



## **Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers: Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation**

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### **Study Visit in Spain June 2007 Report prepared by the INTI Team**

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The fourth study visit, organised within the framework of the project "Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers", took place in Barcelona on 11-14 June 2007. A number of meetings with key governmental officials and civil society representatives were organised by our Spanish partners represented by CREA (Centre of Research in Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities; University of Barcelona) and helped the INTI project team to gain insight on the situation of female migrant domestic workers in Spain. The study visit was once again used by the team members as an opportunity to discuss the progress of the project, examine administrative issues, and examine comparative viewpoints of the different situations of female migrant domestic workers in each of the five European partner countries.

Over the course of the visit the participants met with the following representatives and Organizations:

- President Marta Selva, Institut Català de les Dones. Generalitat de Catalunya [The Catalan Institute of Women. The Government of Catalonia.]  
<http://www.gencat.net/icdona/>
- President Oriol Amorós i March Magda García Jordina Viñas Secretaria d'Immigració. Departament d'Acció Social i Ciutadania. Generalitat de Catalunya [The Secretariat of Immigration. The Department of Social Action and Citizenship. The Government of Catalonia.]  
<http://www.gencat.net/benestar/societat/convivencia/immigracio/index.htm>
- Gasshan Saliba, CITE. Centro de Información para los Trabajadores Extranjeros. Comisiones Obreras [The Information Centre for Foreign Workers. The Labour Commissions.]  
<http://www.ccoo.cat/index2.htm>
- FACEPA i Casal d'Infants del Raval [FACEPA and Children's Community Centre of Raval.]  
<http://www.facepa.org>
- Carme Simarro, Raquel Gil UGT/AMIC [General Union of Workers.]  
<http://www.ugtcatalunya.org>
- Anem per feina. Coordinadora per la inserció sociolaboral [ 'Let's Go to Work ' . The Coordinating Committee for Job Placements.]  
<http://www.anemperfeina.org/ct/index.php>

- Asociación Mujeres Latinas sin Fronteras [The Association of Latin Women without Borders.]  
<http://www.migrantesenlinea.org/enlinea.php?c=1389>
- Iñaki Santacruz, Professor of Economics of the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona [The Autonomous University of Barcelona] and expert in immigration and the labour market.

One crucial observation made by the participants during the study visit in Barcelona regarded the clear interest which was perceived, on the part of the diverse institutions and organizations visited, to be informed about the results of the project and to work towards the improvement of the situation of female migrant domestic workers in Catalonia. Generally, public authorities in Catalonia recognize migrants as an economic aid to the state, something which is greatly contrasted to the other partner countries of Greece, Germany and Cyprus where study visits have already been successfully concluded.

The balanced selection of organizations and persons we visited included two governmental organizations, two trade unions, three NGOs and associations and a professor of Economics who is an expert in economics of migration of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Significantly, this particular study visit was perhaps the most successful in its incorporation of the gender approach as the partners received plenty of gender specific information, not only by visiting the Institute of Women in Catalonia, but also by visiting trade unions and other NGOs which illustrated how they often work specifically on, and with, migrant women and gender issues. In contrast, the study visits undertaken in Germany, Greece and Cyprus, for example, illustrated that the gender dimension in the German and Greek migration models is absent, as in all three cases the organizations visited did not speak specifically about migrant women until the participants had posed the necessary questions. Particularly in Cyprus, gender sensitive migration policies do not exist in order to access the specific needs of female migrant domestic workers.

As was common during the previous study visits, the meetings and discussions with migrant women themselves, facilitated in this case by Anem per feina 'Lets Go to Work' organization and FACEPA proved especially helpful for the participants, by highlighting some original ways of social intervention and by enabling them to obtain a general idea of the situation of female migrant domestic workers in Catalonia. In this context, the partners noticed and discussed the difficult issue of deciding who represents female migrant domestic workers due to the fact that in most meetings, the situation of this group of migrant women was represented to the team by non-migrant persons, with an academic background and employment in one of the host organizations. Moreover, during most meetings it was also noted how strikingly difficult it was to bridge the team's discourse with female migrant domestic workers' realities and practices.

With regards to migrants, one of the major issues for the local authorities of Spain is the problem of the security of the national borders in relation to the lack of residence permits available. Female migrant domestic workers in Catalonia are therefore mostly confined to the informal sector, just as in Germany and Greece, which results in their lack of rights. On the other hand, migrant women who enter Spain legally as domestic workers find it very difficult to change jobs at a later stage, just as in Cyprus, and are thereby effectively prevented from realizing any improvement of their economic conditions. And yet, in contrast to other countries visited such as Germany and Greece, undocumented female migrant domestic workers in Spain are

dealt with much less restrictively, since Catalonia supports organisations which assist undocumented domestic workers.

Additionally, in contrast to other countries such as Germany and Cyprus, in Spain and more specifically in Catalonia, there is a much stronger civil society to exert pressure on the Government to undertake measures for the drafting of new legislation and policies addressing female migrant domestic workers. Particularly, trade unions offer female migrant domestic workers adequate support within their limits, even if they are undocumented, whereas in Germany only certain departments of some trade unions are currently starting to open for a discussion on organizing undocumented female migrant domestic workers, and in Cyprus the female migrant domestic workers' employment contracts serve to violate their very rights of becoming trade union members. In particular, the more restrictive stance adopted vis-à-vis the German migration model is largely due to the fact that in contrast to Italy and Spain, the German government does not offer undocumented female migrant domestic workers any prospect for legalization. Similarly, although female migrant domestic workers are one of the largest migrant groups in Cyprus, there is hardly any support for them by the Cypriot Government.

Moreover, in comparison to Cyprus, the interrelated issues of 'illegality' and 'flexibility' are dealt with using a very different approach in Catalonia. Specifically, there are policies in Catalonia which provide female migrant domestic workers with the opportunity to shift back and forth from an 'illegal' to a 'legal' status. Trade unions in Spain for example, provide migrants with specific programmes that help them enter the labour market with specific employment opportunities. Furthermore, they offer particular programmes on gender issues and therefore clearly take the intersectionality between migration and gender into consideration. By contrast, in Cyprus, where domestic workers are a specific category of migrant worker that is in relatively high numbers, migration policies are not gender sensitive and do not include any gender specific policies. As the representatives of the Pancyprian Federation of Cyprus [PEO] explained during the third study visit of the team, female migrant domestic workers constitute the most difficult group to reach and inform about their rights due to the fact that the nature of their work confines them to the private sphere where trade unions have no official access. However, even in Spain a discouraging aspect of the trade union programmes is that they are sought out by migrants themselves rather than the other way around.

Another major observation by the team was that although, as previously mentioned, the selection of visited organizations was balanced, meetings with the public authorities were "ethno-centred", or more specifically "Catalonia-centred". This is mainly due to the fact that Spain has a decentralised administrative system therefore the migration regime at all levels (state and regional) proved difficult to discuss as a whole by the stakeholders whom the team visited; rather the team acquired merely a general idea about migration patterns, with a focus on Catalonia. Indeed, a comparison with Italy's similarly decentralised system, albeit to a lesser degree than Spain's, will be very useful for the team with the undertaking of the fifth and final study visit in Bologna, in October.

Furthermore, the team observed how certain NGOs and public authorities visited were significantly made more gender aware, as a direct result of the issue of female migrant domestic workers' employment and civic participation opportunities that

were targeted and discussed during the study visit, such as for example, the Secretary of Immigration (public administration).

Finally, the fourth study visit to Spain has allowed the team a rich and diverse array of information related to female migrant domestic workers which helped the team to gain significant insight on the convergences and divergences among the countries visited so far, namely among Greece, Germany, Cyprus and Spain. This study visit significantly also urged the team members to begin to consider the aftermath of the project and more specifically on how the aim of developing specific policies and strategies on the issues of female migrant domestic workers' employment and civic participation can be effectively continued through other actions or projects in the future.

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