

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3218/02
by Marianne Eriksson (GUE/NGL)
to the Council

Subject: Visa enabling Russian citizens to enter the EU

In September this year I invited three women who work at a women's crisis centre in Murmansk to participate in a European Parliament conference on prostitution and trafficking in women, on 9-10 October 2002. When I spoke to Belgian diplomatic staff in Moscow and St Petersburg about the possibility of obtaining visas for them, everyone I spoke to gave different answers, but it seemed clear that the women would have to go to Moscow with my original invitation, and that even then they would not be certain of obtaining a visa. I also spoke to the Swedish visa authorities about the possibility of their flying via Sweden, but was told that a visa for Sweden would not be sufficient for them to travel on to Belgium (Schengen agreement), and that they would require a visa for each separate EU country. I think it is remarkable that 500 000 people a year can be allowed in illegally for purposes of sexual exploitation but that it is quite impossible to invite three people to talk about the same phenomenon.

Do I need to contact a trafficker in order to invite Russian citizens to the European Parliament? And why does the Schengen agreement not apply to them?