



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

**Presentation to the Seminar on
Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies**

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“Gender implications of current bilateral temporary labour agreements and need for gender-mainstreaming in migration issues based on Greek experience.”

Nagia Pappa, Legal consultant of General Secretariat for Gender Equality

Brdo, 17.2.2009

Chair,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Greek Ministry of Interior, I would like to congratulate OSCE and Slovenia for the organization of this seminar. I'm very pleased to contribute to this session, which will examine the **gender implications of current bilateral temporary labour agreements** and the need for **gender-mainstreaming**.

*** Migration is a dynamic and complex phenomenon** which offers both challenges and opportunities in both origin and destination countries especially in the framework of global financial crisis. It requires a multidimensional response in the contexts of border security, sustainable development, non-discrimination and human rights.

Women, nowadays, emerge as a crucial factor. Female migrants constitute almost half of the (191 million) migrants in the world, expressing needs and claims which differ from those of men. In the EU the number of women migrants is constantly increasing [accounting for approximately 54% of the

total number of immigrants] and covers a broad range of categories (economic migration for stable or temporary employment, immigration because of disasters, family reunification, refugees, illegal immigration, seekers of asylum).

* **Temporary forms of labour mobility** are not a new phenomenon but there has been a dramatic growth in the numbers, since the 90's, as a function of globalisation and the ease with which women and men can today move to find work elsewhere. Among the other policy tools, **bilateral temporary labour agreements** (BLAs) are considered to be a flexible and convenient means to manage the migratory phenomenon, by sharing responsibility between sending and receiving countries.

* The basic challenge is **how to maximize opportunities and minimize risks**, by taking advantage of labour mobility and enhancing human (female and male) capital development, for the benefit of origin and destination countries as well as the migrants themselves (women and men).

* **The Greek Government has already signed bilateral agreements** for seasonal workers (with Bulgaria and Albania), believing that these agreements establish legal channels for

migration and enhance intergovernmental cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields.

The BLAs concerning **short-term employment of less than a year** (seasonal employment) formalize each side's commitment to ensure that migration takes place in accordance with agreed principles and procedures. They provide a **high degree of flexibility** to target specific groups, adapt to fluctuating labour market conditions, and **share responsibility** for monitoring and managing migration. For this reason, they can be an effective means of facilitating labour mobility in order to foster broad economic objectives, to manage irregular migration and to increase the access to international labour market by promoting occupational skills, technology transfer, avoiding "**brain drain**" and securing the migrant workers' rights.

* **Nevertheless** BLAs must take into account the **differences in socio-cultural roles**, needs, constraints and vulnerabilities especially of women. In this respect, female migrant workers often suffer **multiple discrimination**, as women and as migrants. **BLA's shouldn't be gender blind and they can help to reduce the social, human and financial costs of**

migration under three preconditions that meet the special needs of male and female immigrants:

- equal **access** to foreign legal labor markets for women and men
- **protection** and empowerment of the male and female migrants (fair work and wage conditions, social security cover, family support and access to financial systems abroad and back home, information and training both prior to departure and in the host country can help raise women's awareness of gender specific risks and empower them through legal advice, re-skilling, skills upgrading, medical assistance and general social and cultural support)
- **Certainty of return.**

* Adopting a gender perspective and recognizing migrant women's role in the socio-economic change and their contribution to sustainable development is a step towards respecting their fundamental rights **as human beings.**

* At EU level a **significant advance in the cooperation and effective management** of migration, temporary migration included, is the adoption (18.10.2008) of the **European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.** In a spirit of mutual

responsibility, the Pact identifies a basic commitment to create **comprehensive partnerships with the countries of origin.**

Member States must conclude agreements with countries of origin and are encouraged to offer opportunities for legal immigration which are adapted to their labour market.

* As far as **gender mainstreaming** is concerned, EU [European Parliament's Resolution on women's immigration: the role and place of immigrant women in the European Union] urges Member states to ensure, **through bilateral labour agreements** that women migrants:

- enjoy secure legal and labour status in the host countries
- and that they do not suffer discrimination on the basis of either gender or origin, in accordance with the Community acquis. Member states should ensure that BLAs are negotiated and concluded on the basis of respect for the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, [in particular with regard to the status of persons in the event of marriage, divorce, child custody, repudiation or polygamy].

* **Greece, due to its particular position** in the Balkans and the Mediterranean as well as because of the recent

migration and demographic trends, has become destination country for labour migration and especially temporary labour migration. This trend has economic, social, cultural and security implications requiring co-operation with third countries.

* **Some special aspects of female labour migration in Greece should be underlined**, in order to adopt a gender perspective in the migration management. A recent study [Greek General Confederation of Labour/Confederation of Public Servants (INE-GSEE/ADEDY)] reached the following conclusions:

In Greece, recent incoming migration has been characterised by a high presence of women. Most of these women come from Albania (44.8%), Bulgaria (10.7%), Ukraine (5.1%) and Georgia (4.6%).

The main reasons for their movement are economic. Female immigrants mostly work in specific economic sectors: private households, where 48.5% of Greece's female immigrants are employed; hotels and restaurants (16% of female migrants); wholesale and retail trade (10%); manufacturing industries (8%); and health and social welfare (7.5%).

* Greece, in response to current challenges, has elaborated **a new migration policy aiming first and foremost to uphold human rights**, according the following priorities:

- legitimisation of the immigrants' stay and their smooth social integration with special emphasis on women and socially vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking
- scientific study of immigrants' social profile
- cooperation and support of the countries of origin
- managing irregular migration.

The **main tools** for the implementation of this new migration policy are the following:

- contemporary legal framework,
- institutional restructuring.

* Great importance is placed on:

- a) **support of the immigrants' countries of origin** through the provision of financial technical assistance to third countries in the fields of asylum and migration (AENEAS Program), and the implementation of re-entry policies to neighbouring countries on the basis of bilateral agreements;
- b) **cross-border collaboration and frontier controls** through bilateral agreements.

* With some examples I will specify the Greek experience.

A series of programmes were implemented by the Center of Research for Gender Issues under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They **form an integral part of bilateral partnerships:**

1. The first programme is under the title **“Education – Social exclusion – Prostitution – Migration”** (budget of 150.000 Euros) in Albania, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. A seminar of training with participants from the above mentioned countries was organized in Greece as well as training and awareness raising programmes in the three counties. The objective is to promote cooperation with NGOs, International and European Organizations and Networks, to develop proactive policies and to empower women in their efforts to enter or reenter in the labour market and to their repatriation and social rehabilitation projects in countries of origin.

2. The 2d programme is under the title **“Support of regional politics against women’s trafficking”** in Bosnia – Herzegovina and Serbia (budget of 100.000 Euro). It aims at tackling this phenomenon through empowering women, awareness raising and

training of competent actors.

* 3. The 3d programme is under the title “**Actions for prevention and support of victims of trafficking in Albania**”. These actions are focused on education and training in schools as well as on the support of victims through the development of infrastructures.

Another EU funded programme is under the title “**Building of Mechanisms to Effectively and Sustainably Implement Readmission Agreements**” between Albania, the EC and concerned third countries. The objectives are: To strengthen Albania in the formulation and implementation of return and readmission policy, the elaboration of the necessary legislative basis and To improve the measures for return (including the establishment of Labour Offices in Albania for returnees -this would help the returnees to re-insert themselves in the local labour market).

Some more examples of gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming of the Greek migration policy are the following:

- creation of shelters, medical and psychological support, legal aid and administrative assistance

- Programmes for integration into the labor market in favour of

women (special target group are the victims of trafficking)

- Raising public awareness through media campaigns.

* These examples from the Greek experience reveal the need of:

- Closer and effective **cooperation** with third countries for the promotion of labour mobility and circular migration
- **Sharing responsibilities** and mutual benefits between countries of destination, of origin and migrants themselves
- **Equal access** and equal treatment of migrant women and men in the labour market and gender mainstreaming in migration policies.
- **Bottom-up involvement**, that is local-level empowerment of women, awareness raising, protection of migrants from labour exploitation and direct participation of vulnerable groups in finding appropriate solutions.

* **To sum up,**

The issues of migration and gender equality are **undisputedly urgent**, in the framework of global economic crisis, climate change and poverty, which are expected to affect the most vulnerable groups such as women who are subject to multiple discrimination. All countries who face common challenges and development opportunities, Policy makers and stakeholders are

called upon to fully utilize the potential of migrant women and to promote synergies and partnerships. A **gender and rights-based perspective** is crucial in increasing the “visibility” of the –often neglected and “invisible”- migrant women.

* This important issue will be at the centre of discussions at the forthcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development (**GFMD**) (November 2009 in Athens) which will focus on Integrating Migration Policies in Development Strategies for the Benefit of All and Especially of the Countries of Origin.

* Thank you very much for your attention.

