

Speech of BM.a.D. Dr. Marilies Flemming on the Conference Integrating Cities II

Support for migrant children and their families (Speech of BM a.D. Dr. Marilies Flemming on the Conference "Integrating Cities II" in Milan)

If we speak about support for migrant children we know that we have to help them to learn the language of their new home countries, that they have to go to school and that we have to find jobs for them.

We very often forget, that we have to help their families in the same way, because there is no integration of children without integration of their families.

Mothers educate the children, but we know that specially female migrants seem to be particularly disadvantaged. Their educational level is the lowest and in particular Turkish women focus on family and household and they do not have the slightest change to learn the language or something about the culture of their new home country. They are sticking to an isolated position fixed upon the culture of the country of origin. This situation seems to be disadvantageous, regardless of the extent of cultural autonomy that has to be conceded.

This holds especially true if these patterns of behaviour are passed on the next generation of daughters as it perpetuates a societal role model that does not correspond to the prevalent ideas of a modern society. Therefore it is necessary to make stronger efforts to integrate women in overall societal interrelations.

All political measures have to try to eliminate discriminations or at least to alleviate them. Besides the support in acute situations of physical and psychic assaults long-term concepts have to be elaborated, that strengthen the women within the family but also in society. A specific empowerment for female migrants is required. First of all it should comprise information, consolidated education for migrant girls and the improvement of the language ability for late entrants, but also legal restraining of the traditions brought along, that hinder emancipation and equal opportunities for women.

On the labour market, female migrants are affected by double discrimination. On the one hand, they are disadvantaged compared to males and have to take up jobs that bring less income and status. On the other hand they suffer from the same structural discrimination as male migrants. This discrimination starts with an inferior education and proceeds cumulatively. More than half of the female foreign nationals can only refer to primary education, in the case of third-country nationals from outside the EU it is two thirds, and for Turkish females 90 per cent! The labour force participation rate for Turkish women is clearly lower in all age groups compared to all other immigrant groups. They are more often housewives and rarely economically active. This correlates with higher numbers of children and a stronger orientation towards the family. Basically, female migrants take up the jobs that have been vacated by Austrian women. These are mostly worker positions in the field of real assets production, catering and lodging and in the field of cleaning (business services sector). Furthermore they work in health and

social services including position as nurses and in trade. Once more female immigrants are to be found disproportionately often in those branches, that belong to the secondary labour market with below average incomes, where a high flexibility is required and – more often than in other parts of the labour market – fluctuations in demand are directly forwarded to the employees who are then discharged. For this reason it becomes clear, why unemployment is higher in the immigrant group than in the Austrian. Once more Turkish women are found at the bottom of the employment hierarchy.

The basic structures of the housing situation of the immigrant population can directly be deducted from their socioeconomic situation. Foreigners are living more seldom in flats with central heating, bathroom and toilet. More than 10 per cent of the foreign population still have to be satisfied with flats that neither have water supply nor a toilet within the flat. Sex does not matter in the differentiation of the housing condition of immigrants. Wives, daughters and grandmothers are living where their partners, sons and grandfathers live, gender-related differences remain small.

Female migrants are more often confronted with problematic circumstances than male migrants. A future migration and integration policy will have to pay more attention to gender-specific aspects. Once more, the double discrimination of female migrants can be observed. On the one hand they are women with all the discrimination related to it and on the other hand they are members of ethnic group defined as foreign. Finally many women (most of all those from the Islamic World) have to deal with the conflict between a modern and a tradition-conscious role of women and also have to solve it somehow. We have to keep in mind specific problem areas: multiple burdens, domestic violence, the consequences of broken bicultural marriages, trafficking in women, forced marriages and female genital mutilation.

The situation of advisory services for female migrants has also to be regarded critically. They are most of all run by small and medium-sized NGOs, their funding mostly takes place on the basis of temporary promotion contracts and via “patchwork funding” by several sponsors. This practice leads towards a high bureaucratic input, an often precarious financial situation and a resultant insecurity regarding the long-term planning, but also towards a rather differing professionalism concerning the goals and contents of the advisory services.

(the text refers to a publication of the Austrian Federal Chancellery: Bundeskanzleramt)