employment contracts tend to be verbal, and the working conditions mostly depend on the people or families who employ domestic workers, since work inspections are practically non-existent in the private sector.
- Access to these jobs tends to occur through contacts and personal relationships as well as social networks. There are also organisations and entities which manage the agreements and become involved in the mediation of work-related discussions between the female migrant domestic workers and their employers.
- In many cases, female migrant domestic workers have academic qualifications, but their diplomas and degrees are not recognised in Spain.

Civic Participation

- There is no specific legislation related to the civic participation of migrants in general and migrant women in particular. Current legislation on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain specifies the right for legal migrants to be involved in civic and political participation.
- The working conditions of female migrant domestic workers make it difficult for them to have access to civic participation processes. However they are involved in various organisations in society, such as parents associations and cultural organisations.
- Public debate is scarce and there is a lack of visibility of the situation of female migrant domestic workers. To date there have been no campaigns or significant debates involving solidarity or support for this social group.
- Migrant women, who are involved in associations working for the social inclusion of women, are increasingly focusing on integration based on interaction between the local population and migrant groups.