



## German History in Documents and Images

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The Onset of Turkish Labor Migration (1961)

The Federal Employment Agency announces the conditions for the employment and distribution of Turkish laborers in West Germany. This type of labor migration was needed to maintain the FRG's rate of economic expansion in the face of a manpower shortage.

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### **“The Turks are coming”**

Alongside the recruitment of workers from Italy, Spain, and Greece, the hiring of Turkish workers will begin in the near future, as the Federal Employment Agency just announced. On the basis of a provisional arrangement with Turkish government authorities, in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency and the Turkish Labor Administration, workers will be recruited in Turkey and transported to 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, and in this respect it is not entirely unfair to ask if it is sensible to deprive a country like Turkey, which is dependent on its manpower for the continued expansion of its own economy, of those very workers. Certainly, one has to make sure that these workers are not needed back home at the same time. For the practical implementation of a cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency and the Turkish Labor Administration, a provisional agreement was signed; it provides for the following: effective as of July 15, 1961, a German liaison office in Istanbul will handle the placement of Turkish workers suitable for 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 where there is already experience with hiring Turkish workers. 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 if they are orders for male workers not specified by name. For unskilled and semi-skilled male workers, who are available in as large a number as anyone

might want, only orders to place larger groups (at least 25 workers) will be accepted at first. Beyond that, presumably, it should 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 – corresponding 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 receives 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” [“The Turks are Coming”], *Arbeitgeber*, 1961, p. 480 ff; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, eds., *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945-1990* [*The Divided Country. Life in Germany 1945-1990*]. Munich, 1993, pp. 191-93.

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