

ELISABETH HOLMSTRAND GUSTAFSSON  
e-post: elisabeth.gustafsson@mp.se

STATEMENT

August 31, 2007

Immigration and Asylum Unit  
DG Justice  
European Commission, Brussels

Views upon Green paper on asylum. a common asylum policy in the European Union.

It is important to make the system more harmonized but even more important to make it human, as expressed in the ingress to the former Dublin Convention; that it is built upon a human tradition from the New York Protocol etc.

Today the Dublin system is not human, the way it is practiced, which is also mentioned in the evaluation of the Dublin system (KOM (2007) 742). One example is a person who lived in Sweden with his wife and 40 days old child, who was sent back to the first asylum country, Austria. Three months have passed and the child might become one year old before he eventually may return to Sweden. His crime is that he has chosen to live with his wife and child in Sweden.

If he had really committed a crime, he would probably be in prison, where he could meet his wife and child. This punishment is worse, while they are separated, and I can not consider that as a human treatment or in accordance with a human tradition.

To secure a higher degree of solidarity between the member states, to create a common asylum procedure and a common status for those who have been allowed asylum or subsidiary protection, seems reasonable, as well as to assume a common and wide view upon asylum.

Also a more clearly regulated reception is desirable, but must be built upon human intentions. My views here are based upon the countries I know, and I chose to compare Sweden and Austria. In Austria the requirement of a "Mietvertrag", if money shall be paid to the asylum seeker, exceeding the 40 Euro that an asylum seeker who leaves the camp without "Mietvertrag", shall be paid, probably leads to less segregation than the system in Sweden.

In Austria only two persons can share a flat to receive this with "Mietvertrag" conditioned higher sum, while in Sweden the asylum seeker can get money without proving such a contract, and from the first day through bank card. While the requirement regarding a renting contract doesn't exist in Sweden and the compensation is lower, more people live in the same flat in order to save money, which might lead to a more concentrated population of asylumseekers in certain places and thereby to a higher risk for segregation.

In Austria compensation for winter- and summer clothes is also paid, as well as travels to compulsory interviews, which is not the case in Sweden. Also regarding access to health care, Austria surpasses Sweden, while it is free in the federal state where the asylum seeker lives. In Sweden the asylum seeker only has access to free emergency treatment.

However, when it comes to jobs, Sweden surpasses Austria, as an asylum seeker under certain conditions is allowed to work, which is not the case in Austria. So from the integration point of view, it's possible that the Swedish policy is better in the long run – for those who are permitted to stay. During the asylum seeking period, however, and especially for those who can't find a job, the time seems harder in Sweden than in Austria.

Common dealing with asylum applications on an EU level, is not recommendable, but should be handled on the national level, while an asylum seeker also in the future must have the right to choose in what country he or she wants to seek asylum and to live. Therefore it's also worrying to read about the ideas of sending a person for further settlement in another state than where he or she has sought asylum. This has to be carried through in contact with and with the acceptance of the asylumseeker him- / herself!

Finally the "protection areas" at the borders of the EU must also, or at first, protect the asylum seekers! In other words EU can never, if the intentions still are to continue a human tradition, leave the decisions regarding who shall be allowed to seek asylum in the European Union and its member states and who shall not, be transferred to countries, institutions or companies, who will make the asylumseeking process a hazardous and dangerous game for the asylum seeker to participate in. Respect for human right must in other words always be respected!

Elisabeth Holmstrand Gustafsson,  
Local politician, The Green Party,  
Kristinehamn,  
SWEDEN