

# NEW FEMALE MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION RELATED POLICIES IN CYPRUS

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## Introduction

Writing a ‘state of the art’ in the national context of Cyprus is a rather problematic venture. Firstly, the literature available on the subject is mostly ‘international’ and as such we are forced to erect artificial ‘national’ or ‘state boundaries’ in order to confine the ambit of our work. Secondly, there is an inherent contextual problem relating to the *de facto* division of the country in which we are faced with the fact that Cyprus is a bi-communal and bilingual country, but due to budgetary reasons and political issues research fails to properly capture the situation in the whole of Cyprus. For instance, unless the literature is in English or it has been translated into Greek from Turkish, there is usually a failure to deal with the situation in the north of the barbed wire.<sup>1</sup> The third difficulty relates to the fact that the subject of *integration in general* has never been a subject of study, save for some papers written by the researchers themselves (see bibliography and literature review that follows) and one study by Harakis (ed.) (2005). Moreover, the question of integration of female migrants has never been *directly*, and to a large extent indirectly examined before, meaning that this is essentially an exercise of locating the gaps in ‘local’ knowledge in the literature. This reflects the absence of public debate on the general subject matter of ‘integration’. Therefore what follows is an attempt to piece together and locate the knowledge derived from disparate sources, which are not all ‘academic’ or strictly speaking ‘scientific’ in form. Nevertheless, the knowledge derived from various technical reports such as: governmental and non-governmental reports, policy-documents and other publications is crucial in informing us about the theoretical understanding of local actors, policy-makers and the few researchers in the field, as well as making some conclusions as to the theoretical underpinnings of actual policies and the contestations over policies.

As already pointed out there is a problem in trying to locate the policy of ‘integration’ of female migrants in Cyprus, because no literature on the subject exists and instead there is what we have termed as an ‘immigration-integration policy conundrum’ (see Trimikliniotis

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<sup>1</sup> One of the few studies published on the question of migration, migrants and settlers in the north is a monograph report by Mete Hatay (2006). See also Hatay 2008 and Faiz 2008a, 2008b.

and Fulas-Souroulla 2006a). More specifically on the topic of the structure of the labour market for female migrants one has to consider the literature regarding the question of employment, work and labour processes in Cyprus with a focus on gender and women as well as locate the position of women within the context of migrant labour in Cyprus.

### **Introducing the Context: Understanding the conditions for migrant women's integration**

A literature review on the question of integration of new female migrants in labour market and society, as well as policies influencing these processes requires that we begin by discussing the broader context of integration, given by the discourse of corresponding policies on migration and integration influencing migrant women in Cyprus. We then delimit the 'categories' of immigrants in Cyprus as envisaged by the State's employment policies and give a brief account of the literature on female migrants in Cypriot social context. When envisaging main topics in relation to migration and gender in Cyprus we focus on the following: gendered occupations; migrant women within other occupations; undocumented female migrants; civic participation; social prejudice, xenophobia and racism; and female marriage migrants. Subsequently we attempt to trace some processes linked to migrants' integration by analysing public opinion and state authorities' discourses about migrants in Cyprus. We conclude our literature review by identifying major research gaps on the phenomena under discussion.

In order to discuss conditions for migrant women's integration we have to give a brief account of general policies and their effects on female migrants. There are no specifically targeted policies on female migrants or female migrant workers in Cypriot context, except for situations in certain sectors of the economy where the workforce is entirely constituted of women such as domestic work and sex industry/entertainment. There is no specific evaluation or impact assessment of policy in these fields.

We have already referred to the main characteristic of the general policy on migration in Cyprus as an 'immigration-integration conundrum', given that so far there is no 'integration policy' as such. There is a general immigration policy that regulates the entrance and stay of migrants as well as policies dealing with the employment of 'temporary permit' foreign workers on low skill, low paid and low status jobs unwanted by the native population; however, so far these are not integrated as a comprehensive and well-designed migration policy, nor is there a global approach and planning for dealing with immigration-related issues in Cyprus.

As far as labour market policy is concerned, the related regulations refer to an effort at revising the 'strategy for the employment of third country nationals' to protect domestic supply of labour. In terms of aims and goals, according to the declared policy principle, the migrants should enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment with nationals, in matters of employment terms and conditions. When it comes to results and policy effects, violation of rights is widely reported throughout research based on narratives of women participants in various research projects. Qualitative research (Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla 2006b) confirms that violations of work-related rights and contractual terms continue to be a frequent phenomenon and domestic workers in particular complain about work overload and underpayment, bad treatment and sexual harassment by employers. Moreover, it was stressed that implementation of existing legislation is problematic. A main factor invoked is the perception which prevails by the authorities and many civil servants, who display negative attitudes and xenophobic predispositions.

It is widely documented that the high levels of economic growth in the southern part of Cyprus led to a rise in the demand for labour that exceeded the supply of labour from indigenous sources (Matsis and Charalambous 1993). The slow down in the growth of the economy in the 1990s by comparison to the late 1970s and 1980s,<sup>2</sup> together with the rise of inflation, was the basis for the abandoning of the restrictive labour policies practised up to 1990. In contrast with the restrictive policies, the 1990s saw a radical change in government policy. For the first time migrant labour was allowed to enter on a much larger scale, to meet the labour shortage in those sectors of the economy that were no longer popular with Cypriots. Matsis and Charalambous (1993:38) explain the reversal of the policy on "foreign" labour as a result of "excessive demand pressures and the near full exploitation of the indigenous labour supply". The same authors suggest that the policy to allow entry of migrant labour is due to pressure from employers and the fear of inflation resulting from wage indexation; they suggest that "the employment of foreign labour will eventually lead to a containment of wage increases" (1993:42). Migrant workers primarily take up menial, low pay and low status jobs that Cypriots do not take; their occupational structure is similar to that of migrant labour in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s (Matsis and Charalambous 1993:43;

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<sup>2</sup> Economic growth of the island during the years 1981-86, averaged around 6%, for 1987-88; it was 7,5%, whilst for 1989-93 it was 5%. Since 1993 it slowed down to an average of about 3%. (PIO 1997a). In the immediate post 1974 period, 1975-80, with an average growth was 10% per annum manufacturing and construction became the leading sectors, as a result of the reconstruction efforts and the booming Arab markets; however this has been drastically altered in the 80's and 90's where it is the tertiary sector and tourism that are the main driving force of the economy (Matsis and Charalambous 1993).

Trimikliniotis 1999; Trimikliniotis and Pantelides 2003; Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005a; Harakis *et. al.* 2005).

In order to locate female migrants in Cyprus one must examine the literature available on migrants in general, where there is a special reference to female migrants; unfortunately the literature on gender in Cyprus or gendered employment has failed to see the migrant women as part of female labour of Cyprus in the same way that the few studies that exist on labour in Cyprus generally do not consider migrant labour as part of the working class, as pointed out in other works (see Trimikliniotis 1999 and 2006 for a critique of this nationalistic approaches to the study of labour). The only notable exception in the early 1990s is the work of Matsis and Charalambous (1993), and more recently the literature on migrants and migration in Cyprus is increasingly moving in this direction (see INEK 2004 and 2005; Trimikliniotis 1999, 2007; Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005, 2007; Trimikliniotis and Fullias-Souroulla 2006a; Agathangelou 2004; Harakis *et. al.* 2005; Panayiotopoulos 2005).

The position of women in the labour market, the legislative framework for gender equality, and collective bargaining was examined in an EIRO paper (see Soumeli and Trimikliniotis 2004). It located that women have a lower employment rate than men and a higher unemployment rate, and are more likely to work part time or on a temporary basis, while their average pay is lower than men's. Even though specific legislation on workplace gender equality has been introduced only recently, bargaining does not appear to deal with equality matters. Women's share of overall employment is significantly lower than that of men. The gap between the numbers of employed men and women in Cyprus is greater than in most of the current EU Member States. Overall, in recent years the composition of employment has displayed a small but steady shift in women's favour. Despite the greater numbers of women in the labour market and, to some extent, a change in the 'patriarchal' structure of employment, the overall situation of women's employment remains "particularly disadvantageous vis-à-vis that of men" given that "women's employment rate lags significantly behind that of men, women's unemployment rate is almost double, and women prefer or are preferred in positions of flexible employment, particularly part-time and temporary employment." Moreover, "women continue to be over-represented in low-skilled jobs, and there are indications that they fill a significant number of jobs in the clandestine economy. This last category includes the large number of female migrant workers employed in the so-called 'sex industry', as well as many migrants employed as domestic workers. In addition, women as a whole constitute the majority of unpaid workers in family enterprises. It should be noted that the largest increase in employment in 2001 was related to private

households that employ domestic staff, and was due to the continued increase of migrants employed as domestic workers (see Soumeli and Trimikliniotis 2004). The conclusion of the article is that the position of women in the Cypriot labour market is clearly worse than that of men, in respect both of their participation in employment and unemployment and in relation to the quality of their employment. The same is true with regard to the wage gap between men and women. It is thus necessary to conduct studies relating to occupational segregation, and the factors that determine the wage gap which acts so disadvantageously towards women.

With regard to improving women's terms and conditions of employment, the legislative framework has an important role to play. The delay exhibited in previous years in adopting specialised legislation can undoubtedly be counted among the negative developments, while it will be of definitive importance to see whether the recently enacted legislative framework will be put to effective use or not. However, the laws by themselves, no matter how comprehensive, are not enough to wipe out inequality in the workplace and society in general. The social partners are therefore called upon to play a major role both to tackle the gaps, shortcomings and negative provisions of the relevant laws, and to improve the legislation, mainly through establishing a link between the collective bargaining process and equal opportunities (see Soumeli and Trimikliniotis 2004).

### **Categories of migrants in Cyprus as envisaged by the employment policies**

Since accession to the EU in 2004, the Republic of Cyprus has categorised various migrant workers in the manner many other EU countries do: EU citizens; citizens of the acceding countries; third country citizens; and recognised refugees and asylum seekers. Up till 2007 when Romania and Bulgaria acceded to EU, workers from these countries were considered to be a 'special category' and their visa requirements were often relaxed, even though there were numerous instances where this rule was violated.<sup>3</sup> The legislation prescribes different treatment for each category (therefore, the policy over their employment is different). Female migrants in Cyprus are recruited from these categories. As regards undocumented migrants, the majority are primarily workers who have entered the country legally but remain after their visa conditions have expired – they are primarily 'over-stayers'. However, the issue of undocumented migrants is difficult and controversial, and due to obvious reasons very little research has been conducted (see for details Trimikliniotis 2004b:17).

In terms of gendered migration as well as the intersectioned 'gendered and ethnic' division of labour we address the broad category of female migrant workers including the

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<sup>3</sup> See Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, 2005a, 2005b, 2006.

groups of domestic workers (the largest group) and ‘entertainment/sex workers’, two groups that in Cyprus denote exclusively migrant women. The group of women in sex industry comprises on one hand women working in cabaret-type venues as ‘artistes’ and on the other hand, women employed in entertainment centres, pubs and bars as barmaids or waitresses. In addition, we mention the following groups of work migrant women<sup>4</sup>: women employed in other tertiary sectors, such as: nurses, sale assistants and waitresses in restaurants and cleaners in hotels; shuttle migration of women working in agriculture/farming; undocumented migrant women. Other groups of migrant women are: refugees and asylum seekers; Pontian Greek women and female marriage migrants (mainly spouses of Greek Cypriots).

### **Literature on Female Migrants in Cyprus**

It has been noted that women’s participation in the migration process and the reasons for which they migrate are evolving. This change represents one of the most significant trends in recent international migration streams and is referred to as the ‘feminisation of migration’; and this is also true about Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> It influences the shaping of roles and affects relationships between men and women in countries of origin as well as of destination. The issue of gendering migration in the Cyprus context has been raised (Trimikliniotis 1999, 2001; Trimikliniotis and Pantelides 2003; Kadir 2001; Lenz 2001). Whether as an issue of public discourse or violation of employment/human rights of domestic workers and in particular south-east Asians (Kadir 2001; Lenz, 2001), or a general issue of belonging and participation of women migrants in civic life (Trimikliniotis 2003b) the exclusion and racism targeting migrant women assumes specific forms and raises its own particularities. Apparently, even though many women “endeavour to establish gender equality, the ‘androcentric’ evaluation of gainful labour versus unpaid or at best lowly reproductive work” reproduces gender inequality but on a “racialised level” (Lenz 2001:75).

The question of gender and migration in southern Europe is subject of debate in recent literature and there are some references to Cyprus (Anthias and Lazarides 2000). Floya Anthias (2000:17) has developed a conceptual framework for gendering the migration process drawing on the case of Cyprus “to explore more substantively some of the issues relating to the feminization of migration within new migration processes, particularly as they relate to southern Europe”. In this sense, the issues of women migrants and gendered work are discussed by pointing to the analysis of their location in the labour market: “within a

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<sup>4</sup> As identified in FeMiPol, Working paper no. 2, Key informant interviews (Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla, 2006b).

<sup>5</sup> See also FeMiPol WP3 report, the section about Cyprus available at: [http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working\\_papers/wp3/statistical\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working_papers/wp3/statistical_analysis.pdf)

secondary, service-oriented or hidden labour market that is divided into male and female sectors and reproduces an ethnically and gendered divided labour market". Therefore, there is a concentration of women's participation in the service sector, particularly domestic/care service and within the sex or leisure industry. Within the service sector, "the undocumented nature of much migration is therefore important in structuring its relation to the market, in terms of the hidden or private economies" (*ibid.* 26).

Specifically, the issue of gendering migration Cypriot context has been developed in relation to labour market (Trimikliniotis 1999; Trimikliniotis and Pantelides 2003). Generally, almost all the publications based on empirical research focus on the experiences of domestic workers and women in the sex industry and therefore we can identify a large research gap in relation to other groups of women migrants (workers) in Cyprus. Among others, there were empirically investigated issues such as: violation of employment/human rights of domestic workers, in particular south-east Asians (Kadir 2001; Lenz 2001), the globalisation of care with a focus on experiences of Filipina domestic workers as carers for elderly (Panayiotopoulos 2005) and a general issue of belonging and participation of women migrants in civic life (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005a, 2007). Furthermore, Agathangelou (2004) examines the movement of domestic and sex workers to Cyprus, Greece and Turkey and demonstrates that gender, race (ethnicity), and nationality are crucial elements in the constitution of desire economies.

## **Main topics in relation to migration and gender in Cyprus**

In this section we attempt to summarize and discuss main issues in relation to our focus, i.e. integration of new female migrants in labour market and society. In this sense we map out different books, journal articles and reports based on empirical research in order to give some insights on the more general and also particular aspects of the topic under discussion.

The majority of migrants to Cyprus are women. Our assertion is supported by an analysis of population data on long-term immigrants<sup>6</sup> (106,284 people for the years between 1997 and 2004) showing that the sex ratio for long-term immigrants was slightly in favour of female migrants, six years out of eight (1997-2004); the overall sex ratio was 98 men for 100 long-term immigrant women. Moreover, as already mentioned, women accounted for

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<sup>6</sup> This is a statistical analysis of data on marriage, intersocietal mixed marriage and immigration in Cyprus, in Fulas-Souroulla, M. (2006) *Marriages between Greek Cypriots and Foreign Nationals in the Republic of Cyprus*, University of Cyprus, unpublished Ph.D. thesis. The terms 'long-term immigrants' and 'short-term immigrants' are used by the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus.

approximately half of all immigrants in the period since the mid-1980s<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately, there are no statistical data split by sex available for economy sectors. The only data available regards the distribution of migrant workers within economy sectors, fact that reflects lack of preoccupation and awareness at the level of state authorities about the situation of work migrant women in Cyprus.

### **Migrant women in gendered occupations: domestic/care and sex work**

On trafficking and sex work of female migrants there is a number of international, European and national reports as well as three books published and on-line resources of media reports on the subject. We therefore have a good starting point for understanding the situation in Cyprus and a basic literature as a point of departure. These are the USA Reports on trafficking, the Robles Report, the Cyprus Ombudsman report of 2003 and the books by Anna Agathangelou (2004), which focuses on the situation in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey; the book by Ramona Lenz (2006), on prostitution and trafficking of migrant women in the Republic of Cyprus and the book of Chambis Kiatipis (2004). The issue of the position and specific exploitation of women in the sex industry has received attention particularly after the publication of a report by the Commissioner of Administration in 2003.<sup>8</sup>

As stated before, the bulk of migrants to Cyprus are women. Within that group, a significant number is given by the women coming to work mostly as live-in domestic workers. They have been employed in Cyprus since the early 1990s and currently form the largest group within the category of labour migrants in possession of work permits. The latest figures show that in 2005, the female migrants in domestic work constituted a percentage of 31% (or 15,863) from the overall number of migrant workers with work permits (from a total of 52,000 people)<sup>9</sup>. Coming mainly from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, Eastern Europe and former USSR countries, thousands of women work mostly in the houses of the Cypriot upper- and middle-classes performing a variety of domestic and childcare/elderly care functions. Both documented and undocumented women find that their circumstances are financially precarious and to various degrees they are legally unprotected. The task of identifying institutionalised exclusion-inclusion mechanisms is important in relation to the phenomenon of our concern. Domestic workers are not unionised and generally reside with the employer, and together with entertainers in cabaret-type venues in Cyprus are exclusively women migrants.

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<sup>7</sup> See for details FeMiPol Working paper no. 3, the section about Cyprus available at: [http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working\\_papers/wp3/statistical\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working_papers/wp3/statistical_analysis.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> AYT/E1/2001, 24.11.2003.

<sup>9</sup> According to statistical data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.



The lack of any substantial immigration policy in the fields of entry, stay and work as well as the absence of measures for integration of migrants into Cypriot society were described by the Robles report<sup>10</sup> as the two major weaknesses of the immigration system. The absence of any governmental policy exposes the migrants to risks of ill-treatment especially in the area of employment, where the loss of work often means revocation of the residence permit and the criminalisation of the migrant according to the whim of the employer (see Trimikliniotis 2004b:15).

When referring to ‘foreign domestic workers’ in Cyprus, Panayiotopoulos (2005) explains how this category can be located within a ‘polarity’, with one pole given by the consensus on that participation both in domestic service and the entertainment-related sex industry increases the likelihood of violence such as “economic violence of agents who act as money-lenders, and of employers who delay payment, the psychological violence of long hours of work with little social contact and in some cases, physical and sexual violence underpinned by the fear of deportation” (*ibid.* 114). The other pole (more prevalent) consists of the use of benign paternalism to structure relations in the form of patron-client relations, such as through “the advancing of loans and the granting of personal favour, and may encourage carers to behave like ‘member of the family’ and to take part in communal eating or leisure activities” (*ibid.* 114). The author further develops his analysis arguing that this type of relations have important control functions: “For example, they may make a worker more amendable to working longer hours, or to carrying out work not specified in their contract; or worker may take on illegal second jobs for in-household business, in contravention of their contracts; and in some case, it may dissuade them from reporting abuse” (*ibid.* 114). Based on his empirical research related to the female migration from the Philippines to Cyprus, the same author argues that we should understand the transfer of reproductive labour as a form of servitude characterised by the commoditisation and contracts involving the payment of pre-agreed wages, underpinned by legislation on immigration, employment status and social security standards: “Europe has in place extensive social legislation relevant to foreign domestic workers. One paradox of modern servitude is the coexistence of the most oppressive worker-employer relations with extensive social legislation meant to protect immigrant workers” (*ibid.* 127).

Panayiotopoulos (2005) warns about the need to investigate the institutional and ideological framework of support for the international transfer of care in order to understand why existing

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<sup>10</sup> Report of the European Commissioner for Human Rights Alvaro Robles on Cyprus, submitted to the European Council on 12.02.2004.

legislation is not implemented to protect the welfare of migrant workers. In this sense he identifies the racialisation of domestic workers in Cyprus and elsewhere as an important criterion for the selectivity of the institutional response (see Harris 2002; Anthias and Lazaridis 1999). Thus, the construction of ideas about racial and gender superiority, applied to women migrant domestic workers, is reinforced by their lack of economic and social rights by comparison to Greek Cypriots.

Agathangelou (2004) in an international political economy perspective on Cyprus, Greece and Turkey attempts to connect domestic work with sex work. Her basic argument is that reproduction is a productive economy, a point that underlines her analytical and empirical framework for linking domestic and sex work in 'peripheral economies. Central to her argument is the notion of "economies of desire", whereby the contestations over the labour processes and the exploitative extraction of surplus value, migrant women are perceived as central subjects and actors in "racialised gendered class struggles in the desire industries". Globalisation intensifies the scope for exploiting female labour, the peripheral state is 'complicit' in the facilitation of exploitative labour relations which are racialised and gendered. There is a racialised division of labour: what she refers to as "white but not quite" eastern Europeans and south Americans are for sex and sexual gratification, whilst black bodies are for cleaning one's self and family.

As pointed out elsewhere (Trimikliniotis 1999) a sector made entirely by women is the 'sex industry' (see Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla 2006a, 2006b). The migrant women working in this sector are found under the classifications of 'artistes', 'dancers' and 'musicians' mainly working in 'clubs' and cabarets or more exactly, cabaret-type venues. Also migrant women working as waitresses or barwomen in bars, pubs and beer shops are likely to enter into prostitution, sometimes being forced by their employers. The 'entrepreneurs' of this 'industry' (i.e. pimps) are mainly Greek Cypriots. The figure quoted, 1,200 in 2005<sup>11</sup> may be an under-estimate as the 'sex industry' also includes other women who are officially 'tourists' and in other sectors and do not appear in official statistics. The regime governing female 'artistes' or 'kalitehnides' was strict, as they were only allowed to stay for three months (plus other three months as possible extension) and then they must stay abroad for other three months, having a right to be re-employed in Cyprus. Their visa was a special one, granted for entertainment purposes and issued by the Ministry of Interior, not by the Ministry of Labour, like in the rest of cases for migrant workers (Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla 2006b).

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<sup>11</sup> Data made available by the Department of Labour in July 2005.

According to Ramona Lenz (2006) neither the limitations/constraints on migrant women's free-choices, nor the emphasis given to their 'exploitation' are able to describe the situation of these women. She concluded by stating that being female migrants in sex work is not the same as being female victims of sex-trafficking. Therefore, the free-choice decision making cannot be taken-for-granted and used as an excuse for any exploitative relations as regards to employment and residence conditions of women migrants. The author emphasises the necessity of using different approaches in considering combating of sex-trafficking and the protection of sex workers from oppressive conditions of employment. More explicitly, if sex-trafficking needs to be sanctioned by the law and the female victims have to be liberated, those women who freely choose to work in the sex industry need to be officially recognized as work migrants and be protected from exploitation by employers, employment agencies and even government institutions. The author stated that the aim should be the combating of work migrants' exploitation in the international sex industry and not the combating of migration into prostitution.

There has been a dramatic recent change when the Minister of Interior announced in October 2008 that the specific type of visa for "artista" or "kallitehnida" (i.e. cabaret worker) would be abolished: the matter now lies with the Ministry of Labour as with all other types of work. This marks a significant improvement in the situation, but it cannot and does not automatically resolve the problems of trafficking and exploitation of these women.

### **Migrant women within other occupations**

The relevant literature and sources of statistical data are very poor to inexistent as regards to participation and demand of migrant women in other sectors of the labour market, except for the two already discussed. This represents a gap in knowledge and moreover reflects lack of preoccupation and interest about such issues at different levels like: state authorities, especially the policy-making level, public and academic discourses. However, there are some references regarding discrimination in relation to the employment of female migrant workers in possession of work permits, as discussed in following sections.

Migrant workers in possession of work permits are being employed in low wage and low skill jobs under difficult employment conditions. Even though the terms of employment stipulate that migrant workers shall have the same rights and contract terms as Cypriot workers, contract violation is a common phenomenon even though very few cases are being reported. The level of unionisation of migrant workers is very low and the authorities do not carry out the appropriate checks on employers as a matter of conscious decision and also by

using the excuse of staff shortage (see Trimikliniotis 2005). The number of official foreign workers increased by one third between 2001 and 2003 and they were mainly employed in private households (30%), hotel and restaurants (19%), wholesale and retail (11%), agriculture and forestry (9%), construction (8%), manufacturing (8%) and other (15%)<sup>12</sup>. An example of low-wage, low-protection and low-skill sector with high demand for migrant women's work is the agriculture, usually for seasonal works like for collecting different crops. It is worth noting that this represents a sector characterised by the absence of strong trade union tradition and isolation from other migrants, NGOs and authorities due to specific work conditions in rural areas and farms (*ibid.*).

Statistical data on the distribution of migrant workers in sectors of the economy<sup>13</sup> show a great number of migrants employed in the tertiary sector, such as in tourism and restaurants, without specification of distribution by gender and ethnicity or more detailed specification on the type of activity performed.

Moreover, manufacturing and health and social activities (which include medical nurses) are two sectors employing high numbers of migrant workers and therefore we suppose that there are high percentages of migrant women in these economy sectors. In relation to medical nurses, we can mention that those with temporary work permits are exclusively employed in the private sector health care because they do not meet the conditions to employment in the public sector health care such as good knowledge of the Greek language and Cypriot citizenship. However, there is a great demand for migrant medical staff (nurses and medics) in the public sector health care as well. Moreover, exclusively migrant women with Greek citizenship and good Greek language skills (proved through a written examination, according to the law), such as wives of Greek Cypriots are employed as nurses and medics in the public sector health care where wages double those in the private medical care.

### **Undocumented female migrants. Civic participation of female migrants**

There are no studies in Cypriot context regarding irregular female migrants. However, the issue of 'illegal immigrants' as a result of the restrictive immigration policy is pinpointed (see Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005a; 2007). The legal framework as regards to migration in Cyprus is fragmentary and has developed very rapidly in the 1990s. Prior to 1990 the policy towards migration was restrictive. The policy change, allowing the entry of migrant workers, was seen as a necessary step in resolving the labour shortage; at the same time a new set of

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<sup>12</sup> See FeMiPol, Working paper no. 3, the section about Cyprus available at: [http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working\\_papers/wp3/statistical\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/docs/working_papers/wp3/statistical_analysis.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Source: the Department of Labour, Republic of Cyprus, 2005.

measures were introduced to curtail and repress what the authorities term as ‘illegal immigrants’. The net result has been both the failure to control the flow of migration and a fragmentary and inconsistent application of policy on migration. This was partly reflected in judicial decisions on migration cases (see Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005a:20). In the same study, envisaging the topic of civic participation of female migrants (*ibid.* 2005:46), it was found that the least unionised and the lowest paid migrant workers are the domestic helpers, mostly women from south-east Asia, and the agricultural workers. The domestic helpers are fairly active in self-help networks as well as in social activities for various reasons, mainly located in the fact that their community in Cyprus is comparatively large 19244,<sup>14</sup> they are of same gender, they are mostly residing in urban centres and a significant number of them has been in Cyprus for several years. By contrast, the degree of civic participation of the agricultural workers is low because their place of work and residence is in the country side, away from urban centres. Their country-side location may also account for the fact that the widespread violations of their terms of work by the employers often remain unpunished, resulting in long hours of work with little time for engaging in any form of civic activities. Although these findings focus on civic participation, they may help in constructing hypotheses about migrant women’s integration in labour market and society.

### **Social exclusion: increased prejudice, xenophobia and racism in relation to migrant women**

At the level of public opinion/grass root and media discourses we can identify an overall social predisposition translated into unwillingness to welcome immigrants. The ECRI Report 2001 on Cyprus addresses issues of integration and multicultural education encouraging public debate and raises concerns about the unfavourable attitudes of Cypriots towards the presence of ‘foreign’ workers and the way local media pictures negatively the presence of migrant workers in Cyprus.

The process of racialisation of temporary migrant or ‘foreign’ labour in Cyprus is examined by considering policies and rights, discourses around migration found in the Greek-Cypriot press and magazines, and the role of employers and trade unions (Trimikliniotis 1999). The study examines how conceptualisations of race and racism, and their interrelation with class, are useful in understanding and explaining the processes by which migrants are excluded, inferiorised and exploited. This generalised negative discourse about migrant workers seen as ‘temporary’ and part of ‘a transitional phase’ functions as a barriers of any

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<sup>14</sup> This is the mean number provided by the Statistics Section of the Social Insurance Services on 13 October 2008.

integration efforts and questions about possible ways to change the generalized unfavourable attitude (in order to make migrants' integration processes happen at a wider societal level).

Qualitative research illustrated the intensity and types of racial discrimination faced by migrants (Trimikliniotis 2003b). The specificity of gendered racism faced by domestic workers was interpreted as '(en) gendering servitude' whereby it realised 'a domestic politics of shame' and was described as, "the memory or at least a kind of collective resentment of what was a degrading experience shared by many Cypriot women, forced by poverty to work as a *dhoula* –a Greek word literally translated as 'slave' but in fact meaning a 'domestic worker' for another (...)" (*ibid.*).

Discriminatory, xenophobic and racist behaviours and attitudes are very common at the grass root level discourses of everyday life in Cyprus. In this sense, "Southern Asians, Arabs and darker skinned persons are routinely called 'black' as a term of abuse (...) These instances are so common that many darker skinned migrant workers are just referred to as the 'black'<sup>15</sup>, as if they have no name (...). Discrimination does not stop there. Even the state authorities have regularly been found to be discriminatory on the ground of colour. Immigration authorities, local state bureaucracies and civil servants routinely treat black people differently from whites" (*ibid.* 28)<sup>16</sup>.

Fieldwork research based on interviews in various private and public establishments during 2004 showed strong evidence of racial or ethnic discrimination in employment and at the work place, both public and private.<sup>17</sup> The aim of that specific stage of the research was to identify and analyse patterns and mechanisms of institutional, taken-for-granted discrimination in local labour markets and education in Cyprus for comparative reasons with seven other European countries.<sup>18</sup> The research located 'multiple levels, manifestations and dimensions of racial discrimination' and found structural or systemic discrimination. Twenty expert interviews were conducted in Cyprus with representatives of different organisations (NGOs), journalists, lawyers, MPs and writers. When asked to describe typical examples of discrimination, most experts agreed that one of the main issues is the super-exploitation of migrants at work. Others referred to the discrimination taking place on matters relating to their residence status (permits issuing, renewing visas, deportation etc.). Some experts referred specifically to the approach towards domestic helpers, who are treated as inferior human

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<sup>15</sup> In everyday talk in Cyprus they are called pejoratively "mavrouthkia" that literally means "blackies".

<sup>16</sup> As confirmed by FeMiPol, Working paper no. 2 (Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla 2006b).

<sup>17</sup> The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of Racism, EU Sixth Framework Programme, DG Research describe, Workpackage 4: "Institutional Discrimination".

<sup>18</sup> These include Sweden, UK, Germany, Italy, Austria, France and Poland.

beings (Trimikliniotis 2004a:11). Moreover, discourses in mass media and educational system prove lack of tolerance and openness towards immigrants. As regards to media discourse on migrants in Cyprus a qualitative research revealed that “migrant parents consider that what they and particularly their children face in schools is related to the way the media constructs the migrants in Cyprus, who stereotype them in particular ways. In fact the portrayal of migrants on television and radio was repeatedly raised in the focus groups and interviews, as it is an issue of concern, bitterness even, amongst migrant workers themselves” (Trimikliniotis 2003b:19).

The literature on migrant women in Cyprus focuses on discriminatory practices they are subjected to, at different levels and on a variety of grounds. Various narratives of women participating in different researches revealed that “many domestic workers are denied basic rights: holiday, money, overtime, rest time and are often subjected to all sort of abuses. Domestic workers have perhaps the worst deal (together with agricultural workers and women working in the sex industry). They work at irregular times and are often forced to work overtime without extra pay. They often suffer psychological (and physical) abuse and the threat of expulsion is commonly employed as a disciplining device<sup>19</sup> (Kadir 2001) ” – (cited in Trimikliniotis 2003:16). This is only an example that illuminates questions to be taken into account when discussing about integration of migrant women in Cyprus.

In terms of racialised and gendered labour markets, Trimikliniotis and Pantelides (2003:14) analyse the case of Cyprus, addressing theoretical questions in the relevant literature. “Therefore, colour is only one of the signifiers of racism, not exclusively or necessarily the most important. It has been suggested that darker people are more *likely* to be the target of racism. Regarding Cyprus one may crudely suggest that people from different geographical areas are concentrated in different occupations, with ‘whites’ (northern/central Europeans/Americans) concentrated in more office type work, with a very large number as managers. ‘Black’ people (northern Africa/Arabs, and south east Asians, with the exception of Lebanese and Jordanians), on the other hand, are more likely to be concentrated in manual jobs. However this is a crude and at times misleading picture: there is an anomaly with east Europeans who, depending on their class position of course, generally occupy jobs at the lower end of the market. This is also the case for the Lebanese and, to a lesser extent, Jordanian migrants”. Thus, the authors argue that racism cannot be reduced to a phenotypic prejudice solely based on colour.

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<sup>19</sup> This is also confirmed by our Working paper no. 2 about key informant interviews (Trimikliniotis and Fuliias-Souroulla 2006b).

As for the gender dimension, in the case of Cyprus, there is a gendered division of labour based on racial background: “eastern European (white) women are the first preference for the sex industry (prostitution and ‘artists’/‘dancers’), by and large replacing the traditional stereotypes of the ‘exotic’ Asian women working in cabarets, as was the case before the collapse of eastern European regimes. Asian women are preferred for home care and ‘caring jobs’, perhaps linked to some stereotype notion of the ‘black (or dark) maid’. The cultural basis for the position of the Asian maid was found in the category the “kōri” (κόρη) in traditional society, where the woman, daughter and wife, ‘served’ the man. This operated together with class, as lower class women were the cleaners and maids in the houses of the rich (αρχοντικά). One must consider the connection between gender and ‘race’, and racism and sexism, if one is to understand the position of migrant women labour and the kind of racialisation they face. We are reminded that “racialised and ethnic minority women are concentrated in the most arduous and poorly paid work” (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992:117) and the experience in Cyprus clearly show this” (*ibid.*).

### **Female Marriage migrants as Spouses of Greek Cypriot**

Marriage migration in Cyprus is a matter attributed to marriages between non-nationals and Greek Cypriots.<sup>20</sup> As Cyprus has recently become a country of immigration, there has not been so far marriage migration in relation to family reunification of migrants already living in the country and opting in their marital choice for a partner from the same country. However, the situation is expecting to change with the implementation of EU Directives on the status of long-term immigrants and their right to family reunification. Intersocietal marriage and immigration are both new and interrelated phenomena in contemporary Cyprus. Some findings from this study are related to the topic of integration in the labour market and society and concern discrimination in employment and at the work place on one hand, and on the other, difficulties of migrant spouses to develop strong relational ties with Greek Cypriots. Working in Cyprus as a non-national (even if the Eastern-European spouses in the sample were Cypriot citizens, they were regarded and identified themselves as foreigners, with one exception in the sample of 20 spouses), for the majority of the sample respondents, constituted an occasion to face discrimination because of their inferior/marginal status as non-nationals; they faced undermining of their employment rights, maltreatment because of a double inferior status as foreign women at work (i.e. because of their gender and their marginal status as migrants in Cyprus), discrimination concerning wages and unfriendly

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<sup>20</sup> As discussed by Fuliás-Souroulla (2006).



behaviour of Cypriot work colleagues, and the necessity of good Greek language skills for finding a decent job.

### **State authorities' discourse on integration of migrants**

A contradictory approach in relation to this topic (as discussed by Trimikliniotis 2004b:15) is illustrated by The Cyprus National Action Plan for Employment 2004-2006. On one hand, it does not recognise the existence of any social exclusion problems among migrants, and the promotion measures it sets forward for the elimination of social exclusion<sup>21</sup> are general and not focused on any group in particular. However, the document recognises that “migrants are *a group at risk* of being excluded”. Moreover, the Commissioner for legislation and president of the National Organisation for the Protection of Human Rights criticised the Government for regulating only the economic dimension of immigration without formulating a complete immigration policy to include integration measures (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005b:41).

In terms of civic participation of migrants there are hardly any encouraging legal conditions for this to occur. Except for the institutional framework for migrant's stay and employment, there are hardly any conditions regarding civic participation of immigrants (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2005a:19). The same source identifies ‘restrictive conditions’ that prohibit political participation in elections, unless full citizenship is granted, but there are no formal prohibitions of membership in parties and organisations, right for self-organisation, public rallies, etc. At the level of formal rights, the general rights guaranteed under the Constitution and the ECHR are generally respected. Nevertheless, migrants face a tough regime because, on the whole, issues relating to their stay/migration status are considered as falling outside these (*ibid.* :19). The anti-discrimination legislation is the only body of legislation with a practical impact on the migrants' lives, but the issues dealt with are mostly related to their employment conditions and are only indirectly affecting the migrants' level of civic participation.

### **The major research gaps**

We have identified research gaps in relation to the structure of policy regarding integration of female migrants in the labour market and wider society. There is absence of research on integration of migrants in the Cypriot society and the policies affecting these processes. This study is conceived as a first attempt to throw light in the domain.

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<sup>21</sup> Cyprus National Action Plan on Employment 2004-2006, p.31: “Strengthening the attractiveness of the labour market and encouraging the participation therein; Improvement of skills; Employment to acquire valuable professional experience; Constant counselling support”.

As our focus herein is the group of migrant women, we address herein the related set of policies. In relation to policies regulating domestic and care work, at this stage we can identify a significant unintended effect of this policy (or rather lack of policy) in relation to social representations of this occupation in Cypriot context disempowering female domestic workers. Thus, Asian women have become the stereotype of domestic workers/servants and seen as a ‘necessity’ for every household that can afford them. And because they are underpaid (and this happens according to their work contract) employing a domestic worker has become a widespread phenomenon in Cyprus. In terms of gaps in knowledge, the question which arises is to what extent this attitude towards domestic workers affects the implementation of possible policies of integration regarding this group of migrant women. On policies controlling prostitution, in terms of gaps in knowledge, the question of “free choice” prostitution and constraints or whether the migrants in Cypriot entertainment/ ‘sex industry’ are ‘victims’ of certain constraints or they ‘consciously chose this occupation’, constitutes a topic for further debates and research.

As regards to unemployment policies, we should identify to what extent migrant women are affected by unemployment and in which sectors of the economy is unemployment more likely to occur. Moreover, we should consider this topic in connection to effects of social policies for re-entering the labour market in the case of migrant women.

We can identify as a research gap the issue of policies regulating/combating undocumented work and how this influences the situation of migrant women. In terms of negative and unintended policy consequences, so far we can say that many migrant workers are forced into irregular work as a result of the fixed and short-term employment: when their four-year term is up many migrant workers go underground to continue to work, or others who are refused release papers (which is prescribed in their work contract) are forced to run away from their designated address in search of other employment, even if illicit, by the law.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the asylum seekers, who are restricted work only in agricultural sectors, are thus forced to undertake irregular work.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of negative effects of the policy in relation to the short-term employment of migrants, it is interesting to identify empirically to what extent these measures establish a very strict and rigid hierarchy of migrants (and implicitly of female migrants) in Cyprus with regard to their access to and mobility in the labour market. Therefore, the question is whether any

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<sup>22</sup> Key informants noted that this is a wide-spread phenomenon ((Trimikliniotis and Fulias-Souroulla, 2006b).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

migrants' integration policy might reflect, to a certain extent, this hierarchy of access to employment, as this arena is a major one as concerns integration processes.

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