Background of the conference:
Ethnic minorities and migrants experience many obstacles in accessing the labour market, which have been highlighted by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), through its Equal@work initiative. ENAR and the Association to Encourage Professional Integration (AFIP) also focus on structural discrimination in employment that prevents ethnic minorities from climbing the career ladder or reaching their full potential. This is often referred to as the “glass ceiling” effect, which is widely documented as affecting women across countries of the European Union. There is little academic and policy research on glass ceilings affecting ethnic minorities in Europe. This stems from the fact that equality data disaggregated by ethnic origin is not publicly available in a number of countries.

The glass-ceiling is often described as the result of barriers based on attitudes and patterns “that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organisation into management-level positions”.¹

Researchers have identified four criteria that must be met to conclude that a glass ceiling exists:
- a difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee;
- artificial barriers that are more severe at higher occupational levels;
- inequality to be measured in chances of advancement, not just the proportion of workers in high-level positions;
- increased inequality throughout the career path.²

While international organisations such as the ILO, the OECD and the European Commission have produced data on the glass-ceiling affecting women - including a glass ceiling index by country - the above-mentioned criteria are difficult to document in the case of ethnic minorities. Identification of the phenomenon is not easy and requires looking at remuneration across the labour force. Likewise, the glass ceiling effect is difficult to prove in court and can be the result of unintentional individual attitudes or institutional patterns that are hard to flag up.

Research evidence carried out by Association to Encourage Professional Integration (AFIP) shows that minorities come up with strategies to cope with discrimination inhibiting the development of their careers. Qualified minorities tend to over-perform, ‘over-conform’, and undertake high-risk-tasks or adopt low-profile attitudes. AFIP’s findings also show evidence of minorities in situation of marginalisation and isolation in the workplace.

While the EU is currently about to adopt its legislation to increase gender balance in the board of companies, there is no similar legislation to combat the glass ceiling for minorities, beyond the prohibition of discrimination by Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

**Goal of the Conference:**
The goal of the 5th Equal@work European conference is two-fold: raising awareness on the glass ceiling affecting ethnic minorities in Europe and building the capacity of a multi-stakeholder network on diversity in the workplace. In building on Equal@work expertise, the conference will explore innovative ways to combat disparities at the top and at the bottom of the career ladder. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss to which extent limited professional advancement is a consequence of poor access to good jobs by minorities across the labour market.

The conference is scheduled to take place on **5-6 December 2013** in Brussels and will take stock of the different activities that AFIP plans to carry out between May and December 2013. These include webinars on discriminations in career development, a survey to be run in partner companies and the dissemination of good practices.

**Draft agenda:**

**Day 1: Thursday 5 December**

13:30 – 14:00 Registration of participants

14:00 – 14:10 **Opening of the Equal@work meeting**
Sarah Isal, ENAR Chair

14:10 – 16:00 **Session 1: The context: panel presentations on glass ceiling for ethnic minorities**
Sylvia Walby, Professor at Lancaster University, UK

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00 **Session 2: Fish-bowl discussion: challenges in minorities’ career development**
Slimane Laoufi, Head of the private employment sector, Defender of Rights (France)
Alessio Motta, Research officer, AFIP
Emmanuel Wieme, Trade Union CSC (Belgium)
Dimpi Dattani, former City Hindus Network

18:00 – 20:00 **Div’Apero** – a networking event organized by ENAR Foundation

20:00 Dinner

**Day 2: Friday 6 December**

09:00 – 11:00 **Session 3: Workshops on best practices and recommendations on diversity in the workplace**
Break-up in small discussion groups

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 12:30 **Session 4: The way forward to break the glass-ceiling for minorities**
Report back from workshops

12:00 – 12:30  Presentation by Muriel Leselbaum of the “International observatory of good practices”

12:30 – 12:45  Closing of Equal@work Conference
Patrick Taran, Director, Global Migration Policy Associates

List of participants:
Participants will include experts from the Member States’ business sector, employers’ organisations, trade unions, public administrations, equality bodies, European institutions, foundations, NGOs and minorities and migrants affected by the glass ceiling.

About Equal@work:
ENAR’s Equal@work initiative was set up with the aim of building on the momentum initiated by the European Commission High Level Advisory Group, set up in 2006, to examine the integration of ethnic minorities in the labour market in the European Union. ENAR’s Ad Hoc Expert Group on promoting Equality in Employment produced recommendations at the time stakeholders called for a holistic approach to address labour market inclusion of ethnic minorities. The group produced annual reports following European conferences in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

By 2012, the expert group became a fully-fledged initiative called Equal@work. Equal@work brings together businesses committed to diversity and inclusion (Adecco Group, Le Groupe La Poste, L’Oréal and Sodexo), anti-racist, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to work together and engage in finding solutions to ensure the full participation of ethnic and religious minorities and migrants in the labour market. It also aims to enable the sharing of best practices and initiatives that have been undertaken by private companies, trade unions and governments alike.

About AFIP:
The Association to Encourage Professional Integration (AFIP) has been working towards improved professional integration for young graduates from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds for over 11 years. AFIP acts as a resource centre for young people, businesses and civil society organisations and has set up a mentoring network including more than 180 mentors. AFIP also provides diversity trainings for employers and human resources managers.