



TURKEY

MIGRATION POTENTIAL TO THE UK IN THE CONTEXT OF EU ACCESSION: BACKGROUND

Franck Düvell

Summary

Turkey once was a major sending country of migrants but now rather is a receiving and transit country. There are up to 3.7 million ethnic Turks in the EU. Of these, 1.3 million hold EU passports and 200,000-240,000 reside in the UK. Annual emigration to Europe has dropped significantly to below 50,000 plus circa 7,000 asylum applications. For around four years, however, net migration between Turkey and the EU has been negative, with more people emigrate from the EU to Turkey than vice versa. In Turkey there are 1.3 million foreign-born residents and 18,000 refugees. Travel to and from Turkey has almost doubled since 2001 to 27 million arrivals and departures each, of which one third are Turkish citizens.

The UK has never been a prime destination for Turkish migrants. In 2009, 178,000 Turkish nationals were given leave to enter; whilst 1.8 million passengers from the UK to Turkey were recorded only 98,000 passengers from Turkey to the UK were recorded. Turkey is undergoing a demographic transition; its population will grow from 75 to 90 million, begin ageing around 2025 and start decreasing after 2050. Turkey's economy is constantly growing. Between 2000 and 2008 GDP rose by 80 percent and rose by a further 6 percent in 2010. The employment rate is 46 percent and unemployment is around 15 percent.

Facts

Migration to and from Turkey¹

- Until the 1990s, Turkey was commonly referred to as an emigration country, primarily of labour migrants and their families and secondly of refugees migrating to the EU. Since 2007, however, the migration balance between Turkey and the EU has been negative. For example, since 2006, more Turks migrate from Germany to Turkey annually than vice versa, 27,200 versus 35,400 in 2009 (BAMF 2010). Returnees are often highly-skilled (Deutsche Welle 2011). Emigration from Turkey dropped from the mid-1990s to present day to below 50,000. Also the characteristics of migrants changed, labour migrants are now overwhelmingly highly skilled; one third of this number is family related migration. Labour migration to the EU largely ceased in the 1970s and 1980s. Currently, most Turkish contract labour migrants (59,000 in 2009), usually highly skilled, are in the CIS, Middle East/North Africa and Gulf countries. Forced migration has also dropped significantly to annually around 7,000 asylum applications in the EU (UNHCR 2009).
- In Europe there are around 3.7 million Turks (ICT 2004), the largest single immigrant group in the EU. Of this number, 2,481 million are Turkish passport holders and 1,271 million are EU passport holders. Of the Turkish passport holders 146,000 are refugees in the EU (UNHCR 2010). Turkish nationals are to be distinguished by ethnic Turks, Kurds and some ethnic Arabs. They are religiously diverse. Sunni represent the largest group, and Alevis are the largest minority. Another religious minority are the Yazidi.
- Turkey is also an immigration country. In 2000, the date of the latest census, there were 1,278,671 foreign-born residents in Turkey, of which about one quarter were from EU countries (State Institute of Statistics 2003). In 2009, there were 205,000 regular and irregular immigrants (Icduygu 2010).

Turkey receives increasing numbers of migrants and refugees. Labour migrants mostly come from Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. From 1997 to 2008, 69,600 people applied for asylum. In January 2010, there were 10,350 refugees, 5,987 asylum seekers and 2,739 stateless persons. The majority comes from other countries in the Middle East, such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran (all data from Icduygu and Yüксеk 2011, UNHCR 2010).

¹ Turkish migration statistics are of a notoriously low quality and figures are often contradictory.

Moreover, Turkey has become a popular destination for European retirees, in particularly from the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia.

Irregular migration to Turkey has dropped to 34,000 apprehensions in 2009, one third of the peak in 2000.

- Finally, Turkey is a prominent stepping stone for transit migrants from more distant countries. Between 1995 and 2009, 794,937 irregular immigrants were apprehended (IOM 2010). In 2010, around 43,000 migrants and refugees transited Turkey and were apprehended in Greece (Frontex). Transit migration is to some extent driven by (a) Turkey's geographic reservation to its refuge law, only European refugees are recognised, and (b) the absence of immigrant or refugee integration policies.

Migration between Turkey and the UK

- According to the 2001 census, there are 61,000 ethnic Turks and Kurds in the UK, 33,000 of which are Turkish passport holders. Data kept on local level suggest far higher numbers; instead, 200,000-240,000 Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot people could be residing in the UK. Thus Turks in the UK represent 1.9-6.5 percent of the EU total.
- On average 84,576 visa applications were filed annually from 2005-2009, 3.5 percent of all applications in 2009; of all applications 92.3 percent were approved. Of the 178,000 Turkish nationals given leave to enter in 2009, 66,300 were returnees after temporary absence abroad, 64,700 were visitors, 28,300 were business visitors, 9,755 were tier 4 students plus dependents, 1,145 came for employment and 945 for family purposes (Home Office/RDS).

In 2009, 98,000 passengers from Turkey arrived in the UK, a decrease of almost 50 percent from 2006 (151,000). Of these, 27.5 percent visited friends and family, 27.5 percent came for holiday, 32.5 percent came for business and 13 per cent for miscellaneous reasons. The average stay was 14 nights, Turkish visitors' spending per day is as high as spending of EU-27 visitors (£68/day); this demonstrates that they behave like the average European visitor. In the same year, 1.8 million UK residents travelled to Turkey, the 10th most popular destination (ONS 2010).

Turkish asylum applications dropped from 3,990 in 2000 to 185 in 2009 (Home Office/RDS).

In 2009, 985 enforcement actions (removals and voluntary returns) were initiated (40 percent were asylum cases), 1.5 percent of the total and down from 1,730 in 2007 (ibid.).

Demographic

- From 1950 to 2000, Turkey's population grew by 30 million to around 75 million². It will continue to grow to 88-90 million around 2050 and will then probably start decreasing (Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies 2008, OECD 2010c). By around 2025, fertility rates will have fallen to or below replacement level but because life expectancy will increase Turkey's population will continue to grow until around 2050 but will be ageing.
- Demographic developments in Turkey are uneven and the country is characterised by an East-West divide and a growing East and an ageing West. This has consequences for internal migration and East-West migration is significant. Due to the demand by ageing populations in the West for labour, internal migration will remain high and large proportions of the population growth will be absorbed internally. Ageing and demand for labour will also increase the demand for immigrant labour.
- By 2025, only eight of the 27 EU countries and 18 Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries will enjoy natural population growth, including Turkey. Thus any policy that considers replacement migration as a response to its ageing and shrinking populations will only be able to regionally draw on a small number of countries where populations are still young and growing.

Economy

- Over the past 30 years Turkey's economy has changed drastically. In 1970, 87 percent of exports were agricultural products (Krueger 1974) whereas now 51.3 percent of Turkish exports are intermediate goods, such as vehicle parts, and another 35.6 percent are consumption goods (Türkstat 2010).

² Rank 5 among the OECD countries, behind USA, Japan, Mexico and Germany.

- From 2000 to 2008 Turkey's GDP rose by 80 percent and is, for example, 50 percent higher than the GDP of Poland³. Turkey is strongly recovering from the 2009 crisis.

In the same period foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased ten-fold.

According to latest OECD reports 'Turkey's economic growth is likely to be among the strongest of OECD countries in 2010, supported by financial stability, international investor confidence and a dynamic business sector'. GDP growth is expected at 6 percent and unemployment and underemployment, which had been falling since 2006, rocketed in 2009 to 14 percent (3.4 million) but this figure 'is likely to fall markedly' (OECD 2010a, Icduygu 2010). The informal economy represents around 30 percent of the GDP (GIB 2008).

- So far, employment rates are low, 46 percent in total (men 60 percent, women 20 percent), 43 percent of all employment is informal (GIB 2008). 'Economy fails to make satisfactory use of its labour resources. Employment in industry and services does not grow strongly enough to absorb the rapidly growing working-age population and the high rate of migration from rural areas. Consequently, the employment rate, at just above 40 percent, remains the lowest in the OECD area' (OECD 2010b: 8).

Conclusion

To sum up, migration from, to and through Turkey is more diverse than commonly assumed. Thus, Turkey is now more correctly referred to as an emigration, immigration and transit country. Net migration between Turkey and the EU is already negative and since 2009 Turkey is probably already a positive net-immigration country (CIA 2010a). There are no current signs of a migration pressure from Turkey. Simultaneously, the decrease in migration coincides with an increase in mobility/travel and one seems to replace the other. Also, internal migration opportunities make international migration almost redundant. But as long as Turkey does not grant asylum to non-Europeans transit migration of migrants and refugees will continue.

There are no strong or extended migration systems, networks or traditions that link together the UK and Turkey that would facilitate EU-accession related migration. But accession related migration from Turkey to the UK will depend on the policies of other EU member states and whether or not these admit or do not admit free travel, if other countries admit free movements fewer will chose the UK and vice versa.

Turkey's population will increase significantly though the working-age population will start to decrease around 2025. Strong economic and employment growth absorbs some but not all working-age population. Thus, at present neither natives or immigrants are absorbed by the labour markets in sufficient levels. But according to the OECD there is huge potential for economic and employment growth provided that labour, product and finance market regulations are reformed.

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Contact: Franck Düvell, PhD, senior researcher,
franck.duvell@compas.ox.ac.uk,
<http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/people/staff/franck-duevell/>,
 convenor of Turkish Migration Studies group (TurkMiS).
Address: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society,
 University of Oxford, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS,
 UK, 0044 1865 274711.



³ On the OECD scale Turkey ranks 26th out of 40 countries