

**17<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum, Part II**  
**Athens, 18-20 May 2009**

**Session III: Gender and Labour Migration Policies**

**Comment by Ambassador Veronika Bard-Bringéus, Head of the Permanent Delegation  
of Sweden to the OSCE**

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I would like to thank the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr Goran Svilanovic, and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms Eva Biaudet, for this inspiring official launch presentation of the OSCE Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies.

I am honoured to be given the opportunity to comment on this valuable tool for governments and NGOs to address the specific challenges and problems faced by women labour migrants. As we have learned, this group constitutes an increasing share of the total number of such migrants. I am convinced that there is a lot to gain from actively incorporating the gender perspective into policy development in this area.

The cross-dimensional approach of this Guide, encompassing migration as well as anti-trafficking and gender aspects, is very welcome and is an excellent example of the OSCE's comprehensive security concept being put into practice.

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First, I would like to draw your attention to newly adopted legislation on labour immigration to Sweden, which clearly takes into account the gender dimension.

As you all know, gender mainstreaming is an issue that is dear to my country. Swedish experts took active part in the co-operative efforts of producing the Guide and the new Swedish labour immigration rules are highlighted as one of several positive examples of gender-sensitive policy designs.

Sweden has created a legal system for labour migration which is entirely demand driven and offers equal opportunities for both women and men. The system does not include any quotas. Nor does it exclude any skill levels, branches or sectors. Moreover, the new legislation has a strong family perspective. We think that keeping families together has many positive effects not only for women, but for sending and receiving societies as a whole.

According to the new rules, immigrants contracted by a Swedish company can bring spouses and children with them to Sweden from day one. Spouses have the right to work and the immigrant

family has the same rights and benefits as natives within the welfare system - including for example day care, health care and schooling.

To be quite frank, this new approach to welcoming labour migrants from third countries is rather radical. It is too early yet to evaluate its effects, but our hope is that it will respond to many of the requests raised today by panellists and from the floor:

- to open the labour market rather than further restricting it,
- to allow for family reunification,
- to engender immigration law,
- to allow for access to equal rights, and
- to facilitate integration.

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Let me then continue by posing some questions concerning OSCE involvement:

The quality of the Guide is indisputable. The Secretary-General pointed out this morning that the OSCE can provide a useful platform to enhance comprehensive migration management. But I would like to raise the provocative question Mr Svilanovic asked for: What is the exact role of the OSCE in the area of migration management? It is a Swedish view that too many actors are competing with one other in the field of migration. What is the added value of OSCE involvement in general and how can one make best use of this Guide in particular?

How is the guide going to be used within the OSCE institutions and how can the field missions be involved?

Can one utilize the economic & environmental officers and the gender focal points to promote the guide and its use by local authorities and enhance NGO involvement?

The point of departure as to the Swedish legislation is the country of destination. What about the country of origin? What implications can the Guide have for the OSCE's activities in countries of origin? During the first part of the Forum, the creation of information centres was mentioned as a way to work in the countries of origin. How could such centres promote the gender issue? How can they deal with trafficking?

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Before concluding, I would like to touch on the issues of implementation and public-private partnerships. I know that we are running late, but if you have time, it would be very interesting to get a picture of your thinking:

How can the OSCE promote implementation through national legislation and other actions of the participating states?

The private sector is of course of vital importance when it comes to labour migration. How can the Guide be used in public-private partnerships focusing on gender issues?

Thank you once again for your presentation. I will follow the continued work with the Guide with great interest.