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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)**

**FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN  
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Budapest, Hungary, 29 June – 1 July 2009**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**Impacts of Migrations on Rural Households' Livelihoods and  
Better Management of Agricultural Resources at Origin  
Selected European Policy Experience: Gender Focus and  
Mainstreaming**

**Background**

Large scale rural outmigrations and migrations within rural areas have become a significant phenomenon worldwide, with particularly strong impacts in Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Central Asia countries. The impacts of migrations on rural communities include, on the one hand, changes of demographic and labour resources structures at farm and household levels and, on the other hand, financial impact on the rural economy of inflowing remittances, thus improvement of rural families' standard of living, potential for on-farm investment and development of rural communities and economies. Migrations are by both men and women and have different impacts depending on who migrates and who stays at home. Gender-disaggregated statistics on migrations are needed to assist policymakers in formulating development agendas for regions where migrations affect the rural society.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the WPW will undertake to review the multi-faceted impacts of migrations from the points of view of (i) rural development policies to sustain and revitalize rural areas and reduce rural poverty, and (ii) mainstreaming gender considerations into the policies and programmes proposed, where possible based on the experience of REU and SEU activities in the Central and Eastern Europe subregion.

### **Dimensions and variegated impacts of migrations**

Migrations can play a crucial role in reducing poverty in rural communities and mitigating rural-urban income disparities. Push factors (for example a deteriorating resource base, scarcity of land and water, lack of employment opportunities) as well as pull factors (e.g. attractive outside region employment opportunities) influence rural people in their decision to migrate. Migrations are clearly a reaction to income gaps between the origin and the destination areas. Migration is not a guaranteed way out of poverty; it can be instrumental to move people out of poverty and lead to brain gain through remittances spent on schooling but it can also generate dependence on remittances that results in abandoned agriculture and aggravated poverty. Migration is not possible for all and is selective; those who leave are generally younger, better educated and more skilled. The poorest-of-the-poor are prevented from migrating by high migration costs. Migrations, as a rule, have negative repercussions on the abandoned local community.

### **Selected policy issues and research areas**

When analysing the phenomena of migration, the following technical issues need to be researched, statistics collated and analysed and presented, and, the gender perspective needs to be addressed. It is proposed that the WPW Session review and discuss the following issues, with a view to developing specific policy and technical assistance recommendations:

1. Dimensions and structure of migrations (women and men, age and vocational groups).
2. Main migration factors (push or pull factors) and destinations (rural-urban and rural-rural migrations).
3. Geography of migration (temporary/seasonal, circular versus commuting; permanent; regional, international).
4. Effects of migration on the demographic composition of the rural population: skills, age, entrepreneurship ability and on the sustainability of rural areas.
5. Different impacts of feminization and masculinization of agriculture and rural population groups as a result of migrations and impact on welfare and/or poverty.
6. Challenges faced by female-headed households: double burden of farm and household work; change of household livelihood strategies.
7. Implications for the economy of the source region: (i) use of remittances and the multiplier effect, if recorded; (ii) potential for investment in rural non-farm businesses.
8. Experience of rural development programmes and projects to prevent or alleviate depopulation of rural areas, including (i) programmes to attract return of migrants, and (ii) institutions for efficient allocation of remittances.

Based on the presentation and discussion of regional and country experience case studies, the WPW will attempt to collect and develop recommendations for rural development policies and instruments to:

- (i) Mainstream gender focus and considerations into rural programmes, in particular those aiming to prevent/reduce depopulation and abandonment of agricultural activities.
- (ii) Develop guidelines and approaches to supporting rural women, both those remaining in areas of origin and facing labour shortages and those that migrate and send remittances for potential investment.
- (iii) Disseminate experience of programmes and projects that have made rural areas competitive and attractive in terms of jobs, income generation and standards of living, thus mitigating outmigrations.