

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

SESSION 6: FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

STATEMENT BY AGUSTIN NUNEZ, HEAD OF THE SPANISH DELEGATION

Freedom of movement for citizens to reside within, travel from and return to their home countries is an important notion, enshrined in international law.

A fundamental aspect of the freedom of movement is the right of everyone to leave and return to one's own country. As we have already heard here today, the 1990 Copenhagen Document clearly and unambiguously speaks about "the right of everyone to leave any country, including his or her own, and to return to his or her country".

In the OSCE area, the overwhelming majority of citizens of participating states can now enjoy the freedom of movement envisaged in the Copenhagen Document although, regrettably, certain participating States continue to enforce restrictions on freedom of movement, even within the territory of that state.

Some participating States have tried to establish a direct link between freedom of movement and visa liberalization and our moderator for today, Dr. Joanna Fomina, center her intervention on the need to proceed to soften or even abolish visa regimens. I must at this point state that these are two different issues and that, in Spain, the matters relating to external borders are no longer the sole responsibility of the national authorities but subject to overall common EU policy.

Coming now to the consequences of visa regimes, in connection with the freedom of movement, it could be interesting to provide some data:

Spain has now around 47 million inhabitants. Twenty-five years ago, it had 35 million. Most of this enormous population growth is due to the influx of citizens of other countries. Nearly eleven million foreign citizens have acquired residence in Spain since 1985 and, at present, more than one fifth of the population is foreign born, as is apparent if you take a stroll in the streets of Madrid, Barcelona or Seville. Spain went from being a country of migration towards Europe and the Americas to being a country of immigrants in the space of fifteen years, and foreign workers have made a great contribution to the national economy and to the cultural diversity of the country.

Now, it what concerns the effects of visa regimes, I do think that the case of Spain is a good example of the non existence of a direct correlation between more or less strict visa regimes and the percentage of foreign residents in any given country,

especially if you take into account the fact that Spain welcomes nearly sixty million tourists every year.

In what pertains countries located behind what until the eighties was called “the Iron Curtain”, hundred of thousands of citizens of those countries, among them Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine, live now permanently in Spain.

Coming back to the main issue, and to conclude, I do not think there is a clear correlation between the existence of visa regimes and the opportunities to travel, even if you were to accept, which is not the case of Spain, that the liberalization of visa regimes is a prerequisite for the exercise of the freedom of movement.

Thank you.