



SMART PROJECT NEWSLETTER nr.4

Final conference



On 21st November 2019, the Smart Volunteering partnership held the final conference of the **EU- Funded AMIF** project "**SMART Volunteering for Female Migrants**", hosted at the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**.

The project focused on a multi-stakeholder approach for the labour integration of female migrants with structured volunteering being a potential path to employment in Europe.

More than 60 participants, including EU-wide platforms, policy-makers, NGOs specialists, business sector representatives and individual female migrants, came together to listen, exchange and discuss the connections between employment, volunteering and migration policies.

Introduction by Pavel Trantina and Anna Zobnina

An introduction to the first panel was given by Mr. Pavel Trantina, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee and Vice-President of EESC's Diversity Europe Group, and Mrs. Anna Zobnina, Coordinator of the European Network of Migrant Women (ENOMW).

Panel I: Presentation of the project



The project was introduced by **Ms. Sinem Yilmaz, Brussels Officer of ENOMW.**

The targets of the project are the third country national women migrating to the European Union and the wish to provide them with a high-quality lifestyle and work on their field of expertise. In many EU countries, female migrants are overqualified and yet still unemployed. Their skills are not valued enough. For this reason, the project promotes volunteering as a means for changing this situation, making female migrants more visible in each local community. Volunteering is seen as a skill-development device equipped to empower female migrants in a multifaceted way. **The SMART Volunteering consortium is composed of organisations from Belgium, Spain, the UK, Cyprus, France and Italy** and focuses on empowering female migrants, social organisations, NGOs and businesses to be more inclusive and open-minded.

Female migrants are highly motivated to integrate, both socially and economically, into the local communities. They perceive volunteering as an opportunity; however, they wish volunteering to be recognised as a valuable asset when entering the labour market. Volunteering is also extremely helpful when it comes to psychological and mental wellbeing as it enables people to network and actively participate in the local communities.

Nevertheless, the lack of communication between NGOs and the business sector calls for reform. The business community is now more socially responsible than ever and generally open to diversity but small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) find it difficult to devote resources to improve and implement their cultural and gender equality policies. The issue was addressed by this project through the development and implementation of training for NGOs and the business sector.



Interventions from Migrant Women

Space was also given to three female migrants during the conference to share their stories and talk about the obstacles of being a migrant woman:

Veronica, arrived in Spain from Ukraine when she was just 10 years old and, despite the difficulties her family faced at the beginning, she managed to enter the labour market and she has recently launched a business in Seville; **Joanna** is Albanian and has benefited from the SMART Volunteering project. She defines herself as a victim of multiple intimidating border policies which ultimately led to social exclusion; **Marcela** is originally from Mexico but has lived abroad for the past 17 years. She lives in Paris and she is a lawyer



Concluding Remarks

Pablo Morales from the Chamber of Commerce of Seville concluded by making some final remarks, enhancing the importance of labour integration and the high value and entrepreneurial spirit of female migrants.

Panel II: External Experts

The second panel was composed by four constituents: **Mrs. Justyna Wernert**, Member of the EU Commission DG Home; **Mrs. Anna Zobnina**, Coordinator of ENOMW; **Mrs. Esther Lynch**, Member of the EU Trade Union Confederation; **Mrs. Modi Ntambwe**, Member of the Women Economic Forum; and **Mrs. Anila Noor**, Managing Director at New Women Connectors.

Justyna Wernert structured her speech in three key points respectively being a) Policy Making, b) Finance, and c) Policy Outlook. She explained the EU's limited competence on integrational policy-making. When it comes to special policies for migrant women, very few countries have legislation empowering women and fighting inequality. She also highlighted the financing role of the Union to support such projects and programs and called for more flexible projects targeting women. Lastly, an emphasis was put on the need to spread awareness of the fact that more action is required for migrant women.

Esther Lynch outlined two ambitions relating to the fight against all forms of violence against women and the importance of the right to work as fundamental right.

Modi Ntambwe highlighted the need for a holistic approach that addressed, at EU level, all issues related to migrant women, including undocumented women.

The last speaker on the expert panel was **Anila Noor**, a Pakistani woman who migrated to the Netherlands and requested political asylum. She advocates for providing further resources and mentoring for migrant women, particularly those who hold professional skills.



Inter-agency Workshop: Pathways to Sustainable, Social and Economic Integration

After the conference, three workshops were organised for discussion in working groups. One workshop was about the multitasking approach, the second one focused on alternative approaches to skills development and the last one was about the advantages of mentoring for migrant women.



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