

# **EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS 2007-2013**

## **COMMUNITY ACTIONS: CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2008**

### **Priority 2: Developing common European modules for migrants' integration addressing specific integration related issues**

#### **Project Title: Hyphenated Identities: Bridging the Economic and Cultural Distance of Muslim Women**

#### **Background:**

This project seeks to address the social and economic exclusion of Muslim women. The need for a focus on this group is reflected by a number of contextual factors:

- Migrant women have entered the European Union under different immigration categories and for different purposes. Until the stoppage of mass labour migration in the mid-1970s (earlier in the UK), female migrants constituted a significant minority of labour migrants but often entered without children. Following the halt to mass labour shortage, family reunion became the main route of entry into the European Union and was predominantly female. By the 1990s, refugee flows, with variable gender balances began to increase.
- Until recently the growth of employment for migrant women was driven by the informalisation of service sectors and inadequacies of welfare provision. Women migrants are prominent in several of the 3D jobs – dirty, degrading and dangerous (domestic, textiles, hotel and catering, agriculture). However the strengthening of Islamophobia and emphasis on cultural practices (head scarf, arranged marriages, honour killings) associated with Islam focuses attention more than ever on Muslim women oppressed by patriarchal systems. Such practices have also generated official debate and policy measures, as in the UK, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Forced marriage is defined as a marriage contracted without the free and valid consent of one or both parties (Southall Black Sisters 2001). It is different from arranged marriages where there is free and valid consent, although in reality the difference for many women may not be so clear. As more recent studies of educational achievement and familial relations have shown, shifts in gender relations in the workplace and the household intersect with and are shaped by class and education. Downward mobility, racism and discrimination contribute to conservative familial and gender identities. An understanding of how young Muslim women, like other women, construct their identity through values and norms that may be both contradictory and complementary needs to take into account the double discrimination of sexism and racism in relation to the wider society and the internal communal pressures they confront . Muslim women need to be given their own voices.

The “cultural distance” of Muslim women from the labour market is reflected in research at an EU and National level in several Member states which highlights the low participation of Muslim women in the labour market. Muslim women have the highest economic inactivity rate of all faith groups. 68 per cent of Muslim women are economically inactive, as compared to 28 per cent of Christian women and approximately 35 per cent of Hindu and Sikh women

- Furthermore, It is twice as hard for Muslim women to succeed in achieving their career goals" because of "hostility from college, discrimination at work and struggles within their communities" according to the interim results of a recent study into the under-representation of young Muslim women in higher education and professional employment
- Economic inactivity impacts beyond the individual person not in work and can have longer term effects on their partners and families. This can result in long term and generational economic and social disadvantage.
- There is a need for policy to encourage Muslim women into the mainstream labour market. Encouraging dual income households, in a culturally sensitive way, would be one way of tackling severe economic inactivity and disadvantage. The level of economic disadvantage Muslims face requires policy to encourage and support dual income households. Policy should ensure that there are measures in place to support not only the female partners of Muslim men who are already in employment to enter the labour market, but also those women whose male partners are not currently employed, through assisting both into the labour market. Facilitating female labour market entry could be of financial and social benefit to the family unit as a whole. Their entry into the mainstream labour market may encourage and support the entry of future generations into the mainstream labour market.
- Women from all ethnic minority groups are currently under-represented in the selfemployed sector. There may be cultural preferences which may restrict employment by some Muslim women into the mainstream labour market. Other possible barriers, examined later in this report include lack of soft skills, training, and childcare responsibilities. If this is the case, other opportunities to become economically integrated through other forms of employment should be explored, such as selfemployment and home working.
- It is estimated that between now and 2012 Muslims will account for over a quarter of the growth in the working-age population. The challenge for governments, employers, and Muslims themselves is to tackle the barriers Muslims currently face to ensure that they are integrated into the mainstream labour market. The reasons for the level of multiple disadvantage Muslims face are complex, ranging from gaps in mainstream labour market policy and employer practices, poor service delivery and a lack of faith-friendly work environments. Policy must reflect this complexity and aim to integrate Muslim women into the mainstream labour market, through local and national, public and private sector initiatives. It should also acknowledge that the faith dimension is an important factor in effectively targeting the most disadvantaged group in the labour market. Due to the demographic change in

the Muslim working-age population, governments and employers must recognise and respond proactively to the level of disadvantage Muslims face. Policy must aim to integrate Muslims, men and women, into the mainstream labour market through local and national, public and private sector initiatives.

- Furthermore, it is a group that is not effectively linked into existing mechanisms for participation at a general civic /local community level. This is further reflected in the fledgling nature of self-help/mutual aid organisations OF Muslim women.
- As a result of the general climate since 9/11 stereotypes have been resurrected. Clichés have resurfaced. Prejudices reinforced. About Muslims in general, but about Muslim women, in particular. Leading people to draw superficial, and simply erroneous, conclusions: That all Muslim women are victims. That all Muslim women are passive and docile. That men in Muslim communities fully control the lives of women. That Islam is basically anti-women.
- Relatedly, current provision is simply failing to effectively reach this target group. Existing “gender equality”/“equal opportunity” policies are failing to reach this target group. Such policies are beset with a false “universalism” which fails to address the social, economic and cultural contexts which construct the realities which are experienced by Muslim women. There is a clear need to impact on current mindsets which create such false “universalisms”

## Objectives

Given the above contextual factors, this project seeks to develop an exchange of experience AND the development of best/better practice at European, national and local levels in addressing the needs of Muslim women in relation to integration based on the nine common basic principles agreed at EU level.

In achieving these overall goals, the project will bring together a partnership of 8 organisations from at least 5 Member States which are actively involved with this issue. All partners will therefore have mechanisms for engaging directly with the target group. Where possible, partners will also have connections into wider regional and national mechanisms which exist to address this issue. The aim is to ensure an effective impact into mainstream services and policies.

It is envisaged that the project would undertake the following specific actions in order to meet the overall goals:

- Undertaking three transnational peer review workshop. The workshops would focus on specific sub-themes; labour market integration; empowerment; participation; changing stereotypes, political involvement etc. Each workshop would bring together a delegation of 4 to 5 participants from each partner location. These delegations would ensure involvement of Muslim women as well as key actors from local/regional/national organisations. The aim will be share experience and also result in the production of good practise case studies.
- Development of a good practice resource pack for developing services for Muslim women. The aim being to pool the experience within the partnership and beyond in order to create an online resource that can be useful in disseminating good practise. This would draw on the work undertaken in the workshops but also include a wider mapping exercise.
- Undertake a mapping exercise at a local level in order to identify the needs of the target groups and also the gaps in local provision. The aim here would be to create local action plans which provide a means for wider dissemination and implementation of outcomes.

## **Project Results**

The project would have the following outcomes:

- The production of three peer review reports.
- The production of three linked case studies reports
- Establishing a peer review programme that would involve over 120 participants. Of these at least 30% would be from the target group.
- Eight local mapping report and linked action plans
- An online good practice resource pack
- The setting up of local action groups who would undertake the development and eventual implementation of the local action plan.
- Establishment of a transnational community of practice

## **Project Budget (based on 8 partners)**

Co-ordination (Transnational)

( includes; strategic management; project administration and co-ordination; financial management; audit cost; evaluation; Website; general administration; bank charges; etc)

**€151,000**

**Steering group meetings (1 delegate per partnerx4 meetings)**

**€25,600**

Local Co-ordination

€25,000 per partner

**€200,000**

Peer review Exchanges x3 (4 delegates per partner and €12,000 per workshop to pay for interpretation)

**€145,000**

Peer review reports and linked case studies (€12,000 per workshop)

**€36,000**

Local Mapping and action plans (€6,000 per partner)

**€48,000**

**Overheads**

**€20,000**

**Total €625,000 for 18 months.**

**Please note that this projected budget is the maximum.**

**The commission will fund 80% and 20% has to be provided in CASH as co-financing. Based on the projected budget of €625,000, the Commission would fund €500,000 and €125,000 would be the co-financing required.**

**This means €15,625 per partner over two financial years (€7,8125 per year)**

**Each partner would however receive € 31,000 in cash for local co-ordination costs and local mapping, PLUS all travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for 12 delegates with respect to the peer review costs AND travel, accommodation and subsistence for steering group meetings. This will be equivalent to a further €14,900 over the 18 months.**

### **Next Steps**

The closing date for applications is 09/03/09. We would like to have a partnership established by 24/02/09.

If successful the project would begin in November or December 2009.

**Please send your responses to:**

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