

Brussels, 4th November 2010
Ares(2010)

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Mr Emine Bozkurt
Member of the European Parliament
European Parliament
ASP 15G107
Rue Wiertz, 60
B-1047 Brussels

Dear Ms Bozkurt,

I am grateful for the information you provided on the issue of child labour and fully share your concerns on the remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

During the past 15 years, we have witnessed an overall positive trend as regards reduction of the prevalence of child labour in Turkey. This has led the ILO to select Turkey as one of the three countries that achieved success in fight against child labour in 2006. According to survey results of the Turkish Statistics Institute, the numbers of children engaged in economic activities in the age group 6-17 decreased from 2,269,000 (15.2%) in 1994 to 958,000 (5.9%) in 2006. This is an encouraging trend, although further efforts are needed to eliminate child labour completely.

The Commission actively supports Turkey's efforts in this area. In annex to this letter you will find a compilation of completed and ongoing projects supported by the EU to strengthen respect of children's rights and combat child labour. The overall EU contribution for these projects is €47.35 Million. We will pursue our efforts in the coming years, as part of the pre-accession financial assistance to Turkey under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA).

As indicated in the 2010 Progress Report on Turkey, the administrative capacity to tackle this issue has been strengthened through the establishment of a Department for disadvantaged Groups in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. This should now translate in the implementation of more effective policies to prevent child labour.

The information you have provided on the specific situation in hazelnut plantations warrants a more intense dialogue with the Turkish authorities during the sub-committee meetings under the EU-Turkey Association Agreement planned for 2011; and as part of the regular dialogue on the Copenhagen political criteria with the Turkish authorities. I will remain available to provide feedback on the outcome of these deliberations.

At this stage let me already share with you the preliminary findings of the Delegation of the EU in Turkey on the prevalence of child labour in hazelnut plantations:

There are 300.000 people (50-60 thousand families) involved in seasonal migration in Turkey every year - mostly to work in hazelnut plantations in the Black sea region or in cotton plantations in Adana – according to official sources.

The period of seasonal work starts as early as April and lasts until October. This hampers children's enrolment in school. EĞİTİM-SEN (a labour union active in education sector) had published a report on this subject in 2007 reviewing the impact of seasonal agricultural work on 115 primary schools in six South-eastern provinces (Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman, Adana, Batman, Diyarbakır and Gaziantep). According to this study approximately 10% of the primary school students (i.e. 23,683 students) started school later in the year and left earlier, due to seasonal agricultural work.

A Circular was issued by the Prime Ministry in March 2010 with the aim to improve conditions for seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their families, including better access for children to education and health services. The circular establishes a "Monitoring Board for Seasonal Migrant Farm Workers (SMFWs)" at national and local level. In addition, several measures were announced on housing, education, health and labour conditions (see Annex II for a detailed overview).

The Commission will continue closely monitoring the implementation of these measures, which can bring a substantial contribution to improve the conditions for migrant seasonal workers in Turkey and follow-up as appropriate other initiatives aiming at addressing the issue of child labour in Turkey.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "U. Seferi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Annex I:

EU funded projects in Turkey helping to combat child labour and to improve respect for children's rights:

Recently completed

2004 - 2007 - Eradicating the worst forms of child labour in Turkey (€5.3 M)

The objective of the project was to contribute to the Turkish government's effort of eliminating the worst forms of child labour. The project enhanced the national and regional capacity for actively removing children from the worst forms of child labour and preventing "at risk" children from beginning such work. The project was managed by the Child Labour Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with technical assistance provided by ILO. Within the framework of the project, pilot offices were established in 7 provinces (Çankırı, Kastamonu, Sinop, Ordu, Erzurum, Elazığ, Van) offering education, withdrawal from work, prevention, monitoring and counselling services to working children and their families.

The project contributed to Turkey's realisation of its international commitments to the ILO aiming at eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

2004 - 2008 - Towards Good Governance, Protection and Justice for Children (€6 M)

The main objective of the project was to upgrade the capacity of the related institutions to provide a more protective environment for children in contact with the law, including establishment of baseline data and empirical evidence, development of common strategies and collaborative implementation practices for the protection and reintegration of these children. The project was coordinated by the Gendarmerie General Command with technical assistance provided by UNICEF.

As a result, capacity building on how to implement the child protection law was initiated within 16 provinces (where the number of children in contact with the law is the highest and child courts are existing) among 1500 persons working for the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, child judges, prosecutors, prison guards and social workers. A catch-up education curriculum was drafted with the objective to target children at risk (street children) to be made available in the same 16 provinces. Two parenting education programmes targeting parents with children at risk have been developed and 100 000 families with children under 6 years have been informed on child raising methods without abuse, beating or neglecting. As a pilot project, 5000 parents with children between 7 and 19 years have followed a parenting course, with a view to give them skills and knowledge on how to communicate with and raise their children to prevent violent behaviour in school and at home.

2006 - 2009 - Children First- Modelling Child Protection Mechanisms at Provincial Level (€4.8 M)

The purpose of the project was to establish effective, coordinated working mechanisms for the delivery of effective and integrated child-centred protection services in 12 priority provinces (Adana, Ankara, Batman, Bursa, Diyarbakır, İstanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Mersin, Samsun, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon) selected in consideration of education participation rates and the

prevalence of children working and living on the street and in conflict with the law. Professionals will be trained on the implementation of the Child Protection Law. Families will be provided with a parenting education programme.

Ongoing

Justice for children (€3.3 M)

The purpose of the project is to ensure the effective implementation of the Child Protection Law and full realization of all rights of the children in contact with the law through protecting children's right to fair trial, effective the inter-sectoral collaboration in the juvenile justice system and high standards of services provided to children deprived of liberty.

Strengthening Pre-school Education (€13.9 M)

The project's purpose is to develop quality and effective community-based child day care and pre-school education models for disadvantaged children and their families with the active participation and support of local public institutions, municipalities, NGOs and private sector organizations. The project includes a grant scheme aimed at encouraging local public institutions, municipalities, NGOs and private sector organizations to open community based child day care and pre-school education institutions throughout the country.

Strengthening Special Education (€ 6.15M)

Project purpose: To increase opportunities and to improve the learning environments for disabled individuals with a view to increasing their access to education and inclusion in society through campaigns, in-service trainings, psychological assessment and diagnostic tests, equipment and educational material support with the active participation and support of NGOs, local public institutions, municipalities and private sector organizations. In a wider context the project will contribute to the concept of "Education for All" through inclusion of disabled individuals in regular schools.

Increasing Primary School Attendance Rate of Children (€2.9M)

Project purpose: To increase the attendance rates in primary education by taking measures to decrease drop-out and non attendance rate targeting areas with a high concentration of vulnerable groups.

Supporting Social Inclusion through Sports Education (€2.1 M)

Project purpose: To increase social inclusion and cohesion in pilot areas of Southeast Turkey by realising preparatory studies and management structures for new sports facilities and supplementary education opportunities for youth and children.

Fight against Violence towards Children (€2.7M)

Project purpose: To reduce and prevent violence towards children through increased capacities of follow up and prevent services by developing policies for taking legal measures and promotion of Counselling Services, developing a Safer School Model which is free from physical, emotional, verbal and psychological violence and increasing the awareness of parents, NGO members, non-teaching staff, teaching staff and students.

Human Rights Association - Diyarbakır Branch' project "To Defend the Rights of the Children Who are in Dispute with Law and Unable to Reach Justice and Have no Access to Justice; Redressing their Grievances" (€80,207.20)

The project aims at defending the children who are in dispute with law and unable to reach justice by creating awareness at national and international level and trying to change legal regulations not in line with the children and UN Convention on the Rights of Children's Right Agreement. The project will allow better access to justice for children, increase awareness on the issue and attempts to change the "unfair" judicial system and negative legal regulation.

Anadolu Kültür's "Project for developing integral social policies for Roma communities" (€111,943.90)

The project will initiate public sensitivity towards the cultures and problems of Roma communities, by improving dialogue among different segments (Roma communities, local authorities, local civil society organizations, educational organizations) and by contributing to the development of social policies applicable at the local and national levels by local authorities and all other interested local and national organs through keeping the issue on the agenda.

Annex II:

Overview of the measures announced in the Circular on seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their families, of March 2010

The following measures will be pursued to improve the living conditions of migrant agricultural workers and their families

1. **Housing:** employers or provincial administrations should establish shelters for migrant families, with adequate health conditions, basic infrastructure, utilities and social services.
2. **Education:** Regional Boarding Primary Education Schools should admit migrant workers' children, whose education is interrupted. In addition, mobile education facilities should be established, and migrant parents will receive a financial compensation if they send their children to school.
3. **Health:** the workers and their families will be subject to regular health check-ups against contagious and epidemic diseases; in addition, pregnancy and child development will be monitored periodically. If necessary, mobile health teams will be established for these services. The families and children of these workers will be briefed under the scope of social services, psychological support will be provided and they will benefit from the services and means provided by the State to disabled and elderly.
4. **Labour conditions:** compulsory certification of labour brokers in the agricultural sector will be introduced. Disputes relating to wages will be settled by the Monitoring Board for Seasonal Migrant Farm Workers.
5. **Transportation** between places receiving and sending migrants will be coordinated by relevant authorities to ensure safe travel for migrants.
6. **Upon the return of migrant workers,** literacy courses, socio-cultural activities and vocational courses for adults will be organized primarily for women and young girls.
7. **Monitoring:** the Turkish Employment Agency will monitor the prevalence of seasonal agricultural work and set-up a database for this purpose.