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**The Thirteenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum**

**“Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons  
belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and  
Sustainable Development in the OSCE area”**

**Prague, 23-27 May 2005**



Ladies and Gentlemen,

As this meeting takes place just ten days after *the Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Integration* in Warsaw, allow me to present the main ideas that emerged from the Warsaw Seminar and also to outline the concrete activities my office is currently undertaking and what we are planning to do in this important field.

It is a particular pleasure for me to come to this meeting, since there is no sharp division between the dimensions of migration. Indeed, the determination of the Slovenian Chairmanship to focus on migration in a comprehensive manner and to pay tribute to the three-dimensionality of both the organization and of the issue is a 'best practice' in itself.

Human Dimension Seminar looked at the issue of migration from the *human dimension* perspective, and was aimed at examining ways to ensure protection of human rights of migrants and an efficient and harmonious integration of legal migrants, to the benefit of both the receiving society and migrants themselves.

Our approach was to propose the Human Dimension Seminar's participants to move beyond traditional discussions on costs and benefits of migration as merely a cross-border movement, towards looking for practical solutions for migrants already in the territory of the receiving countries, and at the same time discussing integration of migrants as a two-way process which affects both the newcomers and the host population.

The Seminar discussed relevant experiences and recommendations in four consecutive working groups dealing respectively with questions related to *co-operation at domestic and international levels, the legal framework of integration processes, participation of migrants in public life as well as socio-cultural aspects of integration*.

The wealth of recommendations which came out of the meeting may have no official status; however, they will serve as a useful indicator for the ODIHR and OSCE in general in *setting priorities and refocusing its programmes* aimed at protecting human rights of migrants and supporting their efficient integration.

Most participants felt that the Seminar was successful since it provided a unique opportunity for sharing of experiences and opinions across the OSCE region. It provided a floor of the OSCE-wide forum for an exchange of ideas and lessons learned on the one hand, between *sending* and *receiving* countries; on the other hand, countries that are considering *first steps* towards integration of migrants in their societies and countries that *have already been involved* in this process for decades.

Moreover, Seminar participants have heard of the experiences of those participating States that have recently turned *from emigration into immigration countries* as well as those countries that recently took significant steps to address the presence of hundreds of thousands

of irregular migrants on their territories or those countries that are considering taking similar measures in the nearest future.

The Seminar's discussion revealed that *no OSCE participating State can claim full success in the area of migration and integration*, no society is free from discrimination, but all have room for developing and improving their integration policies as well as to promote tolerance and respect for others. The difference between the societies lies in how authorities and civil societies act in order to prevent and combat discrimination and to ensure harmonious integration of migrants into host societies.

There was a general consensus of the Seminar's participants that *both sending and receiving countries can benefit from migration* if they take positive steps to combat discrimination and acts of intolerance against migrants and ensure that conditions are created for them to integrate without losing their identities.

Along with cross-border dialogue, the Seminar's participants agreed that a key element for integration lies in social dialogue between all the actors involved.

In particular, the discussion highlighted the crucial role of *civil society* in promoting integration. Participants also acknowledged the important contribution of *migrant organizations* to facilitating dialogue and participation as well as the need for capacity building programs for them. Finally, participants discussed the important role of *the media* in spreading information on migration issues and promoting a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity.

Particular emphasis was put on the difficulties encountered in participation of *female migrants* in public life due to cultural reasons as well as to their widespread exploitation in the labour market. In this regard, participants agreed that, when elaborating integration programmes, it is crucial to ensure full and equal participation of women migrants in public life and society, and to address their specific needs and concerns, as well as to ensure their adequate protection from violence and discrimination both at domestic and society levels. A generally accepted idea was that integration could not be successful and parallel societies would be created without the integration of female migrants.

There were also strong opinions expressed that while preventing marginalization and exclusion should be the first goals of integration processes, one should not stop here. Ideally, integration policies should be in place from the moment the migrant arrives to the country and should target migrants arriving for both *permanent and temporary stay*. Moreover, integration is not a process that has a logical end, where migrants can be seen as having been fully integrated or a society can be classified as fully cohesive. Integration should be viewed as a *process* rather than a static goal. As recent events in the OSCE region showed, successfully completed naturalization processes and granting of citizenship of the receiving country might be a very important element of integration process, but definitely not an end in itself.

The role of *granting citizenship* to migrants in promoting participation and integration was discussed at length. It was suggested that democratic and inclusive citizenship laws could be an effective tool to integrate migrants while allowing them to preserve their identity. Basic knowledge of the language, the culture and the institutions of the host country as well as the acceptance of its fundamental principles were stressed as necessary requirements for citizenship.

The need of providing migrants with *relevant information* on their rights and obligations was mentioned as an essential measure to stimulate participation and integration, as well as the aspect that could ease migrants' situation and the task of providing that information should be a shared responsibility between the sending and the receiving country. Moreover, the importance of *adequate and correct data* for the development of sound migration policies and dispelling myths about migrants was stressed by several speakers.

Participants agreed that engagement and participation of migrants in social, political and public life of the host society are key determinants of integration. There are many measures that can be taken to further integration such as language education, orientation to community services and health care, legislation against discrimination of migrants. But, as the Seminar's discussions revealed, this is not sufficient, and the *host societies also need to be educated* about the migrants, e.g. through improving coverage of migration issues in the mass media or bringing people of different background together in areas such as sport or music.

Many of these measures can be taken without special legislation in place, but *legislative frameworks* are important in ensuring that migrants do not fall victim to discriminatory practices and that migrants can associate freely and reunify with their families.

The process of developing migration legislation could promote further democratic governance practices if all the interested stakeholders are involved. Seminar's participants presented a number of examples where all the relevant actors, e.g. governmental agencies, employers, trade unions, and representatives of migrant communities and groups work together on developing legislation. These processes in themselves promote cohesion and inclusion. The ODIHR will use examples of this work in the migration field as well when developing our activities on democratic governance and legislative transparency.

During the seminar we also have heard of many good practices being undertaken by governments and NGOs, particularly those, which facilitate and support social and cultural inclusion and participation of migrants within their host communities. ODIHR will include these experiences into our database of good practices being developed by the Tolerance and Non-discrimination Programme.

The ODIHR has developed a comprehensive portfolio of specific programmes that are in line of most of the Seminar's conclusions and recommendations. Allow me to mention some of these.

The ODIHR's *tolerance and non-discrimination* programme, which was established in 2004 following the Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision, provides support to participating

States in implementing their OSCE commitments and in strengthening their efforts to respond to and combat hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance.

Since 2004, the ODIHR has been assisting the participating States in developing bilateral and multilateral co-operation mechanisms in the field of *labour migration and protection of human rights of migrant workers* as well as in elaborating specialised training programmes for law-enforcement agencies in this field.

Moreover, since 1998 the ODIHR has been assisting several OSCE participating States in overcoming the Cold War-era legacy of restrictions *on freedom of internal movement and free choice of the place of residence* for citizens, migrants legally residing in the country and foreigners travelling for personal and professional reasons.

The ODIHR also promotes the active participation of migrants in the public life of receiving countries through its work in the field of *democratic governance*. In particular, the ODIHR is focusing on increasing public awareness of the mechanisms and benefits of participatory democracy as well as of more efficient involvement of civil society in decision-making processes, including input into the legislative process. In the framework of ODIHR *legislative support* to participating States, expert analysis of international standards on migration and domestic migration legislation of twelve of the OSCE's participating States has been conducted and was made available on the *Legislationline.org* website at the end of 2004. In the field of *gender equality*, the ODIHR is implementing the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and a number of programmes aimed at increased participation of women in democratic processes, facilitating dialogue between the government and the civil society to address gender aspects of migration and integration of migrants and to raise awareness of the specific needs and concerns of female migrants.

Finally, the ODIHR *Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues* is continuously working on various forms and trends of across-State-boundary movements of different groups and persons belonging to the Roma and Sinti populations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These were in brief the main conclusions of the Seminar's discussions and some of the highlights on what my office is doing or planning to do. The ODIHR will publish a final report of the Seminar which will feature the main themes of the debate.

But the most important outcome of the seminar is that its participants agreed that a sensible and efficient migration policy can be – and indeed should be – both **humane** and **pragmatic**. *Humane* means that rights of migrants are effectively protected, and *pragmatic* in the sense that the receiving states fill niches in the sectors of economy where there is shortage of domestic labour. We have heard that many OSCE participating States do not see a contradiction between pragmatic policies being fully in line with human right standards.

We hope that participants of the Economic Forum will take this formula as a guideline and we will see a continuation of a fruitful exchange of views on this complex but crucial subject of our days.

Governments, international organizations, NGOs and business community, we all share responsibility for the well-being of migrants. OSCE participating States laid down clear commitments in this field, and we should all work together to implement them effectively.

Finally, we are also looking forward to working closely with the Office of Economic and Environmental Co-ordinator, the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and other partners on the outcomes of these two OSCE-wide events that looked at the same issue from different – but mutually reinforcing perspectives.