

The Onset of Turkish Labor Migration (1961)

Abstract

Employment offices in the Federal Republic published information on employment conditions for Turkish laborers and described how these migrant workers would be distributed across regions and industries. The goal behind these efforts was to continue expanding the West German economy despite a shortage of German labor.

Source

The Turks Are Coming

The Federal Employment Agency just announced that in the future, in addition to recruiting workers in Italy, Spain and Greece, it will also be recruiting Turkish workers. On the basis of a provisional arrangement with the responsible Turkish government authorities, and in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency and the Turkish Labor Administration, workers will be recruited in Turkey and placed in the Federal Republic. Recent news reports may have already suggested that German authorities had this intention; nevertheless, the announcement of the realization of these plans is somewhat surprising. For one thing, the reservoir of manpower from previous countries of recruitment has hardly been exhausted; moreover, countries belonging to the EEC [European Economic Community] should have a certain priority over countries not yet included in the recruitment of workers. Additionally, Turkey numbers among those countries in need of development aid, so it is not unjustified to ask if it makes sense to deprive a country like Turkey, which is dependent on its manpower for the continued expansion of its own economy, of that very labor force. However, it must be borne in mind that not all of those workers will be needed in the country at the same time. A provisional agreement has been signed to implement cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency and the Turkish Labor Administration; it provides for the following: effective July 15, 1961, a German liaison office in Istanbul will handle the placement of suitable Turkish workers in the Federal Republic. For the time being, placement will be restricted to the regional employment office districts of Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Hamburg, which already employ a considerable number of Turkish workers, and already have experience hiring them. Since the German Federal Railway is interested in hiring a large contingent of track and loading workers, this restriction does not apply to contracts with the German Federal Railway. For the time being, however, companies can make hiring requests for Turkish workers at the employment offices only by requesting male workers not specified by name. For unskilled and semi-skilled male workers, of whom any number are available, only orders to place larger groups (at least 25 workers) will be accepted at first. Beyond this it will presumably be possible to place qualified workers in the textile industry, metalworking industry, food, drink, and tobacco industries, shipbuilding, building trades, mining, as well as quarrying and brick making. Here, though, it should be noted that while qualified Turkish workers have a certain amount of professional knowledge and experience, their practical training is not as systematic as that which is customary in the Federal Republic. For every Turkish worker requested—subject to final approval by the governing board of the Federal Employment Agency—companies must pay a lump sum for expenses in the amount of 120 DM—equivalent to the amount for recruitment in Greece—and a travel supplement of 30 DM, which comes to a total of 150 DM. The German liaison office in Istanbul will routinely inform the employment offices about placement prospects as soon as it has gained a comprehensive overview of the manpower supply. It is recommended that interested employers turn to the employment office in their jurisdiction for further information.

Source: “Die Türken kommen”, *Arbeitgeber*, 1961, p. 480 ff; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, eds., *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945–1990*. Munich, 1993, pp. 191–93. Republished with permission.

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