



Visa Hotline Project Turkey & Free Movement of People



Purpose

The objective is to present the state of the art regarding the problems faced by Turkish citizens in obtaining visas; documents required and procedures applied, discretionary treatment and all other difficulties involved in obtaining visas and to report these to the authorities in charge in Turkey and at the EU level.

Target Group

Specifically:

Business world, academic circles, students

Generally:

Turkish public

Incoming Calls

	17 Nov. 2009 – 12 Jan. 2010 2 Phone Lines+E-mail	Jan. 2010 – June 2011 E-mail+Phone
Telephone	280	19
E-mail	332	154
Fax	236	12
Post	96	18
Total	944	203
Grand Total	1147	

Participants Profile -1 (Occupation)

	Number
Self-employed	348
Employed	237
Student	195 <i>Erasmus Student: 52</i>
Academic	141 <i>For EU Project: 31</i>
Housewife	61
Retired	39
Unemployed	21
Other (s)	26
N/A	79

Participants Profile -2 (Requested Visa Type)

<i>Calls according to the requested visa type</i>	Number
Tourist / Family Visit	445
Business	315
Education/Academic	237
Health	3
Family Reunification *	60
Residence / Work Permit *	3
N/A	84

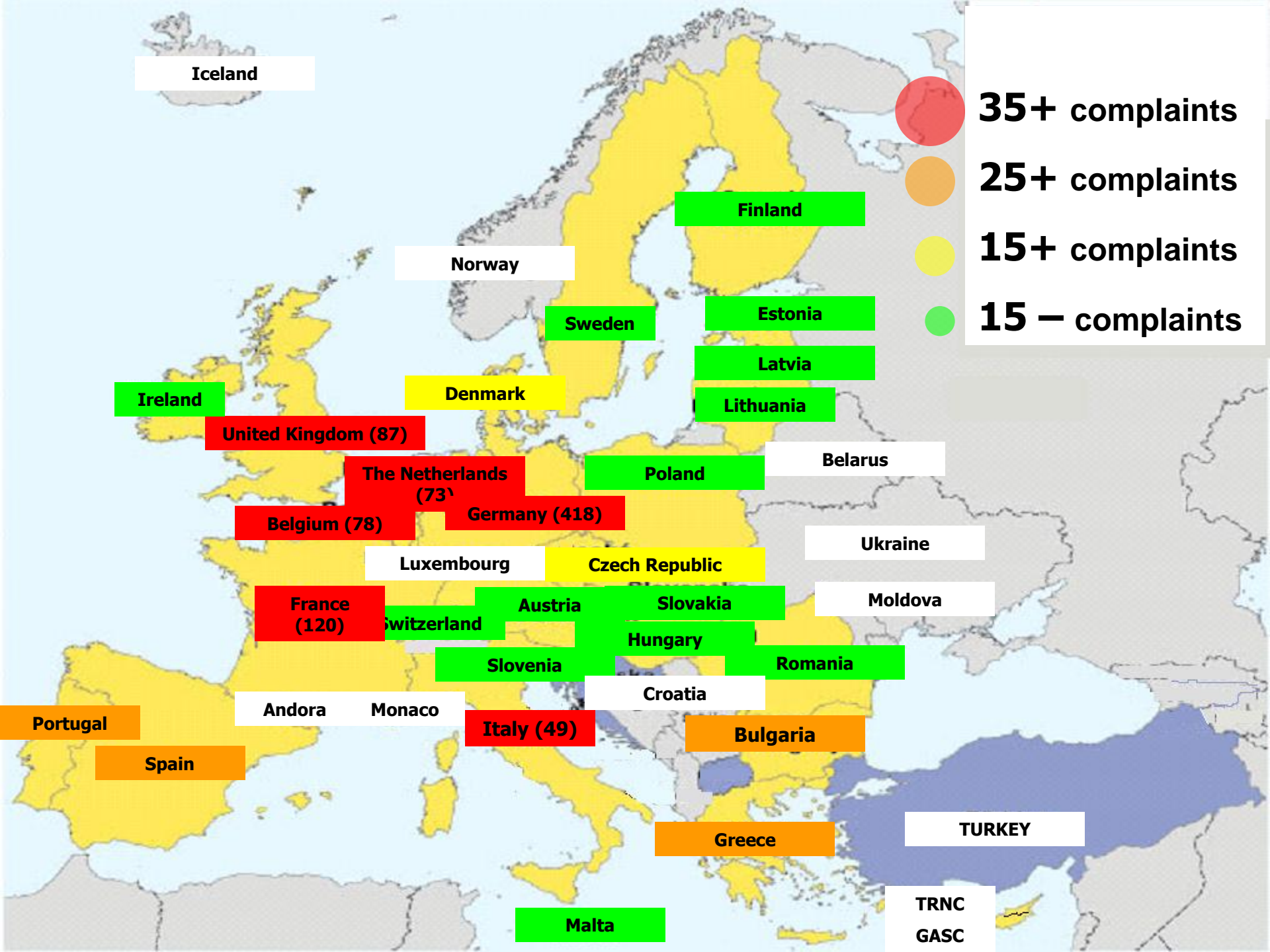
Participants Profile -3 (Result of Application)

<i>Calls according to the result of the application</i>	Number
Visa rejected (negative)	592
Visa obtained (positive)	328
Application in progress	82
N/A	143
Deported	2

Distribution of Calls

Overview (by EU Countries)

Germany	418	Bulgaria	28	Estonia	3
France	120	Portugal	27	Switzerland	2
United Kingdom	87	Denmark	14	Slovakia	2
Belgium	78	Czech Republic	13	Slovenia	2
The Netherlands	73	Romania	9	Ireland	2
Italy	49	Hungary	6	Finland	1
Austria	35	Sweden	6	Lithuania	1
Greece	31	Malta	4	General (Schengen)	47
Spain	30	Poland	3	N/A	56



Iceland

Norway

Finland

Sweden

Estonia

Latvia

Ireland

Denmark

Lithuania

United Kingdom (87)

The Netherlands (73)

Poland

Belarus

Belgium (78)

Germany (418)

Ukraine

Luxembourg

Czech Republic

Moldova

France (120)

Switzerland

Austria

Slovakia

Hungary

Slovenia

Romania

Portugal

Andorra

Monaco

Croatia

Italy (49)

Bulgaria

Spain

Greece

TURKEY

Malta

TRNC
GASC



35+ complaints



25+ complaints



15+ complaints



15- complaints

"The Consulate General of XXX refused an invitation letter, which I had submitted and requested the host university to send the letter directly to the Consulate."

**Academic, Istanbul
(EU Project Coordinator)**

*"Due to delays on my visa application, I had to start my exchange programme (*Erasmus) two months later than my friends".*

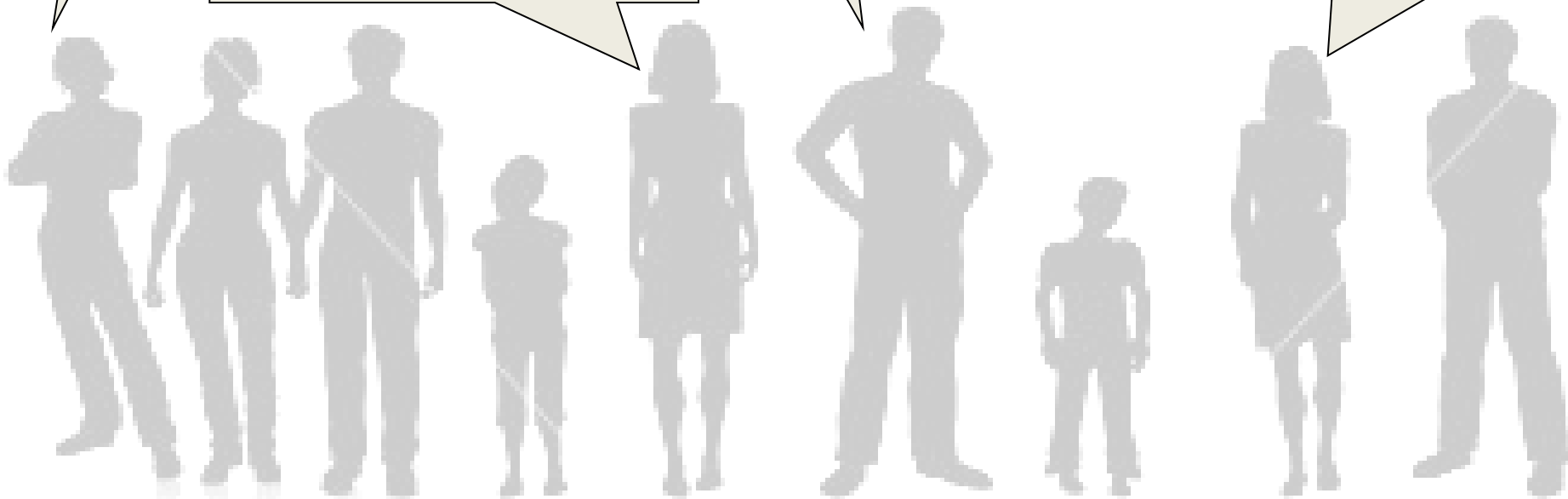
Student, Ankara

"As visa refusals can be annoying and lead to unnecessary costs, especially business people are demotivated to pursue business in Europe."

Businessman, İstanbul

*"As an Erasmus exchange student (*age: 24), the Consulate General of XXX requested a letter from a Turkish Bank stating that I have 2,500 Euros on my personal bank account".*

Student, İzmir



*"We are conducting an EU project with 14 partner institutions from Europe. Due to a minor delay on our visa requests, we missed the first 2 days (*of a 3-day-conference)"*

Academic, Izmir

I applied for a visa 3 weeks prior to the conference. I also specified the urgency to attend the conference. The Consulate gave me an appointment date, which was after the launch of the conference!

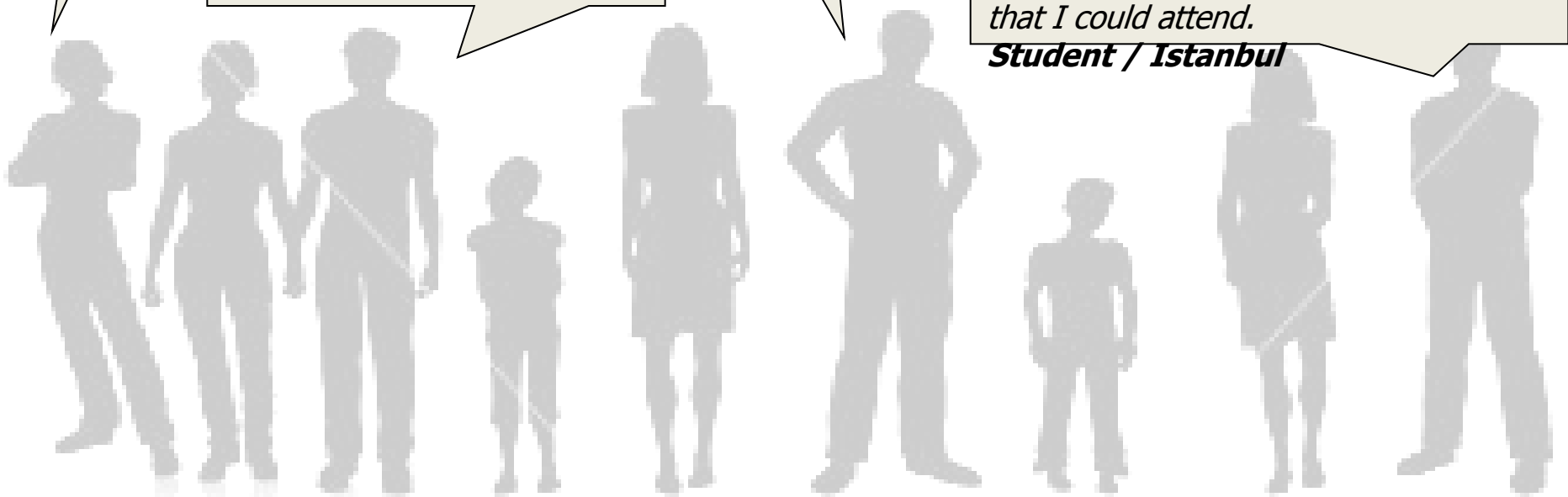
Architect / Istanbul

I am the coordinator of Leonardo Project in my school. I missed the closing conference of the project since my visa application was delayed in the Consulate.

Teacher / Bursa

I applied for a visa in order to participate in a 4 months language course. All the documents were complete. During the interview the Consular staff told me that I didn't need to go to XXX for this purpose. My application was turned down with a list of possible language courses in Turkey that I could attend.

Student / Istanbul



Current State of Play: Visa Hotline Project Turkey

Complaints received within the scope of the “Visa Hotline Project” can be classified in 8 main categories:

- 1- Refusal of the visa application / not stating any reasons for the rejection;
- 2- Quality / quantity of the documents required for the visa application;
- 3- Expenses (including fee for visa application / fee for intermediary agency etc.);
- 4- Treatment by the consular staff and physical environment / conditions of the consulates;
- 5- “Moral” / financial costs of the visa refusal / delays on visa;
- 6- Difference between requested and obtained visa;
- 7- General complaints;
- 8- Problems regarding family reunification.



Visa Hotline Project Results



Refusal of the visa application / not stating any reasons for the rejection or the reasons being unsatisfactory.

In 65% of the rejected visa applications, no reason was indicated. In case of an explanation, participants indicated that these were not satisfactory (“you are too young”; “your marriage is forged”; “you lack sufficient financial resources” etc.)

The quality and quantity of the documents requested for the visa application is a matter of concern:

- **Quantity of the documents requested for the visa application;** *(Minimum 20 documents are requested for a tourist visa; this number goes up when for the business/student visas)*
- **Content of the documents requested for visa application;** *(Secrecy and confidentiality of private and business life is violated; e.g. invitation letter, bank accounts, credit cards, company’s registration documents etc.)*
- **Extra documents requested for visa application and the cost/burden of these documents;** *(notarized approval, apostil, translation etc.)*
- **Problems regarding request of original documents;** *(no return)*

The visa fees paid to consulates / intermediary agencies (if applicable) and also “other costs” are an important matter of complaint:

Excessive visa fee; Service fee paid to intermediary agency for visa application; PIN code; Bank commissions; Costs related to the requested documents; Difference in visa fees requested by each consulate due to different exchange rates applied, other additional costs. No refund of the visa fee in case of refusal.

Visa Hotline Project Results



Differential and discretionary treatment by the consulate staff:

Communication problems with the Consular officials; problems regarding the appointment system; not being able to receive information before/after application; delayed appointments; mistreatment by the Consular officials; poor physical infrastructure in the waiting lounges.

The financial and psychological loss / costs regarding the visa refusal or delays on visa application:

Non-refunded costs due to delayed visa procedures or rejection; costs relating to the necessity of applying in person (travel/accommodation/interruption of work or school); additional charges (form fee, translation costs etc.); missed opportunities (business or academic meetings, seminars, fairs, courses, weddings, funerals, graduations etc.); problems regarding further travels during visa application.

Difference between the requested and obtained visa:

Duration related problems (usually short-term); visa type related problems (single/multiple entry).

Visas

- **Major Barrier in front of:**
 - Civil Society Dialogue
 - People to People Contacts (*esp. for Turkish students participating Erasmus programme and academics taking part in EU projects*).
- **'Europeanization' vs. Reactive/Emotional EU Opposition.**
- **Negative Impact on:**
 - Trade, Investment, Business Opportunities
 - Tourism/ Travel decisions
 - Benefiting from Exchange Programmes (ERASMUS)
- **Feelings of injustice and discrimination (*humiliation*).**
- **Breach of a fundamental right: Freedom of movement.**

Significance of Visa Hotline Project

- **Pioneering study;**
- First and foremost **civil initiative** in this area;
- **Human Dimension** with Real-Life Examples;
- **Raise awareness** both in Turkey and the EU;
- **Monitoring** process- Watchdog of the process;
- **Source of reference-** contact point.

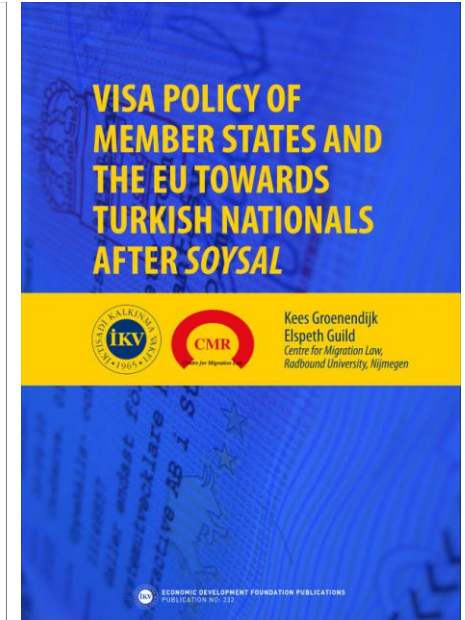
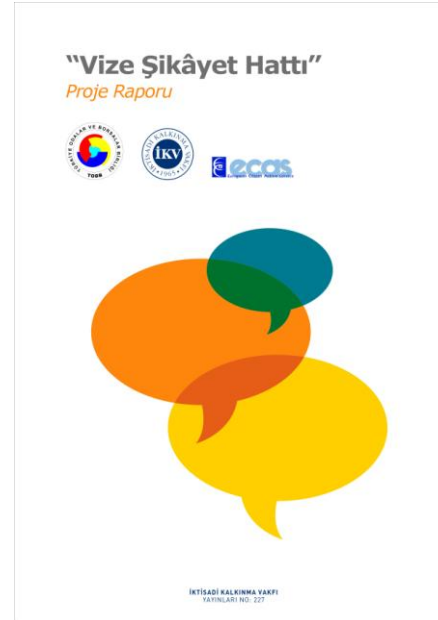


Current State of Play

- **Uncertainty**
- **EC-Turkey Readmission Agreement**
- **Major reforms underway** (biometric passports, border control, migration and asylum law etc.)
- **Unlike W.Balkans no clear roadmap:**
 - Application of the Visa Code
 - Visa Facilitation
 - Visa Liberalisation
- **Technical Criteria vs. Political Will**



Visa Hotline Project Outputs



- * Visa Hotline Project, Preliminary Survey Report (Turkish)
- * Visa Hotline Project, Background Paper (Turkish & English)
- * Visa Hotline Project, Final Report (Turkish & English)
- * Visa Policy of Member States and the EU Towards Turkish Nationals After Soysal (English)

All the publications are available at www.ikv.org.tr