Social integration of women belonging to ethnic minority groups

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Antonyia PARVANOVA (ADLE, BG) on the social integration of women belonging to ethnic minority groups.

Members take the view that more structured coordination of EU, national, regional and local policies concerning ethnic minority groups is needed in order to have a lasting impact and achieve better policies at EU, national, regional and local level .They encourage policy-makers at all levels to consult the women whose rights are affected, along with their communities and organisations active in this field, on policies and measures designed to improve the social inclusion of ethnic minority women. They state that it is of primary importance to implement existing legislation in a timely manner, and thus to transpose the directives in the Member States.

Members insist in particular on the following issues:

Education, training and qualifications: Members highlight the importance of education on the acceptance of different cultures and the impact of discrimination and prejudice. They call on the Commission and the Member States to adopt measures aimed at preventing the de-skilling of women belonging to ethnic minorities by providing better access to the labour market, including access to affordable, high-quality childcare, and ensuring access to education, training and vocational training. They also call for the effective implementation of policies that target women belonging to ethnic minority groups and introduce clear, speedy procedures for the recognition of skills and qualifications.

Integration: Members encourage policy-makers at EU, national, regional and local level to consult ethnic minority women's organisations on policies and measures geared towards the social inclusion of ethnic minority women. They urge the Commission and the Member States to propose measures designed to promote the existence of intercultural and socio-cultural mediators within the EU. They take the view that the **process of inclusion must be initiated at an early stage in life**, in order effectively to provide alternatives to poverty and social exclusion. It is therefore necessary to provide an institutional framework for community-based social and educational services for children and families which meet regional and personal needs. The Commission is called upon to provide particular support for programmes geared to early inclusion and in particular to widen EU funding opportunities from the European Social Fund and the European Integration Fund and giving them a more strategic focus in order to play a role in the integration and reintegration of women from ethnic minority groups into the labour market, in particular in times of economic crisis. Members urge the Commission to develop measures that make EU funding more easily available to ethnic minority women.

Raising awareness: Members call on the Commission and the Member States, in collaboration with NGOs, to carry out awareness-raising campaigns aimed at ethnic minority women as well as the general public, and to ensure the full implementation of the relevant provisions in order to combat discriminatory cultural habits and patriarchal role models, to prevent polarisation and **tackle the prevalent sexist stereotypes** and social stigmatisation which underpin violence against women, and to ensure that there is no justification of violence on the grounds of customs, traditions or religious considerations.

Statistics: the Commission and the Member States are called to provide for the regular collection and analysis of gender- and ethnicity disaggregated data in accordance with the Member States' rules on the

protection of personal data relating to issues connected with social inclusion, such as access to education, the labour market, social security, the health system and housing. The report stresses that more cross-sectoral research and indicators in relation to the impact of discrimination and social exclusion on women belonging to ethnic minority communities within the EU are needed in order to inform targeted integration policies.

Representation: Members encourage the active political and social participation of women belonging to ethnic minority groups in all areas of society, including political leadership, education and culture, so as to combat the current underrepresentation. They point out that **women's economic independence and empowerment** are key factors in ensuring their full participation in mainstream society.

Language learning: Members encourage the Commission, the Member States and regional and local authorities to make active efforts to improve and facilitate access to education, with particular emphasis on language learning (especially the official languages of the country in question) and access to lifelong learning and higher education, for women and girls belonging to ethnic minority groups in order to avoid a gender gap in education that may lead to labour market exclusion and poverty. They stress that women from ethnic minority groups need access to health care information in different languages.

Gender equality: the report urges the Commission to take the gender aspect into account when deciding on policies and measures geared towards social inclusion. It also calls on the Member States to take measures to ensure access to support services aimed at preventing gender-based violence and protecting women from such violence regardless of their legal status, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or religion. Existing gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation should be fully implemented. Member States are called upon to:

- ensure the protection of victims of multiple discrimination, among whom ethnic minority women represent a big group, by adding explicit clauses and binding regulations on multiple discrimination to the legal system;

- ensure that national equality bodies are efficient and independent and to provide them with sufficient financial and human resources for each ground of discrimination, along with multiple discrimination, including calls on national equality bodies to develop tools and training in relation to multiple discrimination, including the specific situation of ethnic minority women.

Lastly, Members insist on the active involvement of the European Institute for Gender Equality in collecting data and carrying out research on integration issues concerning ethnic minority women and call on the Fundamental Rights Agency to include a transversal gender equality and women's rights perspective in all aspects of the multiannual framework and its subsequent activities, including those on ethnic discrimination and on the fundamental rights of Roma.