April 2013

EFECW Newsletter

- Reports -

Forum Ecumenico

Donne Cristiane d'Europa (EFECW)

Seminar "We are all migrants"

15 – 17 March 2013, Ecumene Centre Velletri, Italy

Migrant women play a fundamental role in the receiving country as well as in the countries of origin, and are an active part of cultural, demographic and economic dynamics at international level. In the world today there are some 214 million migrants (according to forecasts, in 2050 there will be 400 million). Half of this number are women who produce income, but who are exposed to forms of discrimination, abuse, exploitation and violence ("multiple discrimination").

The **"feminalization of migrant influxes**" linked especially to expansion in the service economy, is now a statistic at international level and in Europe has become a relevant phenomenon since the 1980s. The wide request on the part of families for help from women migrants in domestic and care sectors involves many countries, especially in Southern Europe where the request for foreign workers is particularly high, and has created a real "*parallel welfare system*".

Domestic and care work today constitutes the main opportunity for integration in the labour market at global level (80%) and has become the "typical job for migrant women" both for the strong demand in the receiving countries and also for the general difficulty in getting into other work sectors. In the European Union there are 52 million domestic workers, without taking into account the black market. According to ILO (International Labour Organization) data migrant women in EU earn on the average 16% less than migrant men. In Italy migrant women earn 31% less than Italian women. We speak about "**gender wage gap**".

Notwithstanding the high request for work for migrant women, attention by Governments to **the rights of women** is scarce and only in few countries at international level are there specific laws for the protection of domestic employees.

The Convention of the Council of Europe on the prevention and fight against violence towards women and domestic violence (adopted in Istanbul in 2011) has not yet been signed by the EU. It was signed by Italy in September.

At international level an important instrument is the ILO Convention (n. 189/2011) on domestic work which lays down basic rights and principles to improve life and labour conditions of domestic workers all over the world. Italy has recently ratified the Convention (the first country in the European Union), which will come into force next 5th September 2013.

The lack of protection and instruments at national and international level have, among the most serious consequences, an increase in **serious exploitation** by irregular employment agencies with exorbitant rates, low salaries, little contractual force and a strong tendency towards blackmail, causing dependency and fear on the part of the women.

Among the indirect effects of this *parallel welfare system* there is certainly a situation of hardship and marginalization for many migrant women employed in the domestic sector, which often turns into domestic slavery, with tremendously long working hours, only occasional free time, isolation to the point of imprisonment and segregation, and minimum social life.

In Italy from the numerical point of view we have substantially **"equal numbers of men and women"**: out of some 5 million migrants a little over half are women. In the labour market the countries of origin of the women are divided thus: Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia.

In Italy also the majority of migrant women are taken on in domestic service and care work (help for the elderly, invalids, the sick and children) and come mainly from Ecuador, Philippines, Morocco, Moldova, Ukraine, Peru, Poland, Russia. They have often a university degree and have filled more important social roles than the men in their countries of origin. But this is changing gradually because the migrants are increasingly women with low education, little competence, coming from rural areas. The fact remains however that **migration is a selective process:** those who leave are often the more enterprising, better educated and more socially aware, and this inevitably leads to a weakening of their human assets in the receiving country.

The social transformations and changes which, from the 1970s, have affected the organization and structure of the family due to the growing participation of women in the labour market, have had a strong impact on migratory dynamics.

The emancipation of women in Western society has often turned into a "*double burden*" of work for the women, frequently torn between family and work because it has not coincided with a redistribution and sharing of responsibility within the family. Moreover the substantial lack of adequate public welfare policies for the elderly and for children has meant that part of the care has fallen to migrant women, mainly from the Southern hemisphere and from Eastern Europe, who have thus become **valuable and invisible substitutes**, a temporary workforce without rights. The emancipation of women is often maintained thanks to the presence of migrant women, and poses questions on the vulnerability of the space obtained by women through long battles for rights in social, economic, individual and cultural life. Today the rights won by women in some parts of the world are counter posed by the rights denied to other women.

In Italy women from Capoverde, Eritrea and the Philippines began to arrive in the 1960s. The Eritrean women, "benefitting" from the colonial past with our country, had privileged access and found work in Italian families. This "benefit" was full of ambivalence and contradiction because it constituted a sort of **continuation of the colonial period** and ended by suffocating and relegating the Eritrean women to subordinate and submissive roles, making almost impossible any effort to change and any aspirations outside the old parameters of power.

The inheritance of colonialism and the relationship it has with current migratory policies are today an area for analysis and careful examination. The management of migratory policies proposes at a symbolic, material and juridical level, the same hierarchical discrimination experienced by the populations that today, in the inverse route from colonialism, find themselves living in Europe imprisoned in work like that of the colonial economies (**"*recolonized immigration*" and "European apartheid"**).

Migrant women are today an invaluable response to essential needs, but they often remain suppressed and caged in subordinate and submissive working situations from which it is difficult to escape because the possibility of self-determination and upward mobility is minimal.

They remain servants, often slaves, and their condition finds new forms of not only of symbolic legitimization, but also juridical legitimization (e.g. the ad hoc regularizations only for carers are provisions to help Italian families and leave a precise and disturbing message: today in Italy only the person who serves the "signori" is saved). A return to feudalism, even before perpetuation of the various forms of colonialism.

Today in Italy paradoxically, as far as work is concerned, the crisis seems to have protected women, because the service economy has held up better than the industry sector. Families cannot manage without care in the absence of Social Services: two and a half million families have a carer in the home. Italy is the country with the highest number of carers in the world and has the most elderly citizens in the world (after Japan). However, even if there are no data yet to prove it, the current economic crisis seems to affect this also and the number of Italian women "competing" with migrant women for domestic and care work is increasing. Even if there are not official data, in the last three years about 100.000 care givers are missing (Source Migrantes).

In the care sector, the irregularity of work relations is double that at national level in other sectors. The estimated percentage of black market is about 62%. But often the irregularity turns into a kind of **"double convenience**" for the two parties involved and feeds the black market, at low cost and unqualified, operating without any form of labour protection.

In the majority of cases the women choose to emigrate to better the socio-economic conditions of the family ("the family mandate"): **children's education**, building a house, medical expenses, for their well-being. In countries of the ex Soviet block work, house and medical care which were previously guaranteed by the State, now fall on the family and therefore emigration has become a modern strategy to support the family. It is often a transitory migration project which foresees return and in most cases is a sad choice for mothers who leave. But the return often becomes just a dream: little opportunity for work reintegration in the countries of origin and the continuing needs of children and family turn the migratory project of the women into a sort of condemnation. Return to the home country is seen by the family as putting at risk a standard of life, which can be guaranteed only whilst they are abroad.

Often the women, precisely because the decision to emigrate is temporary, prefer to accept resident domestic work, also because it involves lower living expenses. But co-habitation and the tendency to familiarization of work create a "**relational density**" which gives space to forms of dependence and exploitation: long hours of work, occasional free-time, isolation and confinement, forms of violence and diverse ill treatment. One speaks in fact of a return to "domestic service". The co-habitation – although one must not forget the many positive experiences which do exist – reduces the external stimulus and social life which disappear in the live-in/work context, often depressing, but at the least sad.

Forms of unease and psychological fragility are becoming frequent (depressive state or real pathological cases). Today one speaks about "**Italian Syndrome"**. The price which the women pay in terms of physical and psychological health is high, also because their capacity to adapt means that they put into practice reactions which are more implosive than explosive and bring difficulties and frustration. **The body of the women becomes a symptom.**

Another problem is the impact on the family and **children left behind**, today defined as "social orphans". The distance changes forever the relationship with the

children and breaks traditional equilibrium. A particular difficulty is that of fathers of redefining their role. Today the impact of migration on the children is the subject discussed most in emigration countries, and among the negative effects identified, are absenteeism and lack of study at school, the difficulty of relationships with older generations, increased consumerism, and forms of bullying. The media contribute to the creation of real social alarm which brings with it an inevitable process of stigmatization of the migrant figure and migrant women/mothers in particular. It has also brought closed policies and real campaigns of abandonment in emigration countries, where the women are seen as the primary source of social disorder and the prime cause of deterioration in the family institution. In 2003 the then president of the Ukraine publicly insulted women who emigrated, describing them as prostitutes.

It is important to underline how female immigration has impacted on natality (16,5% in Italy). The progressive aging of our population has sensibly benefited by the arrival of female migrants. However, according to recent research, this advantageous phase is just temporary as migrant women tend to modify their reproductive behaviour according to the models of the hosting society (as already happened in France, UK, Germany and Sweden).

The emigration countries will be gradually hit by a trend of old age in the population and the number of vulnerable people and those needing care will increase. Today we are beginning to speak of the **"care drain",** be it in respect of the lack of maternal care in the poorer countries, or the growing emigration from these countries of socio-health personnel. This situation will bring a new need for care in the countries of origin and will increase introduction of private and costly services which, if on one side can be seen as development measures, on the other will be source of new inequalities, because they will not be accessible to all.

Some conclusive reflections

Today women migrants represent a **powerful feminine force** which is bearer not only of needs but also resources.

Migrant women, notwithstanding the difficulties, discrimination and obstacles which they encounter in the exercise of their rights and the affirmation of their situation, are today the promoters of dynamics of deep social transformation. Migrant

women are an active force for change, they are always **the strong link in the migratory chain** because they manage to carry out their migratory project with tenacity, maintain contacts with the country of origin, establish the family unit, face the impact of their children growing up, and support more than the men their rights of citizenship and participation. Often migrant women create **forms of gathering together** which go beyond their common geographical origins and become a real political strategy. Starting from a common point, they put together inequalities to face challenges collectively, and to relaunch themselves in the achievement of individual, family and group projects.

The associations of women migrants are more stable and have better continuity, because the women are able to mediate and adapt their plans to conditions in the arrival country, they are more rooted in the territory and better recognized by the institutions. They are often involved actively in associations, be they secular or religious, which are not related to the immigration sector – associations for peace, for the environment, cooperation for development, or health. In particular within our Evangelical community, where there is a strong presence, the migrant women are actively involved and fulfil a well defined role in the church. They participate actively in the life of the community bringing energy, vitality, and enthusiasm, which are interpreted in new forms of being together and being a church together. Working together, Italian and migrant women, is the challenge before us. Working together means creating resources to reformulate problems and discuss stereotypes which block the freedom of all women – migrant and native alike.

In the latest years, the concept of "**female leadership style**" has become established weakening traditional leadership models and underlying women's capacity to deal with social, cultural and economic transformation thanks to their higher aptitude for change, innovation and mediation. It is important to share experiences to build together policies which centre on women and human rights in order to transform deeply our societies.

Lecture held by Franca Di Lecce
Servizio Rifugiati e Migranti – Service for Refugees and Migrants
Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia – Federation of the Protetstant Church in Italy

European Project for Interreligious Learning

MODULE IV IN THE NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY

'The Challenge of Migrant Communities - Revisiting Integration'
Amsterdam/Cologne
September 30th – October 7th 2012

EPIL, a travelling caravan of studies

Forty women from various Islamic and Christian backgrounds aged between twenty and seventy met in the Dominican Priory Huissen/Netherlands where they made their fourth stop during a two-and-a-half years journey of studies throughout Europe. These women participate in EPIL, a project of interreligious learning which had been set up by Reinhild Trailter-Spiritu, very familiar to EFECW, and Teni Pirri-Simonian, who know each other from the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The students come from Switzerland, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Germany and the Netherlands. Each country sends a delegation of three Muslim and three Christian students who are coached by an academic team of a Christian and an Islamic scholar. Twice per year there is a study week in one of the participating countries, in between the students prepare and study together on a national level. Finally their finish their studies by writing a diploma work.
In spring 2011 the EPIL journey started in Switzerland under the title: '*Difference and the Search for Identity – Confronting Different Religious, Cultural and Social Traditions*'. The second modul was in Austria in autumn of the same year and had the topic: '*Historic Memories and Present-Day Realities - Difficult Interactions*'. The third modul took place in in Bosnië-Herzegovina, May 2012, and was dedicated to the theme: '*Conflict and the potential for Pluralism - Analysing the Use and Misuse of Religion'*. The one but last modul was held in the Netherlands under the title: '*The Challenge of Migrant Communities: Revisiting Integration'*. The last stop of the journey will be in Beirut/Lebanon in February 2013 and has the theme: *'Committed to Staying Together – One People, Multiple Confessions'*

Module IV 'The Challenge of Migrant Communities: Revisiting Integration'

The participants were introduced to the history of the Netherlands as a nation which had always to fight against the water and for new land and the current situation of a society of migration. Manuela Kalsky, director of the Dominican Study Centre in Amsterdam and professor at the Free University of Amsterdam presented the multimedia website-project *"New We"* which invites individuals and communities of believers to transgress borders and look further than their own community. The "*New*

We" however is not to be seen as another unity or entity. It can only be found when we dare to see the diversity. During the rest of the week the Dutch diversity was shown through lectures by a Jewish scholar, and by representatives of migrant churches and Islamic communities. And there was a public debate in Amsterdam about the role of the Netherlands in Europe and worldwide, about integration and migrants, about the importance of connections and about the role of religion in a highly secularised society. Two hundred guests, the Epil Group and politicians, church leaders and members from multireligious and ecumenical networks took part.
The Epil women visited different religious buildings in Amsterdam: the Portuguese Synagogue, the Blue Mosk and the Moses and Aaron Church.

Trialogue
In this module there was a special space for the Jewish tradition. The recent war and current political tensions between Lebanon and Israel were clearly present in the discussion between the Dutch rabbina Esther Hugenholtz and the Lebanese participants. But in the end both sides came nearer to each other and tried to understand the other without losing one's own identity. Thus EPIL showed its peacemaking character, this debate was one of the highlights of the week.

A visit to Cologne
During the excursion to Germany the long history of migrant women in Cologne was presented. And the participants visited the cathedral and a Turkish Mosk. Also they met members of the Council of Churches in Cologne. So they got a glimpse of the German perspective on migration, interfaith dialogue and interreligious cooperation.

New methods of interreligious dialogue
Practising interreligious dialogue in EPIL does not only happen through lectures, debates or working in small groups, but also through sharing all day spirituality by celebrating together. Reading together texts of the holy books leads to growing respect and mutual understanding. And very special in this module: interreligious dialogue of the body and the heart in the workshops Body Language of Praying, Turkish Ebru Art, Bibliodrama and Meditative Painting.

Moving on …
After this adventure of exploring the role of religion in a highly secularised and very multicultural country which shows new forms of connectedness and communities the caravan of studies will cross the borders of Europe and move on to the fifth and last module which will take place in the Middle East (Lebanon, February 2013).

celebrating and meditating

Martina Heinrichs

programme director at the Dominican Priory in Huissen www.kloosterhuissen.nl

(with thanks to Geertje de Vries and Nora Asrami)

MODULE V EPIL

"Committed to Staying Together - One People, Multiple Confessions"

was the title of the fifth and last module of the European Project for Interreligious Learning. EPIL is a traveling studycourse taking place throughout Europe and the Middle East during two years. It was the third time that such an interreligious study course had been organised. Module V was held in Beirut, 2 - 10 February 2013.

Because of the cooperative relations between EFECW and EPIL I took part at this module after having helped before to facilitate module IV (October 2012) in my working place, the Dominican Priory in Huissen/NL. One of the two founding mothers of EPIL, Reinhild Traitler, has close connections to our Forum.

Lebanon is a buffer country in an unstable political situation of the area with Syria, Jordan and Israel as direct neighbour countries. Because of this situation and for security reasons the EPIL programme was concentrated around Beirut with only one excursion to Biblos, but no visit to Tripoli, near the Syriac border.

With a population of four million inhabitants, Lebanon is a small country, but it has a variety of religions. Six major religious groups are represented such as Christians like Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Melkite Greek Catholic. And Muslims like: Druze, Sunni and Shia. There are third generation Armenian Christians who came from Turkey to Lebanon after the genocide of 1915, and catholic Christians called Maronites or protestant Christians whose churches were founded by missionaries as well as Coptic Christians who had come from Egypt. Lebanon has a long history of different religions living together: since 1400.

Many peace building initiatives are taken, especially by women. It is Hosn Abboud, the Muslim scholar from the EPIL Lebanese academic team who started a joined venture of Christian-Islamic Conviviality with the aim to declare the 25th of March as National Holiday after having discovered Mary/Maryam as a common figure in both religions. March 25th is the day to commemorate the Annunciation of Mary by the angel Gabriel who said that she will become pregnant of Jesus. In 2012 this national day was held for the first time, many religious leaders took part at the festivities and common prayers. Furthermore a group of Christian and Muslim women organises pilgrimages to places of veneration of Mary/Maryam. A link has been made to the Egeria pilgrimage of the German Forum branch which will also pass by Lebanon. The EPIL students were introduced to several non governmental organisations which work for peace and reconciliation like the Adyan foundation for interreligious studies and spiritual solidarity www.adyanvillage.net or "Offre joie" www.offrejoie.com/ a volunteer organisation which brings Christian and Muslim families together after the war. Lately they rebuilt a destroyed flat so that the families could come back to their homes after the bombings.

One of my personal highlights of this study week was the invitation to take part in the prayer and meditation gathering of Beirut sufi women guided by their Scheicha. Chanting, rythmically praying and dancing together they practice the *dikhr* to pronounce the nighty-nine beautiful names of God in the tradition of mystical Islam. This all took place in the home of Hosn and was followed by a delicious oriental meal with special dishes from Lebanon and Syria.

Epil is an enriching and peacebuilding interfaith project which hopefully will continue in the future. Up till now the delegations of each participating country – Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Lebanon – consisted of three Muslim and three Christian students as well as a Muslim and a Christian scholar in the academic team. Every country hosts one of the modules. Members of our Forum are invited to register for the next run of this study course which will hopefully be offered in the near future. In June 2013 the current shape of the course will be evaluated and new plans will be made.

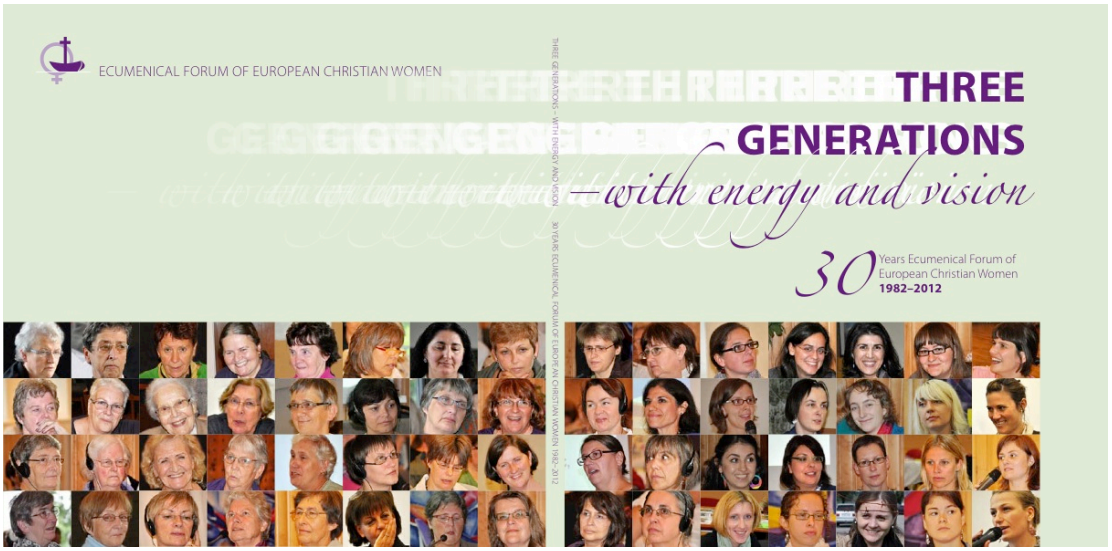
For more details: http://www.epil.ch/EPIL_news.html

Martina Heinrichs

EFECW Co- President

At the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of our Forum we published the book "THREE GENERATIONS, with energy and vision". You can order it at gabriele.kienesberger@gmx.net

Minimum price: 8 Euro (+postage) solidarity price: 12 Euro (+ postage)



Information

Changing of treasurer

After a period of 5 years **Gisela Hoeve** has laid down her tasks as treasurer of EFECW. We thank her very much for the hard and good work, for the time and energy she dedicated to the Forum. We wish her all the best for the future.

Since March 2013 the Forum has a new treasurer:

Hannah Golda from Vienna, Austria. She is very much experienced in the European work with and for *women in development* (WIDE). She was involved in the struggle against violence against women and girls. Other fields of her interest and experience are: community development, the anti-apartheid campaign for South-Afrika, training, coaching and facilitating groups. Having been responsible for budgeting, book-

keeping and financial reporting to donors as well as the funding by the Austrian government and EU institutions the tasks of a treasurer are not new to her.

In the meeting of the coordinating committee of March 2013 in Velletri/Italy the CC appointed her as EFECW treasurer.

We are very glad that Hannah is willing to give her gifts and skills to the Forum and welcome her cordially.

Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy

In 2009 we received a legacy of over € 220.000 from former CC-member Jacqueline Stuyt. The legacy is earmarked for special projects of National Forums in Europe for the duration of 10 years.

Please remember to apply. The information you need is on the website: www.efecw.net

Projects supported in 2013:

1. Revival of the Italian EFECW branch
   a. Seminar: "We are all Migrants" in Velletri, Italy, March 2013
   b. Constitution Meeting, Rome, Italy, June 2013
2. Study Visits "Healing and Reconciliation between Roma and non-Roma communities"
   Organised by EFECW in Hungary in cooperation with neighbouring countries
3. Regional training for women from ex-Yugoslavian countries, "Connecting compassionately"
   Organised by EFECW in Serbia in cooperation with ex-Yugoslavia EFECW branches
4. Seminar – Neighbourhood Meeting in Sweden

   "Living water – Sharing the Treasures of our Traditions"

   Organised by EFECW in Sweden in cooperation with EFECW women in Nordic countries, Baltic States, Russia and Poland

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EFECW Archive in formation

In October 2012 we started to plan for the creation of a Forum archive, financed by the Jacky Stuyt Fund. The cultural historian and journalist Dr. Cornelia Görksu has been commissioned to undertake the development of this concept. The project is being supported by the Jackie Stuyt Legacy. The Forum would like to create a systematic collection and documentation of the three decades of its history as a grass-roots ecumenical peace movement in Europe. At the same time a central archive

should also provide a natural home for the memories and the legacy of its members that will be readily accessible for academic research. The project is set to last over several years and will involve collecting written documents, objects and pictures as well as recording individual interviews with contemporary witnesses. The results of the research will also be made available on our website.

In memoriam

Annemarie Schönherr (80), one of our former Forum women, passed away. She was born in 1932 in Eastern Germany and died March 21 of this year in Potsdam. She was a German theologian and pastor and dedicated her live and work to feminist theology and to the movement of civil rights for the citizens of the former GDR (German Democratic Republic). She was also involved in the Kirchentag and in the work for protestant women in the GDR. From 1986 till 1994 she was part of the Coordinating Committee of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women. May her work be a blessing to us and may she rest in peace!

Annemarie Schönherr with her husband bishop Albrecht Schönherr († 2009)

Thank you for reading our newsletter! The EFECW newsletter will be issued regularly in April/May and in October/November. We are happy to receive your comments, suggestions, reports and announcements and to include them if possible!

Please contact: efecw-admin@inbox.net