

Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies



Athens, 18 May. Eva Biaudet, the OSCE's Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and Goran Svilanovic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, present the new publication at a panel discussion.

Long-overdue resource points the way to gender-sensitive labour migration policies

The OSCE's *Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies* has just been published and is being widely disseminated to policymakers, parliamentarians and planners in the OSCE area — and not a moment too soon: Despite the “feminization of migration”, a global trend that shows no sign of abating, decision-makers have not been giving the specific needs of female migrant workers the attention they deserve.

“Women make up about half of the 200 million migrants worldwide and are increasingly taking on an important role in the economic life of their home and host countries,” says Goran Svilanovic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. “However, potential gains and professional and economic opportunities are

slipping away as female migrants find themselves on the losing end in all phases of the migration process and on the gender-stratified labour market.”

A number of factors are fuelling this situation, notably labour migration policies that are not gender-sensitive, women's limited access to opportunities to legally work abroad, and stereotyped male and female roles at the workplace.

“Most women who migrate, including those who are qualified for better-paying jobs, end up working in traditionally female-dominated informal sectors where they are often unprotected by labour laws and are left out of the social safety net. This makes them vulnerable to discrimination, abuse, exploitation and trafficking,” says Eva Biaudet, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Guide cites several studies showing that the most “feminized” occupations, for which there is great demand in host countries, are in nursing, education, domestic and care assistance, hospitality services, garment manufacturing and seasonal agricultural work.

Among the Guide's practical recommendations to governments are:

- Assess the needs for foreign labour by examining data on gender and specific labour market sectors, including domestic work and private care-related services so that admission policies can better reflect needs in these particular fields.
- Develop permanent and temporary channels of migration that offer equal access to women. For example, point-based systems could accord due recognition to the role of women as givers of primary care.
- Allow female migrant workers to change place of employment to reduce dependency on a particular employer.
- Provide prospective female labour migrants with pre-employment and pre-departure services in their countries of origin.
- Develop codes of ethics for recruitment.
- Foster equal access to financial services for both men and women, and establish low-cost remittance services.

Gender-sensitive labour migration policies:

- Recognize that both men and women migrate for economic reasons and to seek better employment opportunities, but that women's experience of migration differs significantly from men's;
- Take account of factors rooted in the gender division of labour and the power relations between men and women;
- Are based on a gender analysis, use sex-disaggregated data, and take into account who benefits from policies and who does not; and
- Include measures specifically calculated to benefit women by promoting equity of opportunity, rights and obligations.

- Develop a variety of reintegration programmes to serve diverse groups of female migrants and ensure smooth return processes.

“By identifying gaps in migration policies, by exploring possible solutions, and by describing examples of good practices and innovative models, the Guide seeks to support and reinforce the contributions of female migrant workers, bring about more equal employment opportunities between men and women, and enable women to emerge from the shadow of the informal sector,” says Jamila Seftaoui, the OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues.

“We hope that the cross-dimensional approach of the Guide will go a long way towards helping participating States and Partners for Co-operation carry out their commitments concerning economic migration, gender equality and anti-trafficking in human beings.”

The Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies is a joint effort of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and the OSCE’s Gender Section. The publication was made possible with the financial support of Greece, Finland and Slovenia. A Russian version of the Guide is being prepared.

“The history of migration in Armenia is multifaceted, with constantly shifting trends. We have seen its negative impact in the form of brain drain, but we have also seen its positive aspect in the form of remittances flowing back into the country, easing the difficult economic situation of many families.

Although we have yet to fully assess the impact of this phenomenon, certain concerns need to be addressed urgently: Firstly, more and more women are now heading households because their husbands are working abroad for long periods or on a seasonal basis. Secondly, women, especially young ones searching for jobs outside the country either for better career opportunities or to support their families back home sometimes find themselves trapped

in exploitative sexual and working conditions.

Against this background, we in Armenia will definitely pay close attention to the *Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies* published by the OSCE. I am sure the Government will find it a useful tool in its efforts to draw up gender-sensitive migration policies, design a gender strategy and develop measures and activities in the next phase of Armenia’s national action plan to combat trafficking in human beings.

I hope that the OSCE will seriously consider dedicating a project aimed at assessing the gender aspect of migration and its development impact in the South Caucasus.”



Athens, 18 May 2009. Dzinuk Aghajanian, Head of the International Organizations Department, Foreign Ministry of Armenia, at a panel discussion on the occasion of the launching of the Guide.



Athens, Seventeenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, 18-20 May 2009. “The global financial and economic crisis calls for a more focused and co-ordinated approach to migration management by the international community,” the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, said at the Forum.



Promoting equal opportunities among male and female law enforcers and encouraging women to take active part in citizens' advisory groups are key goals of the OSCE-supported police assistance programme in Armenia.
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