

Foreign Worker Recruitment Ban (November 23, 1973)

Abstract

On November 23, 1973, only a few months after the “wildcat strike” at the Ford plant in Cologne, Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Walter Arendt instructed the Federal Employment Office to stop recruiting foreign workers for the German labor market. Arendt justified the recruitment stop with reference to the oil price crisis triggered by the Yom Kippur War in October. However, the oil price crisis served more as a welcome occasion for the German government to turn long-standing political demands for a fundamental curbing of labor migration into reality. The debate about guest workers increasingly revolved around the question of how to stop further immigration and settlement, especially of immigrant family members. However, it is not least due to the recruitment stop that Germany did eventually officially acknowledge its status as a country of immigration in the early 2000s. Arendt’s directive ultimately led to many guest workers deciding to stay and have their families join them.

Source

— Copy —

5300 Bonn, November 23, 1973

P.O. Box

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The Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs

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Telex

To the

President of the Federal Employment Office

85 Nuremberg

Regensburger Str. 104

Subject: Foreign employees;

Here: Placement through the foreign offices of the Federal Employment Office

It cannot be ruled out that the current energy crisis will have an unfavorable impact on employment in the Federal Republic of Germany in the coming months. Under these circumstances, it is not justifiable at present to place further foreign employees for work in the Federal Republic through the foreign offices of the Federal Employment Office.

After approval by the Federal Cabinet, I would ask the foreign offices of the Federal Employment Office – with the exception of the German Commission in Italy – to instruct them, with reference to Article 19 (4) of the AFG, to immediately cease the placement of foreign employees. This measure remains in effect until revoked.

However, foreign employees who have already signed an employment contract abroad must still be issued with the legitimization card required for entry and employment. In this connection, I would ask you to inform me of the number of cases in which employment contracts have already been signed with foreign employees who are being prepared for their employment in the Federal Republic of Germany at the expense of domestic companies in their country of origin.

With regard to those foreign employees from countries where labor is recruited who wish to enter the Federal Republic of Germany with a visa, the decree of the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of 28 June 1973 – 513 – 540.30 – still applies.

Furthermore, I ask you to instruct your offices in Germany, when issuing new work permits for foreign employees pursuant to § 19 para. 1 sentence 2 AFG in conjunction with § 1 Work Permit Ordinance, to strictly examine whether a renewal of the work permit can be justified due to the situation and development of the labor market.

The planned measures are likely to potentially increase the risk of illegal employment. I would therefore ask you to instruct your domestic offices to make full use of the available measures.

I have asked the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs to instruct the German diplomatic representations to inform the governments of the recruitment states concerned in an appropriate manner of the temporary recruitment ban and to ask for their understanding. The social attachés at the embassies of the employees' countries of origin will be informed by us.

The Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs

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Arendt

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