

**OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against racism,
Xenophobia and Discrimination
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*Working Session 3: The roles of governments, parliaments, political parties,
and civil society in combating intolerance towards migrant workers*

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished participants of the Conference,

On 12 June 2001 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania passed the Law on the amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens (No. IX-372) which in most cases refer to the legal status of aliens coming to Lithuania in accordance with the Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States of the one part and the Republic of Lithuania of the other part, concluded on 12 June 1995 in Luxembourg. The aim of the Agreement is to ensure free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. Lithuania's preparedness for EU membership, harmonisation of Lithuania's legal acts with the EU acquis in the field of migration ushered in a new stage of immigration policy development. The Law and the supporting legislation laid down a possibility for the EU Member State nationals and their family members to receive permits of temporary residence in Lithuania in a shorter period, according to the accelerated procedure and for a longer period of stay. It should be noted that the procedure of employment of the EU Member State nationals and their family members has also been simplified. The EU Member State nationals and their family members who intend to work in Lithuania under employment contract are not required to obtain a work permit.

Currently, insignificant influx of immigrants has been noticed. The situation might change after May 1, 2004, when Lithuania officially became a member state of the European Union. Therefore, the issues concerning the protection of equal opportunities of immigrants and their antidiscrimination in labour force has been currently actualized.

The Law on Equal Opportunities adopted in 2003 stipulates that all kind of discrimination on racial, ethnic and other basis is prohibited in Lithuania. The Law foresees the appeal mechanism for discrimination actions. The Law on Equal Opportunities will come into force since January 1, 2005.

Seeking to implement more effectively the policy of combatting the intolerance and discrimination, the Republic of Lithuania is concerned about sharing and intercepting the experience of "old" European Union member states and also countries from the North America that has already been successfully working on the protection of equal opportunities of migrant workers.

Therefore, trainings, various seminars and also exchange programmes sharing and enhancing work experience with other foreign institutions would be of paramount importance for staff that directly work with migrant workers in the Republic of Lithuania.

In addition, it is also significant to establish consultation mechanism that could solve the problems related with the most vulnerable issues of migrant workers.

Finally, it is essential to guarantee the establishment of the information mechanism of "good practice" solving the issues of discrimination and intolerance.