



The Hague Process  
on Refugees and Migration

**4TH EXPERT CONSULTATION FOR BUSINESS AND CITIES ON MIGRATION AND URBANISATION**

**Istanbul, Turkey**

(THURSDAY 4 October 2012)

SUMMARY

The topic of migration and refugees in the context of the Istanbul Metropolitan Area has a long history, is complex but also in need of more focused attention. THP's initiative to organise an Expert Consultation in cooperation with Bilgi University's Center for Migration Research provided a platform for a select group of representatives working in the field in the presence of international experts and representatives from the national and local government.

The event was an illustration of the state of migration and refugee policies in the Turkish context. Reflective of the situation in Turkey was the emphasis on refugee issues and the absence of domestic migrant organizations. Officials from the Ministry of the Interior (Department of Asylum Affairs) explained how timely the consultation was as preparations for a new legislation on asylum were ongoing. The draft law would open the way to Turkey meeting most of the requirements set by the EU short of the lifting of the geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention.

To get an international perspective on migration trends, and to consider these trends in the context of regional issues around migration, THP introduced international representatives who highlighted the connection between urban challenges on migration and refugees and the role of the business sector. Discussions explored a number of topics ranging from security considerations to perceptions, irregular migration and the labour market. Against the backdrop of an economy that for a significant part is informal, emphasis was put on the context of urban poverty and the need for protection.

Entry points for improved policies include basic services for people on the move and their families: housing, health and education. In practice, access to these services is too often insufficient or non-existent. The participants recognized the urgency of the situation and discussed ways to raise awareness and to engage key players in the field. The following insights guided the discussions:

1. There is a need for a commitment to a vision of urban space that includes migrants and refugees.
2. Creating a common vision to engage key stakeholders is a first step to bring about change.
3. A shift is possible from security perceptions to recognising responsibilities and opportunities in migration and refugee matters.
4. The private sector can be engaged from the vantage point of skilled labour.

The presence of IOM and UNHCR spokespersons highlighted existing efforts in the region to improve migration management and increase protection for people of concern. Locally, there are some

promising initiatives on the municipal level (e.g. Municipality of *Zeitinburnu*). However, discussions indicated the need for better collaboration between various levels of government and with the private sector as key stakeholders.

*For city authorities:*

- Connect with other municipalities (locally and internationally) to create alliances for knowledge exchange and to raise awareness of migration and refugee challenges;
- Invite private sector representatives to take up responsibilities and realize opportunities in migration management on the basis of a shared vision of the city's future.

*For businesses:*

- Promote policies that address skills shortages and that facilitate better matching of labour demand and supply;
- Take the ethical dimension of recruitment into account as exemplified by the Global Impact (against labour exploitation and trafficking)
- Raise awareness of the potential of migrants and refugees

The expert consultation concluded with a call to create a local group of committed actors to respond to the sense of urgency and to drive cross-linking forward. THP will help establishing this nucleus.