

New Face for Europe
Minority Ethnic and Migrant Elders across Europe – from challenges to
opportunities
Bonn, 30.09-02.10.2008

Forum 9:
Migrant elders – Gender matters?

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Scientific research on female migrant elders:

- Relatively **rich** on the interrelations between **population ageing** and immigration;
- **Very few** specific studies have been made on the living conditions, life experiences and expectations of **older female migrants**

FEMAGE

“Needs for female immigrants
and their integration
in ageing societies”

*EU-funded project 2006-2007
(6th Framework Programme)*

Femage:

■ Consortium:

- Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Finland

■ Samples of immigrant women:

- Bosniaks, Central Asians, Chinese, Kosovo Albanians, Romanians, Russians, Turks, Ukrainians, Vietnamese

■ Methods:

- a small scale **qualitative survey of immigrant women** (n : 237)
- a large scale attitudinal survey on nationals in those countries regarding migration and integration of immigrants (n = 11964),
- focus group discussions of key stakeholders at the national and the European level.

Qualitative survey on migrant women

→ Structure interview:

- Narrative part
- Complementary structured questionnaire

■ Contents interview:

- socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics
- life course history
- migration biography
- identity formation and integration experience
- preferences and expectations towards support for integration into employment, housing, community life and emancipation
- **Expectation about and preparation for old age and retirement**

Female migration biographies

- Quite **heterogeneous** group with extremely complex and individualised life course experiences
- Most women migrants immigrate as **young adults** or come as **children or adolescents**.
- Most third country female migrants enter the host society on **family grounds**
- biography of **permanent** migration
- transitional integration process - **hybrid cultural identity**
- Prevalence of feelings of **social isolation**
- Pervasive **obstacles** for integration

Gender specificities

- Migration is a completely **different experience** for women and men
- Migrant women mainly relate themselves to the **family**
- Temporary or permanent **deskilling**
- **Struggle** around the issue of 'traditional' and 'modern' roles as women.

Preparation for old age

- Preferred **age at retirement**: $m = 54$ years
- **Expectations** concerning the retirement years = active old age, travelling or returning to the country of origin, being involved with children or grandchildren, a peaceful old age, an old age in good health;
- Concerns about their **present economic situation** (8/10);
- **Financial security** in old age: 1/3 won't be able to support themselves in old age;
- **Caretaking in old age**: : almost everybody expects help from members of the nuclear family, very few mention public institutions.

Concluson about old age

- Many migrant women are **not well preparing** or are not expecting a secure pension;
- Many lack appropriate **knowledge** about the opportunities and necessities to prepare for a pension scheme;
- Due to the high cost of migration and high investment of migrant women in children they **sacrifice** provisions for their own old age.

Policy implications

- Great need for policy adaptation and reform to address the **specific situations** and problems of migrant women;
- Strong need for **early assistance** to immigrants in general and women in particular, immediately at arrival in the host country to shorten the painstaking integration and prevent lasting deskilling;
- Growing needs for the **portability** of pension rights.