



## FACTS ON *Discrimination against migrants*

Immigrant labour has become a key feature in meeting economic, labour market and productivity challenges in a globalized economy. Migration adjusts skills, age and sectoral composition of national and regional labour markets to fast-changing needs resulting from technological advances, changes in market conditions and industrial transformations. In countries of aging populations, migration replenishes declining work forces and injects younger workers, sustaining productivity and economic output.

The foreign born commonly represent 10% of work forces in Western European countries. Proportions in some countries in Africa and the Americas are higher. However, the lack of effective policies and practices to prevent discrimination can be seen in high unemployment, low school attainment, and conflictual workplace and community relations.

Discrimination is differential treatment, denying equality of opportunity. It constrains certain identifiable groups to substandard conditions in the labour market. Consistent denial of employment opportunities, confinement in ghettos and inferior education opportunities add up to a powerful recipe for exclusion.

Discrimination prevents integration. Studies show that the longer migrants and their offspring live in a host society, the more likely it is that prejudice and discrimination prevent them from reaching similar economic and educational attainments as the majority population.

Economic arguments against discrimination and for equality of treatment are strong and well documented. . Employers of multi-ethnic workforces attract customers, talented job applicants and investors. Diverse workforces add value to business activities through increased creativity and better problem-solving capacities. Immigrants and ethnic minorities offer privileged insights into markets and speak languages of clients. Migrant and minority communities comprise large consumer markets.

Preventing discrimination in employment requires a comprehensive action agenda of legislation, practical measures, and monitoring compliance at and beyond the workplace. Key elements include: strengthening rule of law by adopting relevant international standards; making racist and xenophobic behaviour and action unacceptable and illegal; elaborating administrative measures and procedures to fully implement legislation; establishing independent human rights/anti-discrimination institutions with powers to address non-citizens; encouraging communications media to emphasize positive images of diversity and migration; incorporating diversity training in educational curricula, and – especially important-- putting in place practical measures and procedures at the workplace itself.

### **Facts**

- ILO studies found that more than one in every three qualified applicants of immigrant background were unfairly excluded in employment selection procedures in several Western industrialized countries: discrimination rates of up to 41%.
- Women constitute more than 50% of migrant workers in Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania; they face double discrimination in employment and society.
- ILO studies in several European countries documented that, to obtain a positive response at any stage of the hiring process, equally qualified job-seekers of immigrant origin must apply an average of from two to as many as twenty times more than applicants of national backgrounds.
- Unemployment rates for youth of immigrant origin are commonly double national youth unemployment rates in Western European countries.
- The European *Race Directive* of 2000, covering both public and private sectors, required all member States to have in place specified legislation, institutional structures and administrative measures to prevent discrimination in employment by 2005. To date, only Finland has fully implemented the directive.
- ILO has catalogued more than 60 different types of measures by employers, trade unions, government authorities and others to prevent discrimination and facilitate integration at and beyond the workplace.

## ***Practical initiatives make a difference***

Continent Supermarkets recruited local workers from an area of Marseilles, France with severe unemployment rates and a large immigrant population. NGOs and government officials assisted in writing job profiles and recruiting minorities to fill over 400 jobs. This was facilitated by waiving requirements such as diplomas, except for specific jobs. Workers were provided with training by employment agencies. Managers were trained to promote integration and respect cultural diversity.

UK chemical manufacturer Robert McBride Ltd. established a race equality policy, focusing on human resources and staff training. It redesigned employment application forms to remove potentially discriminatory questions. Applicants are recruited from areas with large immigrant populations. Requirements for lower skilled posts are tailored to job requirements, for example by removing unessential language requirements. Policies were implemented to respond to migrant needs, such as flexible leave, arrangements for religious observances and respecting minority dress codes. Anti-discrimination educational events brought together management, trade union and community representatives. These initiatives resulted in more proportionate workforce representation of minorities and migrants.

In consultation with immigrant and minority groups, the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Construction Industry Federation, the Equality Authority of the Irish Government and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism host an annual Anti-Racist Workplace Week, a nationwide campaign to prevent racism in the workplace. The campaign encompasses social partner discussions and training, public discussions on diversity issues and encouragement of news media coverage of equality issues. During the week, seminars, conferences and events celebrating different cultures are held nationwide. Resource packs, posters and newsletters are circulated.

## ***The Role of the ILO***

Since its establishment in 1919, the ILO has worked to develop international consensus on regulating labour migration and on protecting workers employed outside their home countries. The ILO sets standards, assists member states in formulating policies, and provides technical cooperation to governments and social partners to implement effective remedies and approaches.

Over the last 15 years, in partnership with constituent governments, employers and trade unions, ILO has developed an extensive knowledge base and practical tools as well as an agenda for action on discrimination/integration in the context of migration.

ILO has reviewed effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation and training in Europe and North America to improve results. Ongoing national surveys measure discrimination to provide policy-makers with precise characterizations to determine effective remedies.

Currently, with EU support, ILO is:

- Expanding a website data-base comprising 200 profiles of examples of employer, trade union, government and civil society activities on discrimination and integration. [www.ilo.org/migrant](http://www.ilo.org/migrant) (click on *discrimination*).
- Studying diverse national experiences to identify key indicators of integration.
- Disseminating a practitioners' handbook and information *tool kits* for employers and trade unions.
- Facilitating social partner networking on integration and discrimination.
- Disseminating the ILO Multi-Lateral Framework for Labour Migration as a key policy guidelines tool.

For more information: [www.ilo.org/migrant](http://www.ilo.org/migrant)

### ***Relevant International Standards***

ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation, 1958

ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment, 1949

ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions), 1975

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965

1990 International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of Their Families

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