



A Project of the Migration Policy Institute

THE GERMANY-TURKEY MIGRATION CORRIDOR

REFITTING POLICIES FOR A TRANSNATIONAL AGE

By Yaşar Aydın

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February 2016

Acknowledgments

This research was commissioned by the Transatlantic Council on Migration, an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), for its twelfth plenary meeting, held in Lisbon. The meeting's theme was "Rethinking Emigration: A Lost Generation or a New Era of Mobility?" and this report was among those that informed the Council's discussions.

The Council is a unique deliberative body that examines vital policy issues and informs migration policymaking processes in North America and Europe. The Council's work is generously supported by the following foundations and governments: Open Society Foundations, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Luso-American Development Foundation, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

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Cover Design: Danielle Tinker, MPI
Typesetting: Liz Heimann, MPI

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Suggested citation: Aydın, Yaşar. 2016. *The Germany-Turkey Migration Corridor: Refitting Policies for a Transnational Age*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.



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Executive Summary

Migration flows of nationals between Germany and Turkey have become much more circular in recent years, with immigration from Germany to Turkey now outpacing flows in the opposite direction. When large-scale migration between the two countries began in the 1960s, it was predominantly in one direction: Turkish labor migrants moving to West Germany. While these flows were initially intended to be temporary, many former guest workers stayed in Germany, and were later joined by their families. Following political upheaval in Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s, established Turkish communities in Germany were joined by asylum seekers and political refugees. Up to 200,000 Turks then returned home in the mid-1980s, encouraged by the *Foreigners Repatriation Incentives Law of 1983*; the German administration covered returnees' relocation costs and made any accrued social benefits (including pensions) fully portable.

In recent years the nature of movements along the Germany-Turkey corridor has evolved.¹ Immigration of Turkish nationals from Turkey to Germany has steadily declined since the 1980s in part due to rising economic prospects in Turkey—with the only exceptions being Turkish students seeking out tertiary-level education in Germany and intracompany transferees. Immigration through family reunification channels has fallen by three-quarters since 2000; asylum applications dropped from nearly 9,000 in 2000 to just 1,800 in 2014. Meanwhile the smaller flows of Turkish migrants entering Germany are increasingly higher skilled than earlier movements dominated by guest workers. The number of Turkish immigrants in Germany remain high, though; nearly 3 million current and former Turkish citizens resided, 1.5 million of them retaining Turkish citizenship.²

In recent years the nature of movements along the Germany-Turkey corridor has evolved.

Whereas earlier waves of Turkish migration from the 1970s often led to permanent residence, data and surveys suggest that patterns of migration along this corridor have been much more temporary and circular since the early 2000s. In addition to students and highly skilled workers moving in both directions, retirees are traveling between the two countries on a seasonal basis. Of those migrants traveling from Germany to Turkey—whether for a short stay or permanent move—some are of Turkish descent. Many Turks living in Germany maintain strong ties to their homeland, and may choose to travel between the two countries to visit family and friends. Meanwhile, Turkey has become a major transit or destination country for increasing numbers of irregular migrants and refugees from the Middle East (including Syria) and Africa, some of whom will travel onward to Europe and specifically Germany.

These developments raise a number of challenges for policymakers in both countries. Turkey must adapt to its new identity as a destination for immigrants and refugees, and develop national- and local-level integration policies to assist newcomers. It has established a new directorate for managing migration and introduced new legal frameworks to better protect migrants' rights. It must also continue to liberalize its formal legal permanent immigration policy—currently restricted to those of Turkish descent—and its asylum procedures. Meanwhile, Turkey has adapted to better accommodate the needs of its sizeable diaspora: a dedicated Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities was established in 2010. Diaspora relations have been aided by a shift—modeled by the ruling elite—from a more secular, ethnically homogenous, Kemalist identity toward a much more pluralistic, multicultural identity with Islamic

1 The focus of this report is on the migration of Turkish nationals to and from Germany, not on the recent transmigration of Syrians, other asylum seekers, and economic migrants through Turkey to Europe.

2 Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund - Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus, Fachserie 1 Reihe 2.2 - 2014* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014), www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/Migrationshintergrund.html.



undertones but that is more ethnically inclusive. These stronger ties with Islam, however, risk alienating some members of the Turkish diaspora in Germany. On Germany's part, removing visa requirements for Turkish nationals—even if just for particular groups such as entrepreneurs—would be an important step in facilitating the circulation of skills between the two countries. German policymakers must also dedicate more efforts to successfully integrating Turkish-origin populations in Germany while accepting that these populations will maintain ties with their country of origin.

Too often, German policymakers view Turkish diaspora members' links with their country of origin as somehow subversive—a perception that is aided by Turkey's attempts to encourage its overseas nationals to maintain their ties to Turkey and its culture. But the advantages of German-Turkish circular mobility—and of a growing population with dual Turkish-German identities—are numerous, and should be encouraged by both countries. Increased circulation can aid integration attempts in both countries, encourage bilateral cooperation in a variety of fields, and help stem skills shortages in both countries' workforces.

The advantages of German-Turkish circular mobility—and of a growing population with dual Turkish-German identities—are numerous.

Examining migration along the Germany-Turkey corridor provides a number of important lessons for nations experiencing renewed migration, whether to or from their shores. It demonstrates that states cannot fully control or even steer migration movements, which fluctuate and result in new types of migration and new transnational communities. It also shows the perils of paying insufficient attention to integration issues: the costs of integration measures are far outstripped by longer-term friction, and the social, economic, and political costs suffered amid poorly integrated migrant communities. Crucially, this report indicates how transnational ties might offer a way to facilitate the integration of migrants.

I. Introduction

Germany and Turkey share a long-standing migration history that predates the signing of a formal labor recruitment agreement in 1961. Yet the “guest workers” recruited at that time composed the first large-scale flows from Turkey to Germany, paving the way for the greater numbers of migrants to come. In German media and on the political stage, migration from Turkey has been the subject of much controversy and debate. Some European policymakers, for example, have expressed concern that migration inflows would grow if Turkey were to accede to the European Union (EU).³ More recently, concerns have arisen about “brain drain”—specifically, the loss of skilled workers with a migrant background—as, since 2006, the number of migrants leaving Germany for Turkey has outnumbered those entering.⁴

3 “Unlike previous waves of enlargement in which periods of adjustment were established, permanent mechanisms were considered to control the additional migratory fluxes of Turkish workers expected after accession to the EU.” See Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 198. See for example *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, “Türkei-Beitritt: Pro und Contra,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, October 6, 2004, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/europaeische-union-tuerkei-beitritt-pro-und-contra-1194259.html; Jacques Schuster and Roger Köppel, “Zehn Gründe gegen den EU-Beitritt der Türkei,” *Die Welt*, September 24, 2004, www.welt.de/print-welt/article342468/Zehn-Gruende-gegen-den-EU-Beitritt-der-Tuerkei.html.

4 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), *Migrationsbericht 2014* (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2016), www.bamf.de/Shared-Docs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.



Migration of nationals along the Germany-Turkey corridor still occurs in both directions, however, and cannot be defined by just one type of movement. Today's Turkish and German migrants travel well-trodden paths between the two countries, and include highly qualified Turks who move from Germany to Turkey or come to Germany for short-term stays through intracompany transfers, as well as German retirees spending their holidays in Turkey.

This report describes how German-Turkish migration has developed over recent decades; examines the economic, social, and political factors behind this development; and discusses the policy implications and lessons that can be drawn. Who is moving, and why? How have the labor market, German immigration policy, and Turkish diaspora policy affected (or been affected by) migration movements between the two countries? What could both countries do to take better advantage of the unique resources of this transnational population?

The case study begins with an overview of the Germany-Turkey migration corridor and its main economic and sociopolitical factors, and then highlights the continuity as well as discontinuity of this long-standing migration. It then looks forward, into the future of German-Turkish migration, and concludes by drawing several policy lessons that may also apply elsewhere in the world.

II. Current Immigration and Emigration Trends

A. The Historical Context of Migration between Turkey and Germany

As early as the 19th century, German officers of high rank, military advisers, and entrepreneurs and other merchants migrated to the Ottoman Empire, especially to the capital, Istanbul. Meanwhile, the Ottoman government sent young officers and trainees to the German Empire. But immigration along the Turkey-Germany corridor became substantial only after a bilateral labor recruitment agreement (*Anwerbeabkommen*) between West Germany and Turkey was signed in 1961.⁵

The initial flow of labor from Turkey to Germany that followed this agreement benefited both countries. In Germany, recruitment of foreign workers was an important tool to satisfy unmet labor demand in the midst of the postwar economic boom (*Wirtschaftswunder*). Recruitment was also considered a form of development aid to Turkey, meant to stabilize the country (a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO) socially as well as politically by releasing the pressure generated by high unemployment rates.⁶ German society, meanwhile, became culturally more diverse and pluralistic. For its part, the Turkish government sought not only to relieve labor market pressures but hoped that Turkish labor migrants would, after some years working in Germany, return with new professional skills and knowledge that would reduce Turkish industry shortages.⁷ The Turkish economy benefited from

5 Other agreements were also signed with Italy, Spain, and Greece in 1955, and later with Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968). There was no labor recruitment agreement between Turkey and East Germany (Deutsche Demokratische Republik), or any migration, except that of a few political migrants with ties to the illegal Communist Party of Turkey.

6 Sabri Sayarı, "Migration Policies of Sending Countries," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 485 (1986), 87–97. See also Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).

7 As stated by Sabri Sayarı: "Turkish policy makers sought to use labor migration abroad to fulfill several objectives such as reducing unemployment and increasing the volume of foreign-exchange reserves through remittances." See Sayarı, "Migration Policies of Sending Countries." In the short term, however, emigration undermined this goal. The departure of "guest workers" to Germany deprived the Turkish economy of a significant portion of its skilled workforce. According to Nermin Abadan-Unat, during the years 1961 to 1973 an estimated "17 percent of Turkey's skilled labor went abroad." See Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe*, 35.



the remittances sent by labor migrants to family members left behind, and from the consumption and investment of workers upon their return, whether for holidays or permanent residence.⁸ Furthermore, Turkish emigration set off a process of modernization in family roles, gender relations, and lifestyles in emigrants' home regions.

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Between 1961 and the present the number of Turkish nationals living in Germany grew from a few thousand to 1.5 million; the vast majority later returned to Turkey, while the rest stayed in Germany.⁹ Post-World War II migration between the two countries occurred in roughly six waves, each with distinct characteristics:

- **1961 to 1973, labor recruitment.** The first emigrants from Turkey to Germany in the postwar period were contracted workers ("guest workers") recruited by Germany's Central Recruitment Office (*Anwerbebüros der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*). While short-term contracts predominated, requirements that all migration be circular or temporary were eventually abandoned due to criticism from German industry representatives and employers.¹⁰
- **1973 to the 1980s, family reunification and irregular migration.**¹¹ After the halt of foreign labor recruitment in 1973 amid worsening economic conditions in Germany, many Turkish workers chose to remain in Germany, and their partners and children joined them. Besides the family members of Turkish emigrants, Germany also became a destination for irregular migrants from Turkey, who entered illegally or overstayed tourist visas, and in some cases worked in the informal sector. Some of these irregular immigrants gained legal status through either asylum application or marriage.
- **1980s, asylum seekers and refugees.** During the late 1970s political turmoil in Turkey encouraged many Turks to seek refuge in Germany; a 1980 military coup intensified this politically driven migration. Among those seeking asylum were political actors and highly qualified persons who—in most cases—were prevented from entering the labor market due to unrecognized qualifications or a lack of legal status.¹² Politicization gave fuel to the fragmentation of the Turkish community in Germany in social, political, and even in cultural terms.¹³ The Turkish state reacted by encouraging all Turks in Germany to maintain

8 From 1975 to 1985 remittances regularly totaled between 2.6 percent and 3.3 percent of Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP). See Ahmet İcduygu, *SOPEMI Report for TURKEY: Period from 2002 to the Early 2003*, (Istanbul: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Continuous Reporting System on Migration [SOPEMI], 2013), www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/work/models/SEGOB/CEM/PDF/Biblioteca_D/86.Turkey2003.pdf, 34.

9 BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2014*.

10 Interstate labor agreements between Turkey and Germany, and later between Turkey and other European countries, were based on the principle of rotation, which was soon abandoned for two reasons. First, employers wanted to retain workers who had become accustomed to their work. Second, in countries such as Germany it was legally impossible to prevent family reunion and chain settlement. Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe*, 12; Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 100.

11 However, irregular migration continued at some level during the 1980s and 1990s.

12 In most cases the process of application for asylum status took a relatively long time, during which applicants were not allowed to work. This situation drove many asylum seekers—especially the young—to work in undocumented, 3-D (dirty, dangerous, and demanding) jobs. See Bundesagentur für Arbeit/Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung, "Arbeitsmarktzugang für Asylbewerber/innen, Geduldete und Flüchtlinge" (powerpoint, Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung, November 2013), 9–12, <http://azf2.de/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/Schmitz-ZAV.pdf>. The access to the labor market is regulated by the enactment *Verordnung über die Beschäftigung von Ausländerinnen und Ausländer (BeschV)*, § 31, 32, 33, 34.

13 Ibrahim Sirkeci, *The Environment of Insecurity in Turkey and the Emigration of Turkish Kurds to Germany* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).



identification with the Turkish state and culture. Institutions such as the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), a branch of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Ankara, were established in Germany at this time.

- **1983 to 1985, return migration.** In 1983 the governing coalition in Germany introduced the *Foreigners Repatriation Incentives Law* (*Gesetz zur Förderung der Rückkehrbereitschaft von Ausländern*) to encourage the return of immigrant workers and their families to their countries of origin. The new policy was in part a response to rising unemployment, growing rates of family reunification, and increasing evidence of challenges to the effective integration of the immigrant population. Policymakers hoped that by incentivizing return, they would ease the integration of those who remained.¹⁴ The law offered unemployed foreign nationals who had worked in Germany for at least two years 10,500 DM to fund their return home, and a further 1,500 DM for each family member. Returnees also got their pension contributions back. As a consequence of these incentives, approximately 250,000 Turks returned to Turkey.¹⁵
- **1990s, second refugee wave.** Armed conflict between the Kurdish rebel organization PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in Turkey and the Turkish government throughout the 1990s led many Kurds to seek refuge and political asylum in Germany. In the 1990s the Kurdish diaspora in Germany became clearly visible in social, economic, and political terms, and the political activities of Kurds and their organizations peaked. This development led to tensions between ethnic Kurds and Turks in Germany, and further contributed to the social and political fragmentation of the Turkish diaspora.¹⁶
- **2000s, circular migration.** Since 2000 the circulation of Turkish retirees between Germany and Turkey on a seasonal basis has become increasingly common. German retirees also favor Turkey as a holiday destination.¹⁷ Another type of migration has attracted interest in the German media: the emigration of highly skilled Turks from Germany to Turkey. Exact data on the share of the highly skilled among emigrants from Germany to Turkey are scarce since the German government does not keep records on emigrants' educational attainment or profession. However, several studies suggest that better-qualified and highly skilled persons of Turkish origin in Germany are internationally more mobile and inclined to move to Turkey than less-qualified and low-skilled persons.¹⁸

To summarize, migration between Germany and Turkey has been highly diverse, consisting of several different flows, including labor migrants, family members of earlier emigrants, students, asylum seekers, and (more recently) returnees and transnational travelers. For Turkey, both emigration and immigration have become integral parts of deep-rooted state policies concerning nation-building and national integrity, and (more recently) economic development and modernization.

14 Douglas B. Klusmeyer and Demetrios G. Papademetriou, *Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

15 It is estimated that, due to this law, the Turkish population in Germany fell by approximately 5.4 percent in 1984 alone, as nearly 250,000 Turks returned to Turkey. See Abadan-Unat *Turks in Europe*, 22.

16 Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: Turks and Kurds in Germany* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

17 In 2008, 9,909 German citizens received residence permits for jobs (1,044), education (337), or other reasons (8,528). It is assumed that these people are German without a Turkish migration background, since naturalized Turks get a blue card (*mavi kart*) from the Turkish state, which allows them to reside and work in Turkey without a residence or working permit. In 2008, 22,827 German citizens were in possession of properties/estates in Turkey. Most are presumably German retirees who spend time on the Turkish Mediterranean coasts. See Ahmet İçduygu, Sema Erder, and Ömer Faruk Gençkaya, *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-devlet Oluşumundan Ulus-Ötesi Dönüşümlere* (Istanbul: MiReKoç, 2014), 226, 230.

18 See Stefan Alscher, Tatjana Baraulina, and Bettina Müller, "Exodus' oder Normalität? Annäherung an Umfang und Struktur türkeistämmiger Abwanderung," in *Abwanderung von Türkeistämmigen Wer verlässt Deutschland und warum?* eds. Stefan Alscher and Axel Kreienbrink (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2014), 86–159, 101, www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Beitragsreihe/beitrag-band-6-abwanderung-tuerkeistaemmiger.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.



B. The Turkish Diaspora in Germany

The worldwide Turkish diaspora is large, and has been built up over decades through the migration of students and workers to the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. In 2010, according to the Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 3.7 million Turkish citizens lived outside Turkey, which had a population of 73.7 million: approximately 3 million in Western Europe and 0.7 million on other continents.¹⁹ Adding in those with a Turkish background brings the estimated worldwide Turkish diaspora to more than 5 million.

The Turkish diaspora in Germany is large and well established. As of the 2014 microcensus, nearly 3 million people with a Turkish migration background²⁰ resided in Germany.²¹ Approximately half were Turkish citizens, and 500,000 were born in Germany. Of those with German citizenship, approximately 14 percent were dual citizens.²² According the Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 777,904 Turkish citizens acquired German citizenship between 1972 and 2009.²³

The Turkish diaspora is highly diverse in social, economic, cultural, and political terms. It includes a number of ethnic and religious minority groups, such as Kurds and Alevis, each of which has a distinct cultural identity (according to some estimates, as much as one-third of the Turkish population in Germany may be Kurdish, and many of these are also Alevis).²⁴ Print media and migrant associations play an important part in diaspora engagement, both in Germany and in Turkey: the Turkish media transmit information between the two countries, while migrant associations mediate between Turks and Germans, government, and institutions. Turkish migrant associations also articulate the social, political, and economic interests of the diaspora and seek to influence the political agendas of both countries. They act as partners of the German federal government and of the German *Länder*, or states in addressing issues related to integration. Today, most Turkish migrant associations in Germany are transnationally oriented, meaning that they are driven by and respond to political circumstances and events in both countries.²⁵

The Turkish diaspora is highly diverse in social, economic, cultural, and political terms.

Turkish citizens abroad were granted the right to vote in Turkish elections as of 2012, increasing the political importance of the diaspora for the Turkish government and political parties. According to the Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey, in the 2014 Turkish presidential election nearly 2.8 million Turkish citizens living abroad were entitled to vote. A little over half a million went to the polls.²⁶ In Germany, 112,705 of the 1.38 million persons eligible to vote did so. Sixty-eight percent of diaspora members' votes were cast for now-President Recep Erdoğan. While participation in this initial election was low—partly due to complicated registration procedures, remoteness of polling stations, and the scheduling of the

19 Ahmet Icduygu, "Turkey and International Migration 2012-13," report prepared for meeting of the OECD Expert Group on Migration, Paris, November 2013, https://mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/sites/mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/files/FINAL_OECDMigrationRTurkey2012-13.pdf

20 The term "migration background" (which is widely used in German migration statistics) is reserved for individuals not born in Germany, foreign nationals (even if born in Germany), or those with at least one parent not born in Germany. See Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund*.

21 Ibid.

22 See BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2014*.

23 Ministry of Labor and Social Security, "Digital Information about our Citizens Abroad."

24 Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics*.

25 Yaşar Aydın, *The New Turkish Diaspora Policy: Its Aims, Their Limits and the Challenges for Associations of People of Turkish Origin and Decision-makers in Germany* (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2014), www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2014_RP10_adn.pdf.

26 Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (YSK), "Voting Abroad Results in Presidential Election," Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey, 2015, www.ysk.gov.tr.

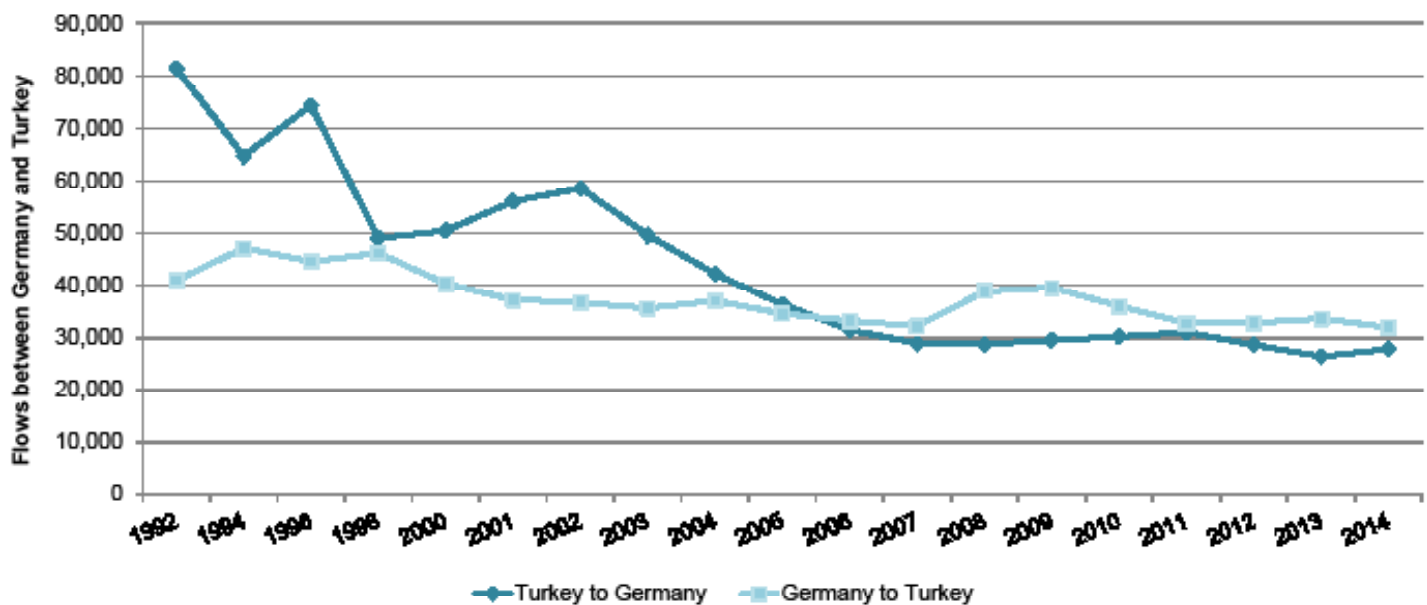


elections during summer holidays—it is likely that the Turkish diaspora will remain an important element in Turkish politics, particularly if these practical issues are addressed in future elections.

C. Recent Trends in German-Turkish Migration

In the past decade, what had been a constant flow of emigration from Turkey to Germany transformed into negative net migration in that direction. This change was the result of a decrease in emigration from Turkey to Germany, and the continuation of migration flows from Germany to Turkey at a more-or-less constant rate. Administrative data from the German Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, or BAMF), based on local registration,²⁷ provide information on both the destination country and nationality of those leaving, as well as the country of last residence and nationality of those entering.²⁸ Each year between 2006 and 2012 more people moved from Germany to Turkey than in the opposite direction (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual Migration Flows between Germany and Turkey, All Nationalities, 1992-2012



Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), *Migrationsbericht 2014* (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2016), www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

The reasons driving migration from Turkey to Germany have also shifted, as Figure 2 demonstrates. While immigration after the halt of official recruitment in 1973 was dominated by family reunification, immigration for family reasons recently decreased, falling from 25,068 in 2002 to 6,355 in 2012.²⁹ Asylum flows from Turkey to Germany have also declined, likely due to stricter asylum laws in Germany and more

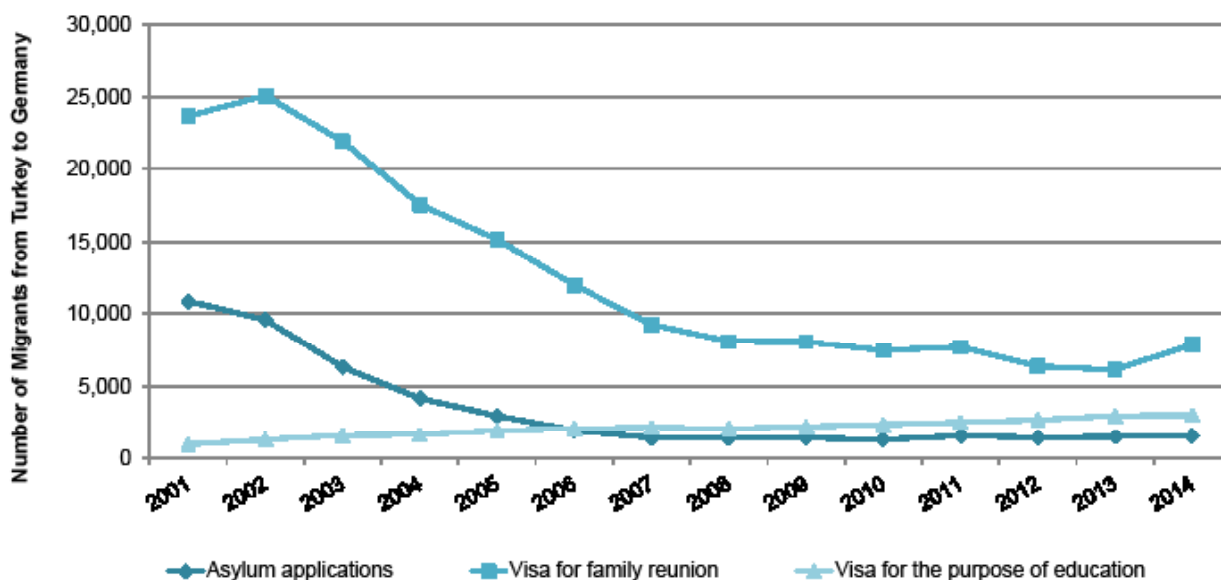
²⁷ It is not possible, however, to distinguish the reason for leaving or the duration of intended stay outside of Germany. See BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2014*.

²⁸ BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2012* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Publikationen/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2012.html?nn=2006704; Statistisches Bundesamt, “Wanderungen,” accessed February 6, 2016, www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Qualitaetsberichte/Bevoelkerung/Einfuehrung.html

²⁹ This decline in family migration has been primarily driven by two factors: (1) a new German migration law (adopted in July 2004) that complicated entry conditions even for the purpose of family (re-)union—it required a basic knowledge of German, among other things; and (2) the decline of family migration from Turkey to Germany points to the changing marriage practices of Turks in Germany. It can even be suggested that the second development plays a more important role in the decline, because a significant decrease in the number of family reunification visas started even before the migration law came into effect in 2005.

stable political conditions in Turkey in the past decade.³⁰ In 2002, 9,575 Turkish citizens applied for asylum in Germany; in 2012 this number was just 1,457.

Figure 2. Annual Flows from Turkey to Germany, by Visa Type or Status, 2000-14



Source: BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2014*.

The only category of migration of nationals from Turkey to Germany that has increased steadily is that of students (although family reunification rose again in 2014). The number of Turkish citizens who received temporary visas for study in Germany increased from 1,310 in 2002 to 2,997 in 2014 (see Figure 2). Student migration is not, of course, a unidirectional movement; students also travel from Germany to Turkey, often for short-term programs. Short-term migration by students can often be the first step of a longer process, as many students try to stay in the host country after graduation.

Recently, more attention has been paid to migration from Germany to Turkey, in part due to rising concerns that it will result in a shortage of skilled workers.³¹ While emigration to Turkey from Germany did rise slightly between 2008 and 2009 (likely due to worsened economic conditions in Germany), it has since returned to prerecession levels, and the data do not support the narrative of a large-scale return of Turkish-origin residents to Turkey (see Figure 1).

30 The asylum application process in Germany became more difficult after the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) was reformed in 1993 to limit the right to asylum to individuals who had not previously transited through another safe country on their way to Germany.

31 Media interest in emigration from Germany to Turkey became particularly high in the late 2000s, as negative net migration became a noticeable trend. In particular, the results of a survey of highly educated Turkish-origin individuals released by the Futureorg Institute in 2009 generated substantial media attention. The study found that more than one-third of those surveyed intended at some point to emigrate to Turkey. See Kamuran Sezer and Nilgün Dağlar, *Die Identifikation der TASD mit Deutschland: Abwanderungsphänomen der TASD beschreiben und verstehen* (Dortmund: Futureorg Institute, 2009), tasd.futureorg.de/pdf/drei.pdf. See, for example: Freia Peters, "Warum gut gebildete Türken Deutschland verlassen," *Die Welt*, October 30, 2010, www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article10636913/Warum-gut-gebildete-Tuerken-Deutschland-verlassen.html; Daniel Von Steinvorth, "Kulturschock in Istanbul," *Der Spiegel*, June 28, 2010, www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-71123434.html; Lars Geiges, "Ausbildung in Deutschland, Karriere in der Türkei," *Die Zeit*, April 18, 2011, www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2011-04/deutschland-akademiker-abwanderung. See also Andreas Ette and Lenore Sauer, *Abschied vom Einwanderungsland Deutschland? Die Migration Hochqualifizierter im europäischen und internationalen Vergleich* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung), 15, www.bib-demografie.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/DE/BuchInfo/Et_Sa_Paperinfo.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3; Herbert Brückner, "Deutschland leidet unter einem Brain Drain," *Wirtschaftsdienst*, vol. 90, no. 3 (2010), <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10273-010-1049-x>.



According to 2014 administrative data, Turkish citizens leaving Germany were most likely to have resided in the country for either under four years or more than 30 years, with each category accounting for 30 percent of emigrants—suggesting that many emigrants were either retirees or short-term visitors (such as business travelers or students).³² Turkish returnees were slightly older than other emigrants: 15 percent of those leaving Germany on average were over the age of 50 in 2012, while 27 percent of Turks were 50 or older.³³ A recent BAMF study also suggests that many of those leaving are either short-term residents or retirees; most had been in Germany for under six years. Furthermore, individuals who had entered Germany on a study or work visa were the most likely to leave (in 2012 one-fifth of emigrants on these visas returned to Turkey), and relatively few emigrants had been born or raised in Germany.³⁴

In media and public discourse, migration from Germany to Turkey is often blamed on discrimination, social exclusion, or a lack of identification with German society.

While many recent discussions in the media narrowly focus on the migration of Turkish-origin individuals from Germany to Turkey, this reverse migration should not be assumed to be a permanent return but instead seen within the context of circular migration between Turkey and Germany. In 2012, for example, 28,641 individuals entered Germany from Turkey, while only 6,355 Turkish citizens received visas for family reunification, 2,670 received visas for study, and 1,457 applied for asylum in Germany (see Figure 2). Therefore, about 18,000 Turkish citizens may have entered Germany without a visa. As Turkish nationals are typically required to have a visa to enter Germany, one explanation for this difference is that these individuals were not entering Germany for the first time, and may have been in the possession of German citizenship or a residence permit.

These figures point to the existence of a circular movement between Germany and Turkey, rather than large-scale “return migration” to Turkey.³⁵

In media and public discourse, migration from Germany to Turkey is often blamed on discrimination, social exclusion, or a lack of identification with German society. One common argument is that Islamophobia (which evidence suggests has been on the rise in Germany, particularly since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, later in London and Madrid, and more recently in Paris)³⁶ has prompted Turks to leave Germany—yet data on emigration trends from 2001 to 2014 do not prove this, as Figure 1 shows. The empirical

32 BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2014*.

33 Statistisches Bundesamt, *Wanderungen: Fachserie 1 Reihe 1.2—2012* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013), www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/Wanderungen/Wanderungen2010120127005.xls;jsessionid=C0021A6F24CA0FC438CBCD7FF04EC559.cae4?_blob=publicationFile.

34 BAMF, *Abwanderung von Türkeistämmigen: Wer verlässt Deutschland und warum?* (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2014), www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Beitragsreihe/beitrag-band-6-abwanderung-tuerkeistaemmiger.html.

35 Further studies also point to changes in German-Turkish migration patterns in the direction of temporary, circular migration. See for example Alscher, Baraulina, and Bettina, “‘Exodus’ oder Normalität? Annäherung an Umfang und Struktur türkeistämmiger Abwanderung,” 142, 145.

36 In an opinion poll, 57.5 percent of the interviewees (recruited by random sample method) agreed with the statement that the Islamic world was backward and ignorant of reality and 56.3 percent were of the opinion that Islam is an archaic religion, unable to meet the requirements of modernity. Regarding Islamophobia in Germany, see Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, and Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte im Umbruch: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2012* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013), 92. Islamophobia reached a new dimension recently with creation of the antimigration, right-wing, anti-Islamic political movement called Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, or PEGIDA). Founded in October 2014 after violent clashes between groups assumed to be Salafists and PKK sympathizers, PEGIDA has been able to mobilize thousands of people every Monday in the East German city of Dresden. Support for the political party AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*, or Alternative for Germany), another antiimmigration, populist political organization with anti-Islamic tendencies, is also rising. Media coverage of the Islamic State (IS) and the killing of the employees of the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* by two Islamist terrorists gave further fuel to Islamophobia in Germany.



evidence is also inconclusive on the effects of other forms of discrimination on emigration trends.³⁷ There are indeed several surveys indicating that Turks in Germany face discrimination, especially in the labor and housing markets as well as in the education system. However, no strong evidence suggesting that people who face greater levels of discrimination are more inclined to emigrate from Germany.³⁸

What, then, is driving emigration from Germany to Turkey? What social, economic, and political factors can be identified behind this development? And why do some highly skilled Turks prefer to live and work in Turkey although they did or could do as well in Germany?

D. Why Move? The Case of Highly Qualified Turks

Why do German Turks—who were born and grew up in Germany, are well-educated, highly skilled, and integrated into the society—choose to return to the country of their parents or grandparents? What prompts them to migrate to Turkey?

This section draws on empirical research carried out in summer 2011 in Turkey. The research aimed to identify major motivations for migration among highly qualified emigrants from Germany. Thirty-six persons were interviewed; of these 12 were thinking of moving to Turkey and 24 had already done so. All interviewees were of working age (between 28 and 55). The majority (18) held dual citizenship (German and Turkish), eight held only German citizenship, ten held Turkish citizenship, and most had migrated at least once before their move to Turkey. They were bi- or multilingual, and most were highly mobile and could imagine migrating once again.

Among the interviewees, four main motivations to migrate were identified:

- **Migration for job-related reasons.** Although all of the interviewees were or had been employed in Germany, they wanted to move—or had already moved—to Turkey for job-related reasons. Of those living in Turkey, some had found a job before their arrival, while others had waited to look for work until they were in Turkey. Most had been well informed about job vacancies in Turkey even while in Germany. Integration into the Turkish labor market was decisive for those choosing to stay in Turkey; those who couldn't find employment said they were likely to return to Germany. Most made use of relatives, friends, social media, or informal meetings to find work. Prejudice, differences in work culture, and differences about gender roles were the main barriers they cited to remaining in Turkey.
- **Culture, identity, and belonging.** Several interviewees suggested that culture, identity, and belonging were strong impulses for migration decisions. One woman who opted to live and work in Turkey explained that she did so because she defined herself primarily as a Turk, and that she felt close to Turkish culture. She called her emigration a move “back to the roots.”

Several interviewees were attracted by the cultural plurality and diversity of lifestyles in major Turkish cities. However, it must be stressed that even those who traced their migration decision to cultural or identity-based reasons moved after getting a job or promising prospects of one. It is therefore to be assumed that cultural belonging and identity guided migration of the interviewees, in addition to the prospect of a job.

37 See Yaşar Aydın, *Transnational statt nicht integriert: Abwanderung türkeistämmiger Hochqualifizierter aus Deutschland* (Konstanz & München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013), 50.

38 These arguments are based on several outdated assumptions. First, migration is still understood as a one-way movement, but this overlooks return movements and transnational circular migration. Second, they focus only on push factors in emigration countries and ignore the pull factors in immigration countries. Third, some scholars still imagine migrants to be victims of societal structures and politics that drive them to move. Migration is not only an outcome of politics and social structures, it requires the conscious decision of subjects.



- **The role of family.** Some emigrants had followed their partners or were married in Turkey; others wanted to live near parents who had migrated earlier to Turkey. For example, a specialist in German studies who worked in a German institute in Istanbul at the time of the interview, said that she would probably have moved to South America after finishing her degree had she not married a Turk. Her husband, who had come to Germany for graduate school, would have found it difficult to pursue his professional goals in Germany because he completed his education in Turkey and was not fluent in German. In most cases, family relations were secondary to other reasons for moving.
- **Education and research.** Turkey attracts researchers working on Turkey-related topics, and students from across Europe and from Germany in particular. Most are drawn to Turkish cities, especially the metropolitan city of Istanbul, described by one interviewee as a “treasure” for its rich culture, multifarious traditions, and variety of lifestyles. Meanwhile, the number of universities in Turkey has more than doubled between 2001 and 2011.

In most cases, there was no single reason for moving, but rather several motivations acted on together. Although these empirical results are not representative they point out the variety of motivations for emigration of highly skilled German Turks.

III. Drivers of Change: Diverse Factors in German-Turkish Migration

The circulation of people between Turkey and Germany today is driven by a variety of developments in immigration policy, public opinion, and economic and labor market conditions in both countries. This section analyzes the effects of these changes.

A. The Impact of Public Opinion, Immigration Policy, and Domestic Reforms in Germany

In addition to tighter controls at EU borders, sluggish economic conditions early in the decade likely contributed to a reduction in Turkish immigration flows to Germany throughout the 2000s. Unemployment in Germany, for example, exceeded 10 percent between 2004 and 2006 (well above rates in other key EU economies).³⁹ Although German employment rates have regained strength relative to the country’s neighbors (in 2013 the German employment rate was 10 points higher than the EU average),⁴⁰ broader economic conditions in Germany—and in the European Union as a whole—were highly volatile throughout the decade. Germany’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate, for example, ranged from less than 1 percent in 2003 and 2005 to more than 3 percent in 2006 and 2007, falling again below zero in 2009,⁴¹ and wage growth was weak.⁴²

39 In Sweden, for example, unemployment rates over the same period remained close to 7.5 percent, and in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands stayed below 6.0 percent. Unemployment in France was slightly higher, at close to 9.0 percent. See Eurostat, “Unemployment Rate by Sex and Age Groups—Annual Average, %,” [une_rt_a], updated November 6, 2014, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database.

40 Eurostat, “Employment (Main Characteristics and Rates)—Annual Averages [lfsi_emp_a],” http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database.

41 Eurostat, “Real GDP Growth Rate—Volume,” updated July 21, 2014, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>.

42 See Karl Brenke and Markus M. Grabka, “Schwache Lohnentwicklung im letzten Jahrzehnt,” *DIW—Wochenbericht* 45 (2011): 3–16, www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.388567.de/11-45-1.pdf.



Public opinion on immigration, particularly originating from predominantly Muslim countries, also worsened in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Although there is no clear correlation between the post-2001 rise of Islamophobia and Turkish emigration patterns to Germany, public debate on migrants and immigration has become more critical of the perceived reluctance of immigrants to integrate into German society. These developments may be making Germany less attractive both for potential immigrants and those already residing in the country. The increased requirements for family migration enacted in 2005 likely also contributed to a decrease in immigration from Turkey.

The threat of losing valuable workers—and the highly skilled in particular—has recently softened German public opinion on immigration.⁴³ Current surveys show that most Germans favor more extensive recruitment of skilled workers from abroad.⁴⁴ This is also reflected in changes to migration policy. Since the green card initiative of then-chancellor Gerhard Schröder in 2000 and the immigration reforms that took effect in 2005, the requirements for migrants to gain entry to the labor market have been comprehensively revised. The annual salary required for a residence and work permit for high-skilled workers, for example, was reduced from 66,000 euros to 49,600 euros (for shortage occupations in the fields of mathematics, informatics, natural sciences, engineering, and medicine, the requirement is 38,688 euros).⁴⁵ Foreign students now are allowed 18 months residence in Germany after graduation to search for a job. Current German immigration policy has two objectives: maintaining the entry of semi- and low-skilled migrants at lower levels than once were the norm, and facilitating the entry, residence, and employment permits of highly skilled workers and their families.⁴⁶

*The threat of losing valuable workers—and the highly skilled
in particular—has recently softened German public opinion on
immigration.*

Several other policy developments in recent years have acted to facilitate circulation between Germany and Turkey. Recent reforms of the citizenship law guarantee German citizenship for children born in Germany to lawful German residents. The reforms have also eased the naturalization process, leading to an increase in the number of naturalized Turks in Germany, although the takeup remained below expectations. While dual citizenship is not generally allowed for individuals who obtain German citizenship through naturalization, individuals who give up their Turkish citizenship may apply for a blue card (*mavi kart*) from Turkey. This entitles the holder to permanent residence and work authorization in Turkey, along with most of the rights given to citizens (except for voting rights and compulsory military service). Access to the rights granted by the *mavi kart* may, therefore, somewhat lower the costs of obtaining German citizenship for Turkish residents. For these reasons, naturalization does not inhibit circular migration.

43 This is also reflected in the interest of established parties. See, for example, the parliamentary request of the Greens (*Zuzug von Hochqualifizierten erleichtern*, Drs. 16/5116, 2007) or the Free Democratic Party (*Zuwanderung durch ein Punktesystem steuern—Fachkräftemangel wirksam bekämpfen*, Drs. 16/8492, 2008), which also submitted a larger request two years earlier (*Konsequenzen der Auswanderung Hochqualifizierter aus Deutschland*, Drs. 16/3210, 2006).

44 See, as an example, “Deutsche heißen ausländische Fachkräfte willkommen,” *Der Spiegel*, August 8, 2012, www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/umfrage-deutsche-wollen-zuzug-auslaendischer-fachkraefte-a-848870.html.

45 See Auswärtiges Amt, “Lernen und Arbeiten,” last updated January 15, 2016, www.auswaertiges-amt.de/sid_8DF1E-84BE9287A4414CA2EBC775C8E69/DE/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/LernenUndArbeiten/ArbeiteninD_node.html.

46 See Thorsten Jäger, “Deutschland macht dicht! Das 2. Änderungsgesetz zum Zuwanderungsgesetz,” Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2007, <http://heimatkunde.boell.de/2007/03/18/deutschland-macht-dicht-das-2-aenderungsgesetz-zum-zuwanderungsgesetz>.



Furthermore, the conditions for residence have been eased; migrants with permanent residence permits, for example, are now allowed to stay outside Germany for more than six months without facing the risk of losing their residence status. These changes, together with the citizenship law reforms, have made it easier for German Turks to travel between Germany and Turkey, as they face far fewer barriers to returning to Germany.

Globalization has also made travel between the two countries easier; flight options have increased and technology has made it easier to access information on visas and other information necessary to plan travel and residence abroad.

B. Integration Policies: A Need to Modernize?

Despite Germany's increased openness to immigration—and the resulting increase in the circulation of skilled individuals—integration policies have not quite kept up. During the initial period of labor recruitment, both the German and Turkish governments regarded labor migration from Turkey to Germany as a temporary phenomenon. Turkish guest workers were expected to return to Turkey after a couple of years; integration into German society was therefore not a priority. During this time, and especially after the start of family migration, the German government supported the home-country orientation of Turkish immigrants and welcomed their efforts to maintain ties to Turkey, their cultivation of Turkish culture and customs, and their efforts to preserve use of their national language—a position that changed significantly once it became clear many workers would not be returning home.⁴⁷

Current German integration policies focus on immigrants' economic, sociopolitical, and cultural integration. Transnational ties are not seen as a priority or a resource; rather, many policymakers see them as undermining integration.

Turkish migrant associations have not traditionally been viewed as partners in the political engagement of Turkish communities in Germany; that perception, reflected in mainstream German political debates and media, is only just changing. These associations have been traditionally seen as “extraterritorial expansions” of Turkey, and feared to be controlled by the Turkish government.⁴⁸ Such fears stem from the close ties of some of these organizations to the Turkish government or to the Kurdish movement in Turkey, and concerns that social, political, and cultural conflicts would be imported from Turkey to Germany. Only recently have German policymakers sought to provide (security-based) cooperation in the fight against “Islamic extremism,” as well as integration services and social support. Recently, there has also been interest in engaging migrant organizations in supporting development in the country of origin.⁴⁹

C. The Impact of Economic, Policy, and Political Developments in Turkey

In Turkey deep social, economic, and political transformations have played a role in making the country more attractive to return or circular migrants from Germany. The past decade was characterized by high growth rates, a remarkable increase in GDP per capita, a drop in unemployment rates, and a decrease

47 For example, some German states even established separate schools for migrant children with instruction in Turkish, in order to facilitate their reintegration upon return to Turkey. See Simon Green, *The Politics of Exclusion: Institutions and Immigration Policy in Contemporary Germany* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004).

48 For example, a rally convened by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Berlin ahead of the Turkish presidential elections generated significant controversy in May 2014; see Stefan Wagstyl and Daniel Dombey, “German politicians attack Erdogan plan for pre-election rally in Cologne,” *Financial Times*, May 19, 2014, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/c1ff024a-df64-11e3-86a4-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3j05H5LEv; Aydın, *The New Turkish Diaspora Policy*, 20.

49 BAMF released a study in 2012 exploring the potential for greater cooperation with migrant organizations in country-of-origin development. See Marianne Haase and Bettina Müller, *Entwicklungspolitisch engagierte Migrantenorganisationen: Potenziale für die Integration in Deutschland?* (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2012), www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb14-migrantenorganisationen.html?nn=1840754.



in poverty and social inequality.⁵⁰ The Turkish economy further underwent economic liberalization and greater integration into the world market, which is reflected by the increase of the share of foreign trade compared with GDP, a rise in foreign direct investment, and increased interest by many international companies in expanding their presence in Turkey—leading to higher demand for a highly qualified and skilled workforce. Europeans with a Turkish background and with a knowledge of European languages and work cultures are uniquely placed to fill this demand.

In Turkey deep social, economic, and political transformations have played a role in making the country more attractive to return or circular migrants.

Turkey's liberal labor market, which is characterized by a high degree of informality, has also attracted irregular migration into Turkey. Recent policy changes, meanwhile, have eased entry into Turkey for the nationals of many countries, for instance, by lifting the visa requirements for travelers from nearby countries such as Azerbaijan, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Russia, Syria, and the Ukraine.⁵¹ Due to the accession negotiations with the European Union, there is also growing pressure to adopt policies that recognize Turkey's own ethnic and cultural diversity and harmonize national migration policy with that of European policies.

In addition to new immigration, returning emigrants and their families are also beginning to receive attention from Turkish policymakers. The Turkish government launched a task force to prevent brain drain—together with experts from the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) the Atomic Energy Authority, and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). No developed institutions exist, however, to help highly qualified or other immigrants come to terms with living and working conditions in Turkey, or to encourage their social, political, and labor market integration.

The AKP government has actively tried to harmonize Turkish immigration and asylum regulations with EU regulations, resulting in several major changes to Turkish immigration laws in recent years. The two most important changes are:

- **Law and Foreigners and International Protection (2013):** This law (no. 6458) introduced landmark reforms to create a modern, efficient, and fair migration management system in line with core international and European standards. More specifically, the law established a new authority responsible for regulating migration (the General Directorate for Migration Management), introduced procedures for dealing with irregular migration, created a legal framework for providing international protection, and for the first time, allowed for the development of an integration policy. The law maintains the geographical limitation for refugees/asylum seekers, however, restricting refugee status to refugees from Europe. It also does not provide integration or naturalization options for refugees.
- **General Directorate for Migration Management (2013):** This new institution regulates entry, stay, and exit from Turkey, and provides for the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum

50 For relevant statistical data, see Statista, "Statistiken zur Türkei," accessed February 18, 2016, <http://de.statista.com/the-men/1282/tuerkei/>. See also Seyfettin Gürsel, "The AKP Decade: An Economic Success Story?" Al Jazeera Magazine, July 16, 2013, www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm_docs/docs/observatoire-turquie/17072013-the-akp-decade-an-economic-success-story.pdf.

51 İçduygu, Erder, and Gençkaya, *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları*, 230–34; Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish Migration Policies: A Critical Historical Retrospective," *Perceptions* vol. 28, no. 3 (2013): 167–90, <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Ahmet-%C4%B0%C3%A7duygu-and-Damla-B.-Aksel.pdf>.



Box 1. Patterns of Immigration into Turkey

Turkey has long been a transit point for migrants making their way to Europe, a regional destination for immigrants, and a host for populations displaced from neighboring countries. In the 1950s Turkey transitioned into a migrant-sending country: students were the first to leave Turkey, often in the direction of the United States; later the state began to promote mass labor migration to Europe, especially Germany. After Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, Turkey became a corridor for transit migration and a host country for asylum seekers. Among refugee groups were Bulgarian Turks escaping the assimilation pressure of the Bulgarian government in the 1980s, and Iraqi Kurds fleeing Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in the 1990s. And today, the country is host to a huge population of Syrians who have fled their war-torn country. There have also been irregular migration flows from the formerly Communist states of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc. After an economic crisis in Turkey in 2001, Turkey became a country of destination for retirees and highly qualified labor migrants from Europe, especially from Germany.

Together, these economic and policy changes have led Turkey to attract four different categories of immigrant groups:

- **Irregular labor migrants.** A significant number of irregular migrants come from the former Soviet republics either illegally or with a tourist visa, and then overstay. Many fill jobs for which it is difficult to recruit natives—in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and services.
- **Transit migrants.** Migrants from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and various African states cross Turkey in transit to Europe. Although there are no clear figures, it is estimated on the basis of data collected by Turkish security forces that 100,000 migrants passed through Turkey annually en route to European destinations during 2000-05. In the second half of the decade, this number was estimated to be around 50,000.
- **Asylum seekers and refugees.** While Turkey has long been a destination for refugees fleeing conflicts in the region, the ongoing civil war in Syria and recurring violence in Iraq have led to unprecedented refugee flows over the past several years. Currently, Turkey hosts more than 2.6 million Syrian refugees, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- **Regular migrants.** Regular migrants and their family members arrive not only, but especially from neighboring countries in Turkey for employment, education, settlement, or long-term residence and recreational purposes.

The Turkish government has also recently instituted several policies to create a more managed migration system. In 2013 a new Law on Foreigners and International Protection introduced landmark reforms to bring the Turkish migration system in line with European and international standards. In conjunction with this law, a new General Directorate of Migration Management was created to regulate the entry, stay, and exit of migrants and Turkish nationals, and to coordinate relevant agencies and organizations (in Turkey and overseas) that deal with each stage of the migration cycle and provide protection from human trafficking.

Sources: Sema Erder and Selmin Kaska, "Turkey in the New Migration Era: Migrants between Regularity and Irregularity," in *Turkey, Migration and the EU: Potentials, Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2012), 113–32; Ahmet Çıdıcı, Selma Erder, and Ömer Faruk Genckaya, *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-devlet Olusumundan Ulus-ötesi Donusumler* (Istanbul: MiReKoc, 2014), 235; Cavidan Soykan, "The New Draft Law on Foreigners and International Protection in Turkey," *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 2, No. 2 (2012): 38–47, 44–55, <http://oxmofm.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Cavidan-FINAL.pdf>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Syria Regional Refugee Response," accessed February 17, 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.



seekers. The migration directorate is responsible for developing policies and strategies for the management of migration movements. It also coordinates relevant agencies and organizations (in Turkey and overseas) to ensure continuing cooperation at each stage of the migration cycle, and provides protection for human-trafficking victims.

Meanwhile, Turkey has recently changed its transnational policy toward Turks abroad. First of all, the Turkish government changed its terminology, and started to refer to the Turkish presence abroad as the Turkish *diaspora*. This represents acknowledgment of the permanent status of Turks living abroad in other, mostly European, countries. In the past, Turkish governments did not even use the term “migrant,” instead preferring the term “expatriate,” because they expected that Turkish migrants would eventually return to Turkey. Now, Turkish communities in Germany and elsewhere are acknowledged to be permanent fixtures.

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities was created in 2010 to strengthen connections with the Turkish diaspora. According to its former chairman, Kemal Yurtnaç, the “presidency aims to carry out this duty with a wide range of activities ranging from offering the required services to citizens and kin and related communities living abroad to international scholarship programs offered by Turkey.”⁵² The presidency has four main areas of focus:

- **Turkish citizens abroad.** The presidency aims to explore opportunities for cooperation with Turkish citizens abroad, developing relevant strategies, and coordinating activities with Turks and their associations.
- **Kin and related communities.** This priority entails cooperation with Muslims in the Balkans who have historically shared the geography and “culture” of the Turks.
- **International students.** The presidency supports students of Turkish origin and Muslim students from the Turkic republics and the Balkan states for studies in Turkey.
- **Nongovernmental organizations.** The presidency assists organizations of Turks abroad in developing their organizational capacity and helps them intensifying their relations with Turkey.

It is worth highlighting that this new Turkish diaspora policy is in line with a foreign policy that has shifted from a pro-Western focus on security to becoming a more multidimensional, proactive presence in the region, deeply involved in conflict resolution. Crucially, this foreign policy highlights the multiple identities of Turkey, stemming from the country’s geographical position, history, and religions. This again means greater recognition for ethnic (Kurdish) or religious (Alevi, Christian, etc.) minorities in Turkey.

Turkey’s diaspora policy is also associated with two further developments. First is the evolution of the Turkish labor community in Germany into a transnational diaspora with considerable economic potential and political influence. It is essential for the Turkish government to strengthen ties with this diaspora in social, political, and economic terms. Members of the diaspora constitute human, economic, and social capital that can be used to intensify economic relations and trade between Turkey and Germany, and to open up new investment opportunities. The Turkish diaspora in Germany is important to the Turkish government for political reasons, too, because of its degree of organization and the social influence that it has now acquired. Second, the recent policy is associated with Turkey’s new administration, which in large part replaced the views of Kemalist, secular elites with a new discourse⁵³ on modernity and a

52 See Ministry of Interior, Government of Turkey, “Directorate General of Migration Management,” accessed February 18, 2016, www.goc.gov.tr/main/Eng_3.

53 The changeover of power was accompanied and legitimized by a critique of Turkish modernity that was interpreted as Westernization. The critique was grounded in the idea of “multiple modernity” and a new discourse that indicated geopolitical ambitions and was labeled “neo-Ottoman.” See Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001), 563.



vision of the Turkish nation centered on Islam. A striving toward ethnic homogeneity (that is, Turkish nationalism) is being supplanted by an acknowledgment of Turkey's cultural plurality.

Turkey's new Muslim nationalism may make its diaspora policy more palatable to Sunni Muslim immigrants in Germany since it does not rest on race, ethnicity, or language—as earlier Kemalist views of Turkish identity did—but mainly on a collective identity that focuses on a Turkic-Ottoman past and Islam.⁵⁴ The conservative focus on social morality is potentially problematic, though, in that it might alienate (ethnically) non-Turkish, non-Sunni Muslim, liberal, left-wing, and secular sections of the Turkish diaspora in Germany. Meanwhile, some German policymakers may still be uneasy about the transnational ties between Turkish migrants and their homeland. Old tensions have not been helped by the inflammatory rhetoric of some Turkish policymakers about German politicians.⁵⁵

IV. Policy Lessons and Recommendations

Recent trends in Germany are promising, with most German policymakers now recognizing that Germany is a country of immigration. The permanent migration inflows of the past 60 years have transformed Germany into a more pluralistic society that is home to diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles. German politics and institutions have been forced to adapt their immigration and integration policies accordingly.

The continuing circulation of people between Germany and Turkey has provided and will continue to provide many social, cultural, and economic benefits for both countries.

Turkey is also facing rapidly evolving migration trends, resulting in a number of paradigmatic shifts in its international migration policies since the early 20th century. Nation-building concerns dominated development, emigration, and immigration policies during the first half of that century. But by midcentury the policy focus had shifted to capitalizing on the potential economic gains from emigration flows to Europe. Emigration was seen as a tool for reducing unemployment, obtaining remittances, and acquiring skills. The perspective again changed after the 1980s, when Turkey became a key destination for immigrants from various national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

The continuing circulation of people between Germany and Turkey has provided and will continue to provide many social, cultural, and economic benefits for both countries. Brain exchange can help reduce skill shortages in the labor markets of both countries. And greater mobility can foster German-Turkish cooperation in a number of different areas such as trade, the sciences, humanities, culture, and

54 This Muslim nationalism delineates differences between Muslim and non-Muslim identities; at the same time, it strengthens intragroup solidarity and devotion to state. The emphasis on the “common historical heritage” in the context of a neo-Ottoman discourse strengthens ties with Muslim neighbors and other “related Communities” authority. See Jenny White, *Müslüman Milliyetçiliği ve Yeni Türkiye* [Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 24, 271.

55 See, for example, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech in Cologne in 2008 and later in other German cities on subjects such as assimilation and the rights of Turks in Germany, which led to criticism from the German media and politics; *Die Welt*, “Erdoğan's Rede erzürnt deutsche Politiker,” *Die Welt*, February 28, 2011, www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article12665248/Erdogans-Rede-erzuernt-deutsche-Politiker.html. For another example, see Thomas Seibert, “Türkei zweifelt an Unparteilichkeit des Münchener Gerichts,” *Tagesspiegel*, March 23, 2013, www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/nsu-prozess-tuerkei-zweifelt-an-unparteilichkeit-des-muenchener-gerichts/8002672.html.



the media. Policymakers could better capitalize on these benefits by taking into account the following considerations.

1. Recognize the Benefits of Transnational Ties

In order to fully capture the benefits of mobility between the two countries, German policymakers should recognize that Turkish migrants—with their transnational communication lines and relations to Turkey, and their biculturalism and bilingualism—function as a bridge between Germany and Turkey. The German government should recognize that Turkish migrants in Germany have close ties to Turkey and most of them wish to maintain a Turkish cultural identity.

2. Capitalize on the Interplay Between Turkish Diaspora Policy and German Integration Policy

As migration further increases and deepens the transnational interdependencies between Germany and Turkey, it will become more difficult to have a clear-cut distinction between foreign and internal policy. German policymakers must take into account the external consequences of their integration policy toward Turks in Germany; they also have to consider the internal consequences of their foreign policy toward Turkey. New Turkish diaspora policies encourage Turks abroad to take further steps to integrate themselves into the host society to benefit from educational opportunities, participate in politics, and support Turkey in its aim of joining the European Union. Therefore, the relationship between German integration policy and the integration needs of Turkish migrants on the one hand, and the new Turkish diaspora policy on the other, is a complementary one.

3. Continue Liberalizing Immigration and Asylum Regulations in Turkey

Turkey must also continue to harmonize its immigration and asylum regulations with those of the European Union. The government should continue the recent shift toward more liberal immigration and asylum guidelines. The *Settlement Law of November 2006* made important changes that further opened migration policies; however it continues to limit legal permanent immigration to Turkey only to individuals and groups of “Turkish descent and culture.” This is unsuitable for the country’s contemporary requirements; Turkey needs to open up formal immigration and implement integration policies and programs for increasingly diverse groups.

4. Encourage the Circularity of Skilled Workers

What were once primary reasons for migrants to move from Turkey to Germany—such as for family reunification and political asylum—have declined in importance for the last decade or so and are likely to continue doing so. Meanwhile, the migration of people in other categories, such as students, commuters, and temporary high-skilled workers, continues to rise. Both countries should develop measures and programs to respond to and encourage these movements. Current visa requirements are the main obstacles to the circulation of highly skilled workers from Turkey. The German government should seriously consider an intermediate step of lifting visa requirements for certain groups such as entrepreneurs and scientists.

Turkey, meanwhile, should establish local-level institutions to encourage and support circular migration, especially of the highly skilled. Institutions such as welcome centers, antidiscrimination agencies, and centers for recognition of foreign qualifications would help newcomers to navigate bureaucratic requirements and aid their successful integration into the Turkish labor market and society. Integration policy is not yet on the national political agenda, though Turkey has become an immigrant-receiving country, thanks to its aging population and its growing workforce. A coherent migration policy and integration strategy, in line with current conditions, are therefore needed.



5. Develop a More Inclusive Collective Identity

Particularly as both countries face unprecedented pressures on their immigration and humanitarian protection systems, there is a need to reassess collective national identities that have not always been open to newcomers. In Germany, this will require continuing the process of becoming more open to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in a society increasingly defined by immigration, as well as resisting a shift towards nativism. In Turkey, the recent immigration reforms and rising inflows provide an opportunity to develop a more civic, territory-based national identity, which would help to cope not only with internal Kurdish migrants in megacities in Western Turkey, but also with international migrants who will stay permanently in Turkey in significant numbers.

For both countries, developing inclusive identities will help further transnational ties, making it easier to capitalize on the benefits that can accrue from the circulation of people, ideas, and skills along the Germany-Turkey migration corridor.

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