

Globalization and Labour Migration

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As we all know very well, migration and immigrants have, by their wider definitions, been concepts that have always remained important within a process dating back to early times and have always been a topic to work on.

Economic, political and demographic factors suggest that we are in an age of growing migration pressures, and will continue to do so on an ever-stronger basis.

As an origin and destination country, Turkey feels the positive and negative impacts of migration directly. While I briefly share our experiences, I would like to point out the problems that we have to deal with in the future and the need for an active international cooperation on migration management for resolving these problems.

Besides the rules set out by the economics and politics, immigrants' preferences have created diversities in migration movements. These developments prevent us from reaching clear conclusions as to the positive and negative economic and social impact of migration on the countries of origin and countries of destination.

Changes in economies and demographic trends increase demand for foreign labour in most of the industrialized countries. Various programs are being developed in order to overcome the problem of ageing population. Such efforts include social security reforms and different programs to encourage the old people to work longer. Whatever the success rate of the programs implemented to keep the ageing population in employment, the need for a new and young labour force is apparent for sustainable development and sustainable social security system.

We do witness that migrant-receiving developed countries, be it permanent or temporary migration, are now following selective migration policies. There is an increasing migration of highly-skilled labour from developing countries to developed countries. This movement, becoming an intensive brain-drain thereby, also results in migration of capital from developing countries. Migration of capital can also take place not only as expenses incurred by the source-country to develop the skilled labour force but also capital requirements set by the receiving country.

I would like to underline that policies for restriction or sometimes completely prohibition of the right to unity of family – which is a fundamental human right – while keeping the door half-open for migration of skilled labour force or limited migration of skilled labour force in only specific sectors particularly in European countries, and for keeping the door closed for less skilled or unskilled immigrants by quota applications, labour market tests and adaptation courses are not sustainable.

Persistent implementation of policies violating the human rights and especially the Immigrants' Law regulating the rights and responsibilities of immigrants while there is an increasing need for labour force due to demographic reasons, shall bring about various problems as well.

Considering the legal positions, rights and responsibilities of immigrants living in the countries of Western Europe and the place they have acquired in these societies, it is a concrete fact that they have suffered serious loss of rights during the last 20 years.

Discriminative practices which immigrants are systematically made subject to and their problems that have been an integral part of their daily lives can be listed as follows:

- Discriminatory treatment in working life,
- Lack of communication and exclusion,
- Inequality in wages
- Restrictions on social security payments,
- Unemployment,
- Inequality in educational opportunities,
- Teaching in mother tongue,
- Family unification,
- Work and residence permits,
- Naturalization,
- Barriers on equal access to health care services,
- Social protection,
- Housing,
- In equal access to public services

In addition to them;

- Barriers on participation into political life,
- The fact that politicians and media pronounce immigrants as a reason of challenges encountered in social life such as unemployment, low educational level, criminality, terrorism and etc. and always keep the issue fresh on the agenda,
- Support found in societies for racism and extremely rightist policies, and
- Assimilation programs,

aggravate the existing problems.

Although it varies from one country to another, problems of immigrants in abovementioned areas are not solved but get more and more serious everyday. It is a fact that the women, children and the elderly suffer from these problems most.

In fact, there are researches about these problems on a sufficient level. In particular United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Migration Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as universities, institutes and ministries have conducted many invaluable studies showing all aspects of the issue. All these studies confirm the existence of these problems.

There are many conventions and recommendations adopted by UN, ILO and Council of Europe, which regulate rights and responsibilities of immigrants. Provisions of the said conventions and recommendations are considerably sufficient for protection of rights of immigrants. It is also natural that there might be a need for new conventions and/or revisions of the existing ones in the coming years.

The reasons for the deterioration rather than an improvement in the existing status of immigrants despite this extensive law system established in national and international levels should be questioned and analyzed.

When we look at the ratification status of conventions posing great importance for immigrants, it is observed that these conventions are not shown the interest they deserve by the migration-receiving developed countries.

Except one or two, no migration-receiving country has ratified yet the UN Convention on Immigrant Workers, which is one of the seven fundamental conventions of the UN on Human Rights.

I would like to give a few more examples. The ILO Convention No: 118 on Equal Treatment in Social Security has been ratified by only nine countries, the European Convention on Establishment has been adopted by eleven countries, and the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers has been ratified by only seven countries.

Despite all these developments, bilateral and multilateral conventions regulating the rights and responsibilities of immigrants and mechanisms monitoring compliance of the contracting parties with these conventions have a decisive role on protection of migrants' rights. Another issue to be noted is that bilateral and multilateral conventions regulating the rights and responsibilities of immigrants are not limited to the conventions which are directly addressing immigrants.

It is obvious that immigrants, irrespective of their type of migration, shall continue to contribute into the demographic structure, a sustainable economy and social security system of the country of employment as they have done so far.

Contribution of immigrants into development of the country of origin and country of employment depends primarily on solution of their own problems. For this purpose;

1. Migration-receiving countries should be encouraged to liberalise their immigration policies based merely on selective approach to admission (immigration policies which solely allow the admission of well-educated and highly skilled migrants) and immigration policies based on exceptionally strict regulations for unskilled migrant labour force.
2. Instead of exceptionally strict measures to prevent the immigration of unskilled labour force, investment projects should be promoted to employ unskilled labourers locally in countries of origin.
3. Governments, particularly the governments of migrant receiving countries, should be encouraged to ratify the international conventions which guarantee migrants' human rights including economic, social and cultural rights.
4. Effective international co-operation on the prevention of abuse against immigrants, particularly the immigrants who are more vulnerable, and on the illegal migration and trafficking in human beings should be among the priority targets.

Considering that the results of this meeting shall be submitted by the President of ECOSOC to "the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development" to be conducted in the UN Plenary Session on the 14th – 15th of September 2006, which shall make a great contribution.