

EF.GAL/2/05/Corr.1
27 April 2005



ENGLISH only

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and
Environmental Activities**

Vienna, 26 April 2005

To: All OSCE Delegations

Subject: Introductory Note for the Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum

Attached herewith is the Introductory Note for the Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum on “Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE area”, Prague, 23 - 27 May 2005.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities

Vienna, 26 April 2005

Introductory Note

Addressing the main theme of the 13th OSCE Economic Forum, Prague, 23- 27 May 2005

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

Pursuant the PC Decisions No. 624, dated 29 July 2004, and No. 666, dated 7 April 2005, the Thirteenth Meeting of the Economic Forum will take place in Prague from 23 to 27 May 2005. The theme of the Forum will be “Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE area”

As part of the preparatory process for the Forum, three seminars were organized:

- in Trieste, on 8-9 November 2004, on “Demographic Prospects in the OSCE area: Economic and Security Implications”
- in Almaty, on 24–25 January 2005, on “Migration from an economic, environmental and security perspective”
- in Kyiv, on 10–11 March 2005, on “Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Economic and other Perspectives”

Each seminar covered one of the three sub-themes of the Economic Forum. Consolidated Summaries, including the main suggestions stemming from each seminar, were distributed under the following reference numbers: SEC.GAL/281/04/Rev.1 (Trieste), SEC.GAL/50/05 (Almaty) and SEC.GAL/80/05 (Kyiv). They are also available at the OCEEA and on the OSCE web-site: www.osce.org/eea.

Background papers were circulated before each seminar: SEC.GAL 241/04 for the Trieste seminar, SEC.GAL/10/05/Rev 3 for Almaty and SEC.GAL/55/05 for Kyiv. They also provide useful insight on the topics under discussion at the Economic Forum.

The Documents distributed during the preparatory seminars, and which were available in electronic version, have been compiled on a CR-ROM that has been distributed to the delegations and is also available at the OCEEA.

The conclusions and suggestions of the three preparatory seminars were instrumental in identifying a number of priority issues and provided the input for the preparations of the Economic Forum. To avoid repetition of the debates in the preparatory seminars, participants in the Economic Forum are encouraged to focus on the priority issues mentioned under each session and focus on concrete proposals for the OSCE and its participating States. The deliberations should focus on how the OSCE and the participating States should proceed in these areas of activity.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the agenda of the 13th Economic Forum and present the main issues and suggestions proposed for discussion in each session. It aims to provide more guidance but should not replace the Consolidated Summaries of the preparatory seminars, which provide a comprehensive picture of topics discussed and suggestions made.

To ensure a successful Forum participating States are highly encouraged to contribute actively to the discussions, to diversify their delegations and to contribute to the debate on a multi-sectoral level. Furthermore, all the OSCE participating States are equally invited to prepare papers for distribution in advance.

The Forum should stimulate a free flowing debate. For each session a limited number of experts have been invited to make short presentations to stimulate the discussion based on the suggestions of the three preparatory seminars. Room for prepared statements during the Forum will be limited. All participants are encouraged to take the floor and express their views.

SESSION I - Population developments

Demographic trends and migration patterns may serve as effective driving forces for economic development, or, on the contrary, may exert certain pressures on labour markets. The socio-economic needs of persons belonging to national minorities as well as the security consequences of non integration may vary from case to case. The preparatory process highlighted the complexity of issues related to demographic trends, migration and integration of persons belonging to national minorities and consequently the difficulty of analyzing and forecasting developments in these areas.

It was emphasized that it is necessary to have structured and synchronized information in order to better address these issues. More conceptual clarity should also be sought. In most cases available statistics is based on different sources and methodologies and thus not easily comparable between countries. It would be important to increase inter agency co-operation with regard to harmonization of information or at least of variables collected. Exchange of information and data should be improved. It was mentioned that this might be accomplished regionally among states that were previously part of the same state (Yugoslavia and Soviet Union). The OSCE could play a role in facilitating such co-operation and support the exchange of existing data, even by providing links on a website.

It was recognized that other international organizations are involved in harmonization and data collection on demographics, migration and national minorities. Nevertheless it was stressed that the OSCE can bring an important added value by linking population developments, economic and security issues. Therefore OSCE should develop closer co-operation and co-ordination with other international organizations.

Furthermore, a careful analysis is required before making policy decisions. Improved knowledge and more research are needed to develop the best policies in both origin and destination countries. A stronger link between academia and policy making bodies should be pursued. The OSCE could encourage such co-operation. The OSCE could increase its practical assistance to academic institutions.

SESSION II - Improving economic prospects in countries of emigration

The preparatory process indicated that labour migration may have some positive impact in countries of origin by temporarily alleviating the pressure on social systems or through remittances. On the other hand it was acknowledged that in the long run migration may be detrimental to the economies of countries of origin. When the most entrepreneurial members of a society, young people or skilled workers are leaving, the economy is deprived of an important driving force, the economic growth is reduced or becomes unsustainable.

Addressing the economic root causes of migration was an important topic discussed over the preparatory process for the Forum. There is direct link between poverty and labour migration. Therefore combating

poverty is of utmost importance for addressing migration. It was repeatedly emphasized that assistance in economic development and empowerment in countries of origin is not only important for tackling migration but can also help prevent trafficking.

Countries of origin should adopt relevant legislation and create effective institutions to stimulate economic development, improve the business climate, increase investment and generate more employment opportunities. A coherent migration policy should be adopted and linked to the general economic policy of a country. Training of young people in professions that will be in high demand in the near future is also important. Economic empowerment of the population by supporting development of the SME sector is equally important and it should include equal education and job opportunities as well as combating job discrimination. The youth and the most vulnerable groups in the society or regions in a country deserve particular attention.

Many existing and core OSCE activities such as supporting the development of market economies, institution building, providing training for youth to help ease unemployment and reduce brain drain etc. are very relevant and should be continued and further developed. It was stressed that the OSCE should play a stronger role in promoting the development of human capital.

SESSION III – Environment and Migration

Environmental issues play an increasing role in migration decisions. Demographic factors like population size and density, youth bulge and urbanization have an impact on environmental security. Migration can be a result of direct environmental degradation or destruction, loss of livelihood or rise in poverty as a result of underlying environmental issues. This connection between environmental issues and economic and security questions is illustrated by natural and manmade disasters such as landslides, mudslides in village communities, droughts, desertification, nuclear radiation in Semipalatinsk, receding Aral Sea etc.

Governments and international organizations often overlook the environmental root causes of migration and have been unable to cope with this environmentally induced migration. They often employ ineffective sectoral approaches instead of taking a more comprehensive outlook. Participating States need to focus on long-term policies that decrease the stress on the environment and alleviate the problem of migration. Relevant environmental policy and programs should be developed and adequate institutions should be built to deal with environmentally induced migration. OSCE participating States should also focus on the creation and/or improvement of national and international regulations regarding the legal status of environment-induced migrants. OSCE should continue to raise awareness and provide assistance.

In addressing environmental migration the solution lies first and foremost at the political level. The OSCE, as a political organization, is best placed to play a leading role. OSCE should promote sustainable development as a key element in addressing problems related to migration. It should draw the attention of the international community to these issues and assist in the co-ordination of all actors to avoid overlap and improve synergy. The OSCE should support research and activities to assist affected populations and to address and resolve environmental problems in a way that does not produce new environmental problems. The OSCE should also encourage the implementation of existing environmental regulations and standards such as the Rio Conventions and relevant UNECE conventions.

Implementing activities aimed at creating new energy sources, developing reforestation programs, and training local populations in new economic practices could be envisaged. This will simultaneously protect and develop natural resources while creating economic opportunities for local populations facing the prospect of migration. Activities under the EnvSec Initiative, identifying environmental hotspots using *inter alia* demographic information, and addressing them by involving local stakeholders should also be pursued.

SESSION IV - Providing services for migrants

A topical issue identified during the preparatory process was that often migrants do not have sufficient information on labour opportunities, working and life conditions in countries of destinations, legal requirements, services provided, etc. This lack of information prevents migrants from fully reaping the benefits of their work thus reducing their income (which is usually returned to poorer regions contributing thus to more social stability). Furthermore, legal migrants may become illegal ones.

It was also mentioned that providing information to potential migrant workers about socio-economic situation in countries of destination is part of the commitments assumed by some states through international conventions (UN Convention Concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers adopted on 4 June 1975).

It is necessary to educate and to inform (potential) labour migrants of their legal and labour rights and responsibilities in both the countries of destination and the countries of origin etc.. One key suggestion was therefore that participating States and the OSCE should step up their efforts to improve and develop access to information for migrants. OSCE could assist countries of origin to take a more active part in the education of labour migrants.

Assistance should be provided to migrants by an “institution” or information centre. This will also facilitate legal migration. The existing experiences regarding informational centres which provide assistance to labour migrants should be used for identifying best practices. The OSCE has co-operated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in developing an information center for migrants in Tajikistan. It was suggested that such information centers should be promoted by the OSCE as best practices.

Embassies/consulates of relevant countries should be more involved in this process. Establishing a register or data bank of own nationals residing in another country was mentioned.

SESSION V – Awareness raising and economic integration in countries of destination

Due to the steady increase of migration over the last decades, it has become a prominent political issue in particular in countries of destination. During the preparatory process it was recognized that, in general, labour migration has a number of positive effects on the economy of countries of destination, in particular on the background of declining demographic trends. However, public opinion often views migration as a dangerous tendency. To counter these negative sentiments, OSCE should develop more activities related to integration of migrants and awareness raising of the positive effects of migration, and encourage a stronger involvement of non-governmental organizations. OSCE, including the HCNM should work to develop better understanding of migrant cultures and to ease integration. In this regard, co-operation with mass media and the general public via lectures, training and campaigning might be important.

It was acknowledged that the increased scale of migration requires a special emphasis on integration strategies as integration of migrants is the pillar of social cohesion. Migrants should receive the same social conditions for the same type of employment. Furthermore, in order to prevent the exclusion of migrants, the recognition of certificates and similar skill credentials was of significant importance.

The vulnerability of migrants in countries of destination was highlighted. Often labour migrants lack legal status and are excluded from legal rights, education, health, and legal redress. It was also underlined that migrants are subject to protection under international laws. A deficient implementation of existing national legislation and international conventions was mentioned as an impediment for applying migration management strategies and protecting migrants’ rights. For example, migrant rights are not usually protected by countries’ labour codes.

Participating States, international organizations including the OSCE should make every effort to address these problems more effectively. Countries of destination should work to improve and strengthen their

legal provisions for tolerance. They should also ratify and implement the existing international agreements such as the Convention of Labour Migrants' Rights. The OSCE should encourage the ratification and implementation of such international instruments and assist in the modification of labour codes to include migrants' rights.

SESSION VI – The informal sector

During the preparatory seminars the role of informal economies in countries of destination in attracting irregular migration was repetitively raised by participants. Illegal migrants are typically engaged in the informal sectors of economy. The economy is becoming divided between migrant and non-migrant sectors. Illegal migration is often a direct consequence of numerous legislative obstacles for official migration, of rigid regulations in countries of destination. This may also lead to an increase in trafficking and smuggling. It was mentioned that illegal migration has a tendency of criminalization.

In this context the necessity of developing legal migration options was emphasized. A good legal migration policy may be the most effective instrument to combat irregular migration. Non-existent legislation and lack of structure for legal migration is an obstacle to legalise migration. States should develop and follow legal frameworks which are comprehensive. Migration policy must be linked to general economic policy of a country.

The OSCE in co-operation with state institutions could work on addressing the informal sectors. Employers in countries of destination should be given incentives to employ migrants legally while countries of origin should develop more precise labour export regulations to facilitate legal emigration and assist workers abroad.

A number of options could be considered in order to facilitate the legalization of irregular labour migrants: temporary contracts; joint applications by employers/employees; amnesties; work permits for temporary workers; adopting laws on rights and liberties of aliens and their social integration; signature of bilateral or regional agreements for labour migration etc.

As migration is a transboundary phenomenon, its management requires commitment from both the origin and destination sides. Bilateral agreements can be useful instruments to promote such co-operation. In this way both countries (source and destination) would benefit from migrant workers. Various types of agreements could be considered and they could include provisions related to protection of migrant workers, provisions on tolerance, selection of labour migrants to fill labour needs, migration quotas, provisions on return benefits and services etc. They could be administered by a joint committee.

The OSCE participating States should develop bilateral/regional agreements in order to facilitate labour migration across the countries of the region, especially for neighboring countries. One option would be to start with bilateral co-ordination which could then lead to a broader framework of co-operation. It was emphasized that it might be useful to develop regional strategies on migration (in Central Asia, European Union, SEE) promoting thus a co-ordinated and holistic approach. Countries of the same region should harmonize their policies in the field of migration. Regular meetings and exchange of information could be useful. It was suggested to develop intergovernmental agencies which could deal with these issues.

SESSION VII – Policies of integration of persons belonging to national minorities

The integration of national minorities is the best way of combating the risk of tensions over minority issues which can threaten stability and security. It was also emphasized that integration is an essential aspect of good governance and contributes to a genuinely democratic and representative society.

Integration measures and policies have to be based on general principles but at the same time have to be adapted to different local situations. The OSCE should draft a "Statement of Principles" on integration of minorities. It was also noted that while in the fields of education and public participation there is international guidance, such principles are less developed for economic and social aspects of integration.

The basis for the integration of minorities is the fundamental principle of non-discrimination. Where gaps exist between minorities and others, special measures are required to achieve equality of opportunity and effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs. It was emphasized that the local and community dimensions need to be taken into account. States would have to pursue a policy of non-discrimination and equal treatment and promote the inclusion, equal access and equitable representation of minorities at all levels, in all branches of government and public services in order to provide them with a voice in decision-making which affects them. OSCE could provide legal assistance to participating States and serve as a forum for discussion of the issue.

The OSCE should advocate and encourage States to adopt effective policies and provide advice on good practices by linking state authorities and experts. The OSCE should encourage NGOs to play a more pro-active role in addressing minority issues and should also encourage States to co-operate closer with NGOs;

SESSION VIII - Economic and social integration of persons belonging to national minorities

In the economic and social life of a state, one has to ensure that minorities receive a fair share of benefits from state policies, particularly in the field of employment both in the public and the private sectors. Governments have the direct responsibility in ensuring economic integration and should establish a framework to foster confidence building and economic growth for all, paying particular attention to the regions where national minorities live. Within their general economic and social policies states should develop measures designed to remedy the accumulated inequalities and exclusion suffered by minority groups.

Action at local level should also be encouraged and local initiatives on integration should be supported, as local rather than central authorities deal with national minorities on a day-to-day basis. Local economic empowerment can be achieved by supporting the development of entrepreneurship. SMEs can also be instrumental in this regard and their development should be supported by governmental policy. Various forms of entrepreneurship such as self-employment, small businesses or social enterprises, which operate as businesses, but whose main objectives are social, can be promoted as a development tool for engaging minority communities.

The OSCE should support national governments in drafting, improving and implementing legislation on the economic and social integration of national minorities and in developing related policies. OSCE should develop more awareness raising and capacity building activities targeting local authorities.

The OSCE should support the creation of economic opportunities in areas where national minorities live, in particular in rural and border areas that are underdeveloped and which may become a potential security problem. The involvement of youth in such projects is especially useful. The OSCE should encourage and facilitate entrepreneurship, identify good practices and promote them. It should continue to support SME development by providing business training through its "Youth Entrepreneur Seminar" programme.

Plenary Session - OSCE as a platform for dialogue and co-operation

The preparatory process highlighted the strong connection between demographic trends, migration, (lack of) integration of persons belonging to national minorities on one hand and economic development and security issues on the other. The need for long-term, sustainable national policies, for integrated and co-operative approaches was also emphasized. The general conclusion was that the OSCE can play a role in assisting participating States in their efforts to manage demographic trends, migration and integration of persons belonging to national minorities and promote increased co-operation and co-ordination, first and foremost by serving as a discussion forum on these topics. The OSCE could also be instrumental in sharing information, good practices and procedures as well as in raising awareness.

- Establishing a special task force/working group or a unit, within the framework of the OCEEA, advisory councils or monitoring groups, which will address demographic problems, migration and integration on a regular basis could be envisaged. Regional working groups could also be considered.
- The OSCE could develop an Action Plan (s)/Strategy(ies) in the fields of migration and integration.
- Follow up meetings on various issues or regional conferences/workshops on specific topics could be organized.
- The OSCE could develop a concept paper on migration or a handbook on migration policies based on good practices on migration management in the OSCE area. In particular, OSCE could assist interested states in drafting legislation on migration and develop related policies. OSCE's involvement in this area in countries such as Uzbekistan and Armenia where related projects were supported was considered useful. Similar activities could be considered elsewhere.
- Adopting a "Statement of Principles" on integration of minorities and providing more guidelines for economic/social aspects of integration could be considered.
- OSCE should reinforce its co-operation with other international organizations in these fields and act as a catalyst. OSCE is expected to use its instruments, including field presences, to facilitate the processes of consultations and coordination of respective policies.

The wrap up session - OSCE as a platform for dialogue and co-operation - on Friday morning should consider such suggestions, as well as the conclusions of the previous sessions (which are more narrow in scope) in order to identify the most appropriate follow-up activities (in terms of types, topics, scope etc) the OSCE should pursue.