

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM,  
XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION  
(Brussels, 13-14 September 2004)**

**Session III: Combating Discrimination against Migrant Workers and Facilitating  
Their Integration into the Societies They are Legally Residing**

**STATEMENT**

Turkey is most attentive to the situation of migrant communities in the OSCE area and to the policy responses to their problems at local, national and international levels, not only because of 4 million Turkish migrant workers currently living in various OSCE countries, but also being a country of origin, destination and transit at the same time. Therefore, we attach particular importance to the debate in this session and we are willing to carry its conclusions to the other OSCE fora.

As a result of increased economic, social and demographic disparities, accompanied by technological developments facilitating mobility and communication, growing numbers of people are leaving their home countries in search of better standards of living. According to ILO estimates, today only in Europe there are around 27.5 million migrants. This figure does not include refugees.

These movements, affecting demographic, social, economic and political structures in both sending and receiving countries, create multi-faceted challenges to our Governments and societies. In recent years, considerable efforts were made on behalf of the Governments of the receiving countries towards implementation of active integration policies. However, effects of these policies remains limited.

- Labour market marginalization of migrant workers continues.
- Disparities in wages, social security, working conditions and treatment between migrant workers and nationals, as well as between migrant workers themselves remain in place. Even second and third generation migrants, who were born and educated in receiving countries and fluent in local language continue to be disproportionately employed or unemployed and become increasingly marginalized from society.
- In many countries access to citizenship and family unification are still lengthy and are subject to very difficult processes.
- Racism, discrimination and xenophobia in the workplace, extensive hostility, abuse and violence towards migrant workers and other non-citizens in the society has become much more visible.
- False or inadequate information by recruiters or intermediaries cause exploitation of migrant work force. Significant numbers of migrant workers, especially women, belong to occupations and sectors where conditions of employment fall far short of international and national standards because they are seldom effectively supervised by national authorities.
- Migrants are often associated with criminality, trafficking, drugs, disease and other social ills. Media coverage and political discourse fuel misconceptions and prejudices often resulting explicit racism in the society.
- The participation of migrant workers in the decision making process is very limited and often non-existent.
- Research, documentation and analysis related to the situation of migrant workers remain minimal.

Under these circumstances, integration remains to be a challenge. Present immigration policies in many countries are based on the principle of equal obligations. Equal rights and equal opportunities are often neglected, whereas, migrant workers and their families should be able to participate in the social, economic and -to some extent- political life on an equal footing, so that they can develop a sense of belonging. They should in the meantime be encouraged to preserve their national and cultural identity.

It goes without saying that successful integration first and foremost requires elimination of prejudices, racism and xenophobia in the receiving societies. On the other hand, a multilateral, transparent and coherent approach should be adopted by the Governments, taking into account and addressing various factors affecting the situation of migrant workers, like labour market conditions, education, health and social security systems, visa and citizenship policies, return and reintegration schemes. All relevant Governmental departments should be involved in elaborating migration policies.

In the case of Turkish migrant workers, migratory movements to western Europe dates back to 1960s, when economic difficulties in Turkey on the one hand and the high demand for foreign labour in receiving countries on the other, led the first generation of migrant workers towards Europe. Since then, they have brought dynamism to the economies of the countries where they work and reside and provided significant contribution to the development and welfare, as well as to the social and cultural diversity of these countries. In return, they have aspirations for a better future for themselves and for their families in their new home countries, where they can no longer be considered as guest workers, but has become permanent members of the society. Thus integration has turned out to be an even more important factor in addressing their problems.

The legal status of Turkish migrant workers remain to be the main obstacle before full integration, particularly in EU countries. Despite improvements in the EU acquis with respect to the participation of the members of the migrant communities in political, economic and social life, individual member countries fail to rapidly and effectively transform the related provisions into their national legislation.

Similarly, although according to the related provisions of the European Social Charter spouses of the migrant workers and their children under 21 fall within family reunification framework, there are examples of national legislation in individual countries bringing the maximum age limit down to as low as 12.

Another particular concern related to the specific case of Turkish migrant workers is the failure in full application of the EU-Turkey Association Council decisions, which accords the Turkish citizens more favourable rights and treatment in the EU. We expect that this derogation, which in practice amounts to discrimination, will be lifted.

On behalf of Turkey, we are prepared to maintain dialogue and cooperation with a view to playing our own responsible part in this process also in line with the relevant OSCE commitments.

Our recommendations to this session will be distributed separately.