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## MPC – MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE

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### *Turkeys Multifarious Attitude towards Migration and its Migrants*

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**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**  
**MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE (MPC)**

**Turkey's Multifarious Attitude  
towards Migration and its Migrants**

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## **The Migration Policy Centre (MPC)**

### Mission statement

The Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, Florence, conducts advanced research on global migration to serve migration governance needs at European level, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.

### Rationale

Migration represents both an opportunity and a challenge. While well-managed migration may foster progress and welfare in origin- as well as destination countries, its mismanagement may put social cohesion, security and national sovereignty at risk. Sound policy-making on migration and related matters must be based on knowledge, but the construction of knowledge must in turn address policy priorities. Because migration is rapidly evolving, knowledge thereof needs to be constantly updated. Given that migration links each individual country with the rest of the world, its study requires innovative cooperation between scholars around the world.

The MPC conducts field as well as archival research, both of which are scientifically robust and policy-relevant, not only at European level, but also globally, targeting policy-makers as well as politicians. This research provides tools for addressing migration challenges, by: 1) producing policy-oriented research on aspects of migration, asylum and mobility in Europe and in countries located along migration routes to Europe, that are regarded as priorities; 2) bridging research with action by providing policy-makers and other stakeholders with results required by evidence-based policy-making, as well as necessary methodologies that address migration governance needs; 3) pooling scholars, experts, policy makers, and influential thinkers in order to identify problems, research their causes and consequences, and devise policy solutions.

The MPC's research includes a core programme and several projects, most of them co-financed by the European Union.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: [www.migrationpolicycentre.eu](http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu)

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## **Abstract**

Turkey is not only a country of emigration, but also of immigration and return migration. It is a country, too, with a significant part of its population living abroad. In this paper, I take into account these various international migration patterns to provide an in-depth historical analysis of the Turkish State's attitude towards migration and its immigrants, citizens residing abroad or returning to the country. The analysis is based on a detailed literature review, a summary of the most recent policies introduced regarding migration and in-depth interviews conducted with policy makers, government officials and academics. The analysis shows that Turkey's socio-economic development, its economic and political expectations from migration, and contextual factors have significantly influenced its changing attitude towards migration. In conclusion, the paper draws attention to the importance of considering these factors and different migration patterns together for a more comprehensive understanding of a country's perspective on international migration.

## Introduction

International migration has played an important role in the history of Turkey since its foundation in the early 1920s. The characteristics of migration inflows and outflows, and the objectives that need to be achieved through migration, the attitude towards and the ways in which the country has dealt with migration have though changed considerably, depending on social, economic and political factors. In spite of the significance of international migration for the country, the Turkish perspective on migration has not been evaluated in a comprehensive way from a historical perspective. In fact, this is the case, as becomes apparent reading the literature, for many countries. Though diaspora engagement, on the one hand, and international migration management, on the other, occupy a significant place in the policy agenda of many countries, we observe that these issues are, all too often, treated separately. That is to say, false dichotomies are created by defining countries solely as countries of immigration *or* emigration. As a result of this, we see that the migration research for many countries is focused either on outflows or inflows. Yet, most countries can be defined simultaneously as countries of emigration *and* immigration. Taking this into account is of greatest importance because it allows us to make better sense of the different attitudes that a country has towards international migration.

In this respect, Turkey is strongly characterized by migration from, to and through Turkey. The main aim of this paper is to fill in this gap, and to discuss the following question: *how and why the Turkish State's attitude towards international migration has changed significantly over the last few decades?* To give an answer to this question, I take into consideration different migration patterns from and to Turkey, and provide an in-depth analysis of the State's perspective on international migration. While doing this, I employ an analysis of the institutional arrangements, and the recent laws and policies introduced regarding migration management, the Turkish Diaspora and "foreigners" in Turkey. Moreover, I refer to in-depth interviews<sup>1</sup> I have conducted with government officials, policy makers and academics in Turkey in May 2010, through which I hoped to get a better understanding of Turkey's attitude towards migration. In short, in this analytical paper, taking into account the international migration history of Turkey, I discuss the evolution of the attitude of Turkey towards international migration as a country experiencing various international migration movements.

## 1. Turkey: A Country of Emigration

### 1.1 Role of Population Exchange in the early years of the Turkish Republic

Already in the early years of the Turkish republic, migration occupied an essential role in the country's history. Following on from the foundation of the republic, migration was used as a nation building tool (Hecker 2006). There were several flows of forced migration as well as population exchanges between the Balkans and Turkey, in order to facilitate the process of "Turkification" in Turkey itself. Basically, during this period Muslim communities moved to Anatolia and Christian communities moved to the Balkans (İçduygu, Toktas and Soner 2008). During the nation building process, non-Muslim communities were seen as a threat to the state that needed to be driven out of Anatolia. There were also official population exchanges between Turkey and Greece with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Hecker 2006). The Turkish-Greek population exchanges were based on religion.

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<sup>1</sup> I conducted in-depth interviews with representatives with different stand-points and institutions (Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Turkey, External Relations and Services for Workers Abroad, *former* Ministry of State of Turkey, Presidency of Turks at Abroad and Kindred Communities, former Turkish Attaché in the Netherlands, and two political scientists and experts on international relations and migration) to discuss Turkish politics regarding international migration and the Turkish Diaspora living abroad. Furthermore, I discussed the institutional arrangements and new initiatives to approach migration issues, and evaluated the past labor migration experiences of Turkey with the interviewees. This fieldwork has been commissioned by IMISCOE institute.

Muslims were considered Turks and Christians Greek with the exception of the Greek-Orthodox community in Istanbul and the Muslim population in the Western Thrace (Kirişci 2000). Until the 1950s, migration in Turkey was mainly characterized by nation building and population exchanges. These early years of migration are not seen as part of the immigration story of today, yet they constitute a significant example in understanding the early role of migration for the country (Bilgili and Siegel 2010).

## 1.2 The 1960s and 1970s Characterized by the “Guest Worker” Programs

Emigration from Turkey was seen as part of a migration strategy in the post WWII period. Given the rapidly growing population in Turkey, the country looked to immigration as a way of reducing demographic and labor market pressures (Paine 1974, İçduygu 1991, Hecker 2006). At the same time, the flourishing economies of many European countries like Germany, the Netherlands and France witnessed labor shortages that needed to be solved to allow economic recovery following on from the Second World War. In this context, Turkey started sending its citizens abroad as labor migrants, in the same way that Morocco and Southern European countries had.

Before any official labor agreements were signed between Western European countries and Turkey, workers were recruited, for the most part, by firms on the basis of job availability (İçduygu, Sirkeci and Muradoglu 2001, İçduygu 2008a). The first official labor agreement with Turkey was signed with Germany in 1961, and other agreements followed shortly after with Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands in 1964, France in 1965, and Sweden and Australia in 1967 (Hecker 2006, İçduygu 2008a).<sup>2</sup> The outflow of workers continued incessantly and reached its height in the 1970s. By the end of 1973, and the beginning of the Oil Crisis, the Turkish Employment Services had sent more than 780,000 workers to Western Europe. It is important to note that around 80 percent of labor migrants were sent to Germany (Sönmez and McDonald 2008). This “guest worker” period was characterized by the emigration of low-skilled rural population for economic development (Penninx 1982). Originally “guest workers” from Turkey (and other countries) were meant to be temporary labor migration to specific countries in Europe; yet, this changed with the economic downturn in the mid-1970s.

At the time of “guest worker” programs, Turkish migration policies regarding migrants abroad were dominated by “homeland policies” (Smith 1997) defined as an approach to encourage migrants’ return, by creating institutions and taking measures facilitating migrants’ strong economic links with their origin country. In other words, Turkey introduced various measures to channel remittances in such a way that migrant earnings could positively affect the country’s economic development. As formulated by Gamlen (2006), migration related policies in Turkey were used to *manage the scale of its [Turkey’s] economic maneuvers*. For economic development, Turkey was in need of hard currency, and in addition to foreign aid and loans that had to be repaid with high interest rates, the huge amount of remittances sent by the migrants were seen as an important revenue for the country (Martin 1991, İçduygu 2008). With the inflow of hard currency, Turkey could import the inputs and the technology that were crucial for industrialization and international trade (Penninx 1982). Hence, Turkish citizens living abroad, especially those living within the EU, were expected to provide economic support through financial remittances, and investments back in Turkey.

Accordingly, concrete measures were taken to channel migrant remittances into “employment generating” activities for economic growth. Some of the most significant programs that aimed to stimulate migrant remittances were worker’s joint-stock companies, Village Development Cooperatives and the State Industry and Workers’ Investment Bank (Abadan-Unat 2006). In the early years of labor migration, the country was successful in channeling remittances as the numbers show. Migrant remittances stood at \$93 million in 1967, and reached \$1.4 billion in 1978 (İçduygu 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> Other agreements were signed with the United Kingdom in 1961, with Switzerland in 1971, with Denmark in 1973, and with Norway in 1981 (Franz 1994).

Yet, in the long term these programs failed to achieve their objectives due to mismanagement and corruption (Abadan-Unat 2006, Akgündüz 2008, İçduygu 2009). On top of this, the oil crisis in 1974 stopped labor recruitment, and the economic downturn that followed made it even more difficult to channel remittances back to Turkey.

The years after the oil crisis were a period of decision for most migrants. It is important to note here that migrants' negative attitude towards economic opportunities in Turkey was a decisive factor in their decision to stay in Europe. Moreover, migrants knew that it would be difficult to come back to Europe if they left. Plus, given that most labor migrants in Europe were granted permanent residence permits and the right to family reunification, "staying" was the most common decision. This is when migration from Turkey to Europe became more permanent. Hence, Turkey had to adapt its perspective on migration, and reestablish its strategy to manage and engage with migrants living permanently abroad.

### 1.3 Diversification of Emigration in Turkey after the 1980s

It is estimated that sixty to seventy percent of the "temporary" migration of the 1960s and 1970s turned into permanent migration (İçduygu 2006a). After the Oil Crisis in the 1970s, labor recruitment in Europe was brought to a standstill, which spurred a new type of migration to these countries, namely family reunification and formation (Ünver 2010a). Many migrants began to invite their close family members in Turkey to join them. Women and children joined the mainly male workers changing the demographic makeup of migration from Turkey. Moreover, migration became a question of family formation as brides or grooms were brought in from Turkey. These characterized the main wave of Turkish migration to Europe in the 1980s and the 1990s (Hecker 2006). There was also a diversification of migrants between the 1980s and the 1990s in other ways. As well as increased family reunification migration and family formation, there was also a flow of, mainly Kurdish, refugees and asylum seekers from the eastern provinces of Turkey (Hecker 2006).<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, destination countries for labor migrants diversified after the Oil Crisis that led to stagnation in the recruitment of labor migrants in Western Europe and many low-skilled Turks turned towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (İçduygu 2008a). The oil rich states, particularly Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait, provided new employment opportunities for low-skilled workers from Turkey. From the early 1990s on, workers also started to move to neighboring Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries like Russia and Ukraine (İçduygu 2008a) (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Turkish Labor Emigration by Destination Countries**

	1961-1974	1975-1980	1981-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	Total
European countries	790017	13426	2612	9647	10465	16561	842728
Arab countries	2441	74181	423208	208274	32195	57974	798273
Australia	5806	2647	2478	1324	515	176	12946
CIS countries				115	65521	89623	155259
Other countries	12235	14792	4875	125238	4256	17533	178929
<b>Total</b>	<b>810499</b>	<b>105046</b>	<b>433173</b>	<b>344598</b>	<b>112952</b>	<b>181867</b>	<b>1988135</b>

**Source:** İçduygu A. (2006b), based on various official sources<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The 1980s saw military clashes between the Turkish security forces and the Partiya Kareren Kurdistan (PKK) in Turkey's eastern, predominantly Kurdish, provinces (Hecker 2006).

<sup>4</sup> International migration data in Turkey is not collected by a single organization. As in many other countries, migration data in Turkey has its limitations. In many cases, to map the overall migration flows, one has to bring together various official

What influenced the attitude of Turkey towards migration and its migrants, more even than the diversification of destination countries, was the increase in permanent migration and the diversification in the characteristics of the migrants going to the Western European countries. Due to the increasing migration of non-active populations (women and children) with the intention of permanent settlement and individuals from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, supporting the well-being of these permanent migrants who were expected always to stay in contact with Turkey became a priority. In accordance with this change, the country's expectations and its obligations *towards its citizens* permanently living abroad changed (Kirişci 2008). Ögelman (2003) puts forward the idea that, with the transition to permanent migration and settlement in the destination countries, Turkish migrants in Europe became more assertive and more insistent on their socio-cultural identities. Having a heterogeneous character, there were more and more groups getting together based on ethnicity, culture and religion. That is to say, migrants mobilized socio-politically through migrant organizations that communicated not only with the destination country governments but also with the Turkish government.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly there was a proliferation of policies regarding the socio-cultural and economic well-being of migrants abroad. One can argue that Turkey started to have more of a *paternalistic* relationship to Turks residing overseas, in terms of assisting them on a more societal level for their socio-cultural interests. For instance, it was around this time that the responsibilities of *Dış İlişkiler ve Yurtdışı İşçi Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü - Foreign Relations and Workers Abroad Services General Directorate* (FRWASGD)<sup>6</sup> expanded. Looking at the services provided by FRWASGD, we see that the directorate accepts written and oral complaints and suggestions, assists citizens with their payment and employment-related problems, and informs citizens on the policies and services of the Turkish government. More specifically, the *Yurt-Danış Bürosu - Homeland-Advice Bureau* was founded in 2001 within the constitution of FRWASGD.<sup>7</sup> This bureau provides direct services for citizens who contact the bureau regarding their legal rights and obligations (İçduygu, 2008a).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in 1998 *Yurtdışı Vatandaşlar Danışma Kuruluna - Consultancy Board for Citizens Living Abroad (CBCLA)* was established with the objective of providing services to Turkish citizens living abroad vis-à-vis public-related issues.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, in the 1980s, *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı - The Directorate of Religious Affairs*<sup>10</sup> extended its reach abroad in the 1980s. This extension of Diyanet was initially guided by the religious

(Contd.)

sources. The official sources from which international migration related data can be extracted in Turkey are the State Statistics Organization, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, and Ministry of Interior. In addition, censuses, border statistics, administrative records (residence permissions, work permissions, asylum seeker and refugee records, citizenship information, visa registers), registers of other countries and extensive surveys (TURKSTAT, HUIPS, NIDI, EUROSTAT, TDHS) provide valuable information on migration flows (Coskun and Turkyilmaz 2009).

<sup>5</sup> As the history of Turkish emigration suggests, the Turkish diaspora is not a homogeneous one, and the distance and attitude of the Turkish government towards the diaspora differs among groups. When interpreting Turkey's attitude towards its diaspora, one should always consider this fact. There is an ongoing debate as to which groups' demands are taken more seriously by the Turkish government than others. The diversity among the Turkish diaspora, and their competing demands and different relationships the State is an interesting issue to focus more on, when discussing how the role of the diaspora is determined to be by the government.

<sup>6</sup> It is the first governmental organization (established in 1967) to deal with Turkish migrant workers abroad, with a special focus of those in Europe (Kaya 2008a).

<sup>7</sup> For more information: <http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/csgebPortal/diyih.portal?page=yurtdanis>

<sup>8</sup> The staff of the bureau consists of multilingual employees who are also responsible for assisting citizens with filling out forms and writing official letters in the residence country languages.

<sup>9</sup> For more information: <http://www.devlet.gov.tr/Forms/pYYVDK.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (The Directorate of Religious Affairs) founded in March 1924 and attached to the Office of the Prime Minister, is the Turkish national bureaucracy of religious affairs. In a way, Diyanet, regulated by the Turkish government, has a monopoly over religious activities, and is considered to be the representative of official Islam in Turkey (Avcı 2005).

affairs unit of the Turkish Embassies and the Religious Services Attachés of the Consulates (Avcı 2005). In a short period of time, Diyanet built up a network and got engaged with many religious migrant organizations (Ögelman 2003). As a result, today, it is considered to be the extension of the Turkish state abroad, and one of the most influential instruments in influencing and monitoring the Turkish Diaspora (Çıtak 2010).<sup>11</sup> This directorate has dominated the religious lives of immigrant communities in the previous years through several activities.<sup>12</sup> However, it is important to mention that because Diyanet can be considered more as the representative of *official* Islam in Turkey, it does not have the same relations with other religious minorities like the Alevis or other alternative Islamic religious movements existing abroad (e.g. Milli Görüş, Suleymanists or Kaplancilar).<sup>13</sup>

All these activities and the engagement of various institutions in fighting for the well-being of the Turkish citizens abroad are interesting examples of how Turkey, as an emigration country, initiated the establishment and maintenance of strong relations with its citizens overseas. In the following section, I will discuss how the need for the better management of these various services and institutes created the need for the foundation of a new umbrella organization. Moreover, I will argue that Turkey not only continues to provide services to its citizens abroad, but puts in place new expectations and obligations for its citizens.

## 2. Turkey: A Country with a Permanent Population Abroad

Turkey currently has about 4.5 million citizens living abroad. The main destination countries are Germany, France, the Netherlands, Austria, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Greece, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Ratha and Xu 2008). According to the literature lower-skilled Turks are mainly found in Western European countries, while the highly-skilled (or elite) are found particularly in the United States<sup>14</sup> and to a lesser extent in Canada.<sup>15</sup> In short, today we are talking about a considerable and dispersed Turkish Diaspora from a diverse background (See Table 2).

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<sup>11</sup> It is essential to mention that Diyanet abroad works through the Turkish-Islamic Association of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Türk-Islam Birliği - DİTİB) or the Diyanet Foundations (Diyanet Vakıfları) (Çıtak 2010). DİTİB is basically a Sunnite religious organization, which is related to the Turkish state through an agreement. Many Turkish Sunnite mosques are under its control abroad (Jonker 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Regarding its activities more specifically, Diyanet sends religion officials with knowledge skills, operates the mosques, and works for the establishment of official religious education in residence countries (Çıtak 2010). Furthermore, other religious issues such as the construction of mosques, institutional arrangements for religious exercises (hajj, umre, kurban, and burial funds), religious feast celebrations and socio-cultural activities (e.g. Inter-faith dialogues) are of interest for Diyanet.

<sup>13</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to further analyze these differences, however, it is important to mention that these differences exist and that they should be studied more extensively.

<sup>14</sup> According to Akçapar (2006), since the 1980s, Turkish immigration to the United States has taken on many forms. This period has been characterized by increasing student migration, migration of professionals and some unskilled and semi-skilled labor. According to the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), approximately 465,700 Turkish immigrants have come to the US between 1820 and 2004.

<sup>15</sup> OECD's estimates show that there were 220,000 Turks in the US as of 2003 (İçduygu 2004) whereas Turkish consular offices in Washington DC, New York City, Los Angeles, Houston and Chicago estimate that there are 350,000 Turkish Americans (Akçapar 2006).

**Table 2. Estimates of Turkish Migrants Abroad in Top Ten Destination Countries, 2007**

Germany	2706232
France	197819
The Netherlands	184424
Austria	153836
United States	100325
Saudi Arabia	95752
Bulgaria	95248
Greece	66402
Switzerland	61861
United Kingdom	60110
Belgium	46324
<b>Total (Worldwide)</b>	<b>4402914</b>

Source: IOM 2008

## 2.1 Better Services for the Socio-cultural Well-being of the Diaspora

In the Turkish case, it becomes clear that a considerable and yet heterogeneous population abroad with various needs has pushed the State to take measures to better manage its relations with its citizens abroad. Recently, it has been recognized that there is the need for an umbrella institution that can coordinate and decide on all the measures that need to be taken with regards to Turkish citizens residing abroad. For the more “efficient assistance”<sup>16</sup> of Turkish citizens living abroad, a new law was approved in March 2010 that introduced the organization entitled *Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı - Turks Abroad and Relative Communities Department*. The organization is linked to the Office of the Prime Minister<sup>17</sup>, but works in coordination with other ministries and governmental organizations that are involved with Turks abroad.

The main objective of this organization, which is to work with Turkish citizens living abroad and to help solve their problems, shows Turkey’s changing attitude towards its citizens abroad (Ref. law no. 5978).<sup>18</sup> Social, cultural and economic activities are organized and managed according to the needs and demands of Turkish citizens and their descendants living abroad. Its activities are directed not only at Turkish citizens and their descendants abroad, but also at migrant organizations, non-governmental organizations and professional organizations outside Turkey. The sub-departments of the organization are as follows: Citizens Abroad (Yurtdışı Vatandaşlar), Cultural and Social Relations (Kültürel ve Sosyal İlişkiler), Institutional Relations and Communication (Kurumsal İlişkiler ve İletişim), Foreign Students (Yabancı Öğrenciler), Strategy Planning (Strateji Geliştirme), Legal

<sup>16</sup> This is a statement made by the interviewee from the Turks Abroad and Relative Communities Department.

<sup>17</sup> At the time when I have done the interview, Turks Abroad and Relative Communities Department was linked to the Ministry of State, however, in 2011 the Ministry of State has been abolished in Turkey, and so now the department is attached to the Office of the Prime Minister.

<sup>18</sup> For the details of law number 5978, see the website: <http://www.yok.gov.tr/content/view/868/183/lang,tr/>

Advisory (Hukuk Müşavirliği), and Human Resources and Support Departments (İnsan Kaynakları ve Destek Hizmetleri).<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, while Turkey recognizes the permanence of a Turkish population abroad, and the increasing naturalization of this population in the destination country, the State still plays “protector” regarding the social benefits and rights of this population. In this respect, special attention is paid to binding agreements with European countries. Especially given the sensitive socio-political atmosphere in many European destination countries, the interviewee from the FRWASGD put emphasis on the *Ankara Agreement (1963) and the Additional Protocol (Article 41)* suggesting that the contracting parties have refrained from introducing new restrictions on the freedom of establishment and the right to receive services. Moreover, according to the *Association Council, the Decision of 1/80 and Article 7*, legal employees have the right to have their permission to work automatically renewed and their residence renewed in line with their right to work. The attention paid to both the new migrants and the established permanent population abroad shows the extent to which the State aims to build an almost “paternalistic” relationship with its citizens abroad.

## 2.2 Economic Expectations from Emigrants: Not a Hot Topic

Looking at the history of migration in Turkey, we saw that emigration was originally a strategy to channel economic remittances to the country for economic development. Currently, the debate on the economic role of the Turkish diaspora has changed considerably. İçduygu (2009) argues that the decline in the importance of remittances is mainly due to the fact that Turkey has become a country which is well-integrated in the global economy, and hence receiving remittances from Turkish citizens living abroad is no longer such a priority as it once was. This idea is also reflected in the statements of the interviewee from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security: “*Before, it was very important that migrants sent money back to Turkey, but now this has lost its importance. Remittances are equal to endorsement of a mid-sized company in Turkey.*” Another interviewee from the former Ministry of State affirms that “*We do not see our migrants living abroad as “currency exchange point”, since Turkey is one of the biggest countries in the world. We have become the seventeenth biggest economy. Turkey is not a country which is in need of remittances to survive.*”

From a different perspective, one can also argue that the policies and programs aimed at mobilizing migrant remittances failed, in the past, due to lack of coordination and corruption problems, and these past experiences have decreased Turkey’s need for remittances and investments on the part of migrants. A former attaché’s statement regarding this issue is typical: “*Turkey’s record on benefiting from remittances is not very positive. Many of the initiatives have failed in the past. It would be hard to mobilize people for similar projects.*” Finally, as argued in the migration literature, transition from temporary to permanent migration decreases the likelihood of return and also decreases the incentives for sending remittances, and hence makes it more difficult to mobilize the Turkish citizens abroad to remit (İçduygu 2008). It would be interesting to look into these arguments in more detail, and debate whether Turkey *does not need* remittances sent by the Turkish Diaspora, or whether it *cannot mobilize its diaspora* abroad to receive more remittances. Such questions are valuable for better understanding how emigration countries develop their attitude towards their migrants and migration.

## 2.3 Political Expectations from Emigrants: A Pressing Topic

There is more focus on the political role that Turkish migrants play for the international objectives of the country. In this paper, we argue that with a transition to the permanent settlement of Turks abroad,

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<sup>19</sup> This new initiative brings together different parts of an overall all Diaspora engagement policy in Turkey for the first time. Since the department was just launched in the spring of 2010, it is too early to evaluate the activities and added value of such an organization. Nevertheless, it is of significance to follow up on this department in the future, because it is the first over-arching governmental organization concerned with the Turkish Diaspora abroad.

and other contextual factors such as the economic liberalization that Turkey has witnessed in the last few decades, Turkey's expectations of its citizens has also changed. "Global nation policies" best define the Turkish state's attitude towards its diaspora from the 1980s till today. According to these policies, states seek to encourage migrants to stay abroad but also to stay in contact (Smith 1997). This is not only for internal relations, but also for external relations as the Turkish diaspora is an important actor and the Turkish state knows this and employs the diaspora. One of the main agenda points for which it is essential that migrants stay abroad but maintain their contact with Turkey is Turkey's well-known objective of joining the European Union. In line with Ostergaard-Nielsen's (2003) argument, Turkey legitimizes its presence in the European context through its Diaspora in Europe.

In spite of all the criticism that Turkish descendants get about integration in the residence countries, Turkey emphasizes economic success, upward social mobility and the multicultural contribution of Turkish citizens in Europe (Bilgili and Siegel 2010). In particular, as the former attaché in the Netherlands affirms "*today Turks living abroad are obviously of great importance for Turkey's future in relation to the European Union*". From the State's perspective, it is of great importance that the Turkish population in Europe integrates because, their successful integration is proof of Turkey's compatibility with Europe, and suggests that Turkey should be considered an integral part of Europe. In accordance with this argument, we observe that Turkey's policies aim at supporting the well-being of Turkish migrants and their descendants. In other words, today Turkey sees Turkish migrants as the representatives of the Turkish nation abroad, though a considerable part of this population never even lived in Turkey as they are second- or third-generation migrants.

### 3. Turkey: A Country of Immigration

In the introduction of the present paper, I put forward the idea of simultaneity when defining countries as countries of immigration or emigration. Though countries are defined as a country of immigration or emigration as a result of the calculation of the net migration rates, it is important to recognize that countries experience both inflows and outflows to which they react. In the case of Turkey, we have seen that emigration has played a significant role in the country's history since its foundation. Yet, when we read the Turkish migration history from an immigration country perspective, one can easily see that immigration patterns have *also* strongly shaped the country's history (İçduygu 2008a). In a way several international migratory systems overlap in Turkey (İçduygu and Yükseser 2010, İçduygu and Kirişci 2009).

So the nation building process that I described in the first section, the population exchanges letting ethnic Turks settle in Turkey in the 1920s were the first concrete examples of immigration to Turkey. Notwithstanding government support immigration stagnated after the 1970s, for a long period (from 1923 to 1997), Balkan countries remained important origin countries for Turkey. It is estimated that during this period more than 1.6 million individuals migrated to Turkey. The immigration history of Turkey is also characterized by asylum seekers who left Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to flee from the communist regimes there (Kaya 2008b, İçduygu 2008b).

Turkey then started to attract asylum seekers from various developing countries, including Iran and Albania. Another important phenomenon in Turkey is that since it is relatively easy to get, when necessary, visas at entry points, many individuals become irregular by overstaying (Kirişci 2003). Although it is difficult to estimate the number of irregular migrants in Turkey, it is argued that their numbers are increasing as they also become visible in small trade businesses. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between 2000 and 2007, Turkey apprehended more than 560,000 irregular migrants (IOM 2008). Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is also significant in immigration terms and a large number of women are brought to Turkey from the former Soviet Union (Saari 2006). The Ministry of Interior estimates that, a little fewer than 900 individuals were identified as victims of human trafficking between 2000 and 2007 (IOM 2008).

It is estimated that the stock of immigrants in Turkey is more than 1.3 million; the main origin countries being Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and the central Asian republics (Hecker, 2006, Kirişci 2003, Ratha and Xu 2008). Overall, Turkey is an attractive destination country for several reasons. The reasons that stand out concern not only the geography of the country that connects many Eastern countries to the European Union, but also its recent socio-economic development due to economic liberalization and the opening up of the global economy. Under these conditions, Turkey not only attracts asylum seekers who flee from political unrest and tension, but also labor migrants who want to settle in Turkey thanks to promising economic opportunities. In addition, sporadic return migration of (highly-skilled) migrants or second and third generation migrants from Europe continue to be part of this new phase of the country's immigration history. In this section, I will elaborate on the attitude of Turkey towards immigration and return migrants.

### 3.1 Political Attitude towards Immigration to Turkey

Immigration and integration policies are the main sources for understanding Turkey's attitude towards immigration. In this respect, policies on the permanent settlement of foreign nationals, naturalization procedures, visa systems and regulations regarding asylum seekers and refugees constitute important aspects of a general attitude. Turkey is especially tolerant when it comes to visa entry regulations. In spite of the increasing concern about irregular migration, many countries (e.g. Morocco, Iran and Tunisia) are exempted from visa, and nationals of more than 30 countries can obtain visas on the border (İçduygu and Sert 2009). As best described by the Turkish Passport Law, this shows that Turkey remains liberal when it comes to short-term visits, most probably because of the economic advantages this short-term mobility brings through tourism and the various economic activities it boosts. When it comes to the permanent stay of migrants and naturalization processes, Turkey has much more restricted and conservative policies that include detailed investigations and conditions that need to be fulfilled in advance (See Turkish Law on Foreign Nationals, Law No. 5683). Moreover, the Law on the Residence and Travel Activities of Foreign Nationals (Law No. 7564) states that those who apply for a work permits need to prove that they have sufficient financial resources and also to declare that they have no intention of disturbing public order (İçduygu and Sert 2009).

Yet, it is important to state that there have been recent changes regarding work permits and the naturalization process to set non-discriminatory rules based on nationality and gender. For instance, with the New Law on Work Permits for Foreign Nationals, labor market conditions are put forward as an important determinant for the allocation of visas. This means that there is no restriction on any professions for foreign nationals, and decisions are made based on economic needs rather than on nationality. Moreover, recent changes made in the Citizenship Law give better protection for immigrant rights and the fight against arranged marriages that have been used as a major way of getting citizenship in Turkey among irregular women migrants (İçduygu 2007). Also, standardized rules are put into place for both genders regarding naturalization through marriage (İçduygu and Sert 2009). These legislative developments point to changes in Turkey's attitude towards immigration management over the last ten years.

For a better understanding of this change, it is important to look at the law draft that was introduced in May 2011 regarding the settlement of foreign nationals in Turkey by the Ministry of Interior.<sup>20</sup> The draft of the law concerning foreign nationals and their international protection has two main aims. First, rules regarding the entry, stay and exit from Turkey for non-nationals are specified in detail. To be more precise, this section includes detailed information about entry rules to Turkey, visa regulations, residence permit applications, work permits, short- and long-term residency rules, and students coming to Turkey for their education, asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking.

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<sup>20</sup> For the whole document: [http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri\\_2.aspx?id=5851](http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri_2.aspx?id=5851)

Second, it provides information on the organization, responsibilities and competences of the Directorate of Migration Management related to the Ministry of Interior.

The draft proposes amendments that are compatible and coherent with international human rights, international agreements and the European Union legislation. Although these amendments are seen as a positive development for better migration management and the protection of migrant rights in Turkey, the non-discriminatory principle has been highly criticized. In the draft law, it is stated that when executing this law, gender, race, color, ethnicity, social background, inherited characteristics, language, religion, political or any other opinions, marital status, richness, being disabled, age or any other characteristics cannot be used as a basis for discrimination. Many Turkish NGOs signed a petition against the fact that the sexual orientation of individuals was left out of this list and that foreign nationals and migrants are left unprotected against discrimination in this respect. The liability and credibility of the draft has been damaged because of the deliberate choice of leaving out sexual orientation from the list. Hence, although the draft law is a positive development, it still has aspects that can be improved upon for the full protection of foreign nationals in Turkey. Moreover, although new legislation has been put into place and important decisions are being made to protect the rights of foreign nationals and migrants, the execution of the law and the extent to which migrants are, indeed, protected in practice in light of the new legislation remains to be seen.

In spite of criticisms and lacuna, it is clear that immigration policies are becoming an important topic on the political agenda and this is reflected in new institutional arrangements: for the development and management of migration management policies and strategies; in coordinating the communication between various institutions working on migration related issues; for implementing and regulating the entry, stay and exit from Turkey for foreign nationals, and for the protection of the rights of human trafficking victims, *Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü* - the *General Directorate of Migration Management* has been established under the Ministry of Interior. The General Directorate consists of the general office and sub-organizations at a local level and abroad. Moreover, *Göç Politikaları Kurulu* - *Migration Politics Commission* made up of the presidents of various ministries from the Ministry of Tourism to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been established to meet at least once a year to discuss migration management policies in Turkey. In addition, *Uluslararası Koruma Değerlendirme Komisyonu* - *International Protection Evaluation Commission* and *Düzensiz Göçle Mücadele Koordinasyon Kurulu* - *Committee against Irregular Migration* have been established. Finally, it is important to note that a department for managing migration research has been established to conduct research regarding migration and integration related issues in Turkey. Looking at these new establishments, one can argue that Turkey has fully accepted that it is also a country of immigration and that it understands that immigration management and integration strategies need to be put into place.

### **3.2 Integration of Immigrants in Turkey: A Newly Addressed Issue**

As a country of emigration, Turkey has been particularly concerned with Turkish citizens' integration and has been demanding better conditions for socio-economic and cultural integration in destination countries. Yet, as a country of immigration, Turkey has not given much importance to the integration of its immigrants at the national level. İçduygu and Sert (2009) indicate that it is only at the local level, in municipalities where there are many migrant communities (e.g. Zeytinburnu in İstanbul), that various practices and programs have been put into place for migrants. The impact of these programs is considered to be negligible and has got little attention at the national level. However, in the new draft law regarding the settlement of foreign nationals in Turkey, we observe that a section has been dedicated to the issue of integration.

The General Directorate of Migration Management is assigned to organize activities to support the social integration of migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey. It is basically indicated that public institutions, local authorities, NGOs, universities and international organizations should cooperate and

communicate to introduce new ideas for better integration practice and programs. In particular, programs should aim to inform migrants and asylum seekers about their access to public services, labor markets, education, socio-cultural activities, basic health services and various formation and presentation activities. It is also interesting to see that integration courses are planned for migrants. These integration courses are supposed to inform migrants about the structure of the Turkish State, Turkish jurisprudence, language, culture, history and rights and obligations. Provincial governors can urge migrants who are not able to communicate in Turkish to take Turkish and integration courses. In the case of objections from migrants, it is possible that residence permits will be invalidated – at least unless migrants have legitimate excuses. The introduction of integration-related policies on a national level is indicative of how a country reacts to increasingly important societal issues, not only for social cohesion and integration but also for compliance with international agreements and human rights.

### 3.3 Attitude towards (Temporary) Return Migration (of the Highly-Skilled)

When talking about return migration to Turkey, two main target groups are addressed in the discussion. First, researchers and policy makers refer to second and third generation migrants who come to Turkey for better economic opportunities and to flee from continuing social and economic problems related to actual and/or perceived discrimination in countries of residence (Unver 2010b). Second, there are a considerable number of highly-skilled migrants, the so-called “*crème de la crème*”, in the major immigration countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia for education and employment. Although highly-skilled migration has always existed in Turkey, it was only with the economic crisis that Turkey faced at the beginning of the millennium that “*brain drain*” emerged as a socio-economic problem (Akçapar 2009). Before investigating the attitude of Turkey towards return migration, it is worth mentioning that another type of return migration is caused by the return of retired migrants back to Turkey to spend their retirement in the “*homeland*”. Since this group consists of relatively small numbers of individuals coming back to Turkey, temporarily or permanently, it does not attract the attention of policy makers, although migration researchers have already started to point to the social and economic effects that migration may have at the local level (e.g. Sert 2011).

The general discourse about highly-skilled emigration in Turkey refers to the potential contribution of highly-skilled migrants to the economic, political and socio-cultural development of the country. The transfer of knowledge and information, human-capital formation and investment are stated as important development channels (Akçapar 2006). Even so, it is not difficult to observe the lack of policy measures and programs that are targeted to encourage highly-skilled migrants to return, or to set the necessary socio-economic and political conditions for them to return. Kaya (2003) is right, in this respect, to mention the lack of investment in research and development as a key problem. Aside from a YOK program for post-graduate researchers to Turkey, it is only through the establishment of private universities and competitive facilities that Turkish scholars, scientists, and university graduates living abroad are attracted back to the country (İçduygu 2009). From a developmental perspective, the efforts of highly-skilled migrants to invest and transfer knowledge back to Turkey are limited to the individual level, and are dependent on specific cases (Kaya 2002).

When I asked interviewees why Turkey is not focused on attracting current migrants back to the country, two almost contradictory answers are given that makes the discussion on this issue very interesting in terms of the determinants of a country's attitude towards return migration. The statement of an expert on international migration and economics of international migration reveals why Turkey is not interested in attracting current migrants: *“It is more advantageous for Turkey that migrants who go abroad stay there. Everybody knows this. There is not much that they can bring back here. Because we are concerned with unemployment... Think about all the migrants currently living abroad. Almost half of the 5 million Turks living abroad are working. How could Turkey employ these people if they returned to Turkey? No country could deal with this easily. So, Turkey is not encouraging return migration.”* This explanation indicates that while Turkey defines itself as an economically developed

country, indeed it has economic problems, especially with regards to unemployment, and is not in a situation to absorb the return of current migrants in the labor market.

The second perspective focuses on the economic development of Turkey and how the country defines itself without making any reference to economic problems such as employment problems. While the respondent from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security suggests that Turkey should be more active in terms of the potential positive effects of return and circular migration, other state officials claim this is unnecessary. State officials are putting forward here Turkey's new economic situation compared to the early years of emigration when migration was seen as a strategic tool for economic development. Today, Turkey is not defined as an economically "developing" country any more. An allusion is frequently made to the self-definition of the country in terms of development levels. It is argued that being dependent on the country's migrants for economic development, knowledge transfer and investments is a contradiction for a country enjoying good economic growth. For example, when I asked respondents about temporary return migration programs and the potential added value of such initiatives for the country, one of the respondents replied: *"Turkey should not be compared with other third-world countries. Our citizens have the right to live wherever they want. There are Turks living in 155 different countries. We will not demand Turks return to Turkey for development reasons."*

In conclusion, as is the case with the economic expectations of migrants through financial remittances, Turkey's attitude towards return and temporary migration is defined by two conflicting arguments. Is it because Turkey does not have a labor market that could absorb return migrants, or is it because, as an economically developed country, it is really not in need of return migrants? Especially at a time where circular and return migration are becoming more and more prominent in the policy agenda of European destination countries, it will be interesting to see to what extent Turkey will stay out of the target area of temporary and permanent return migration policies and programs.

## Conclusion

The debate about migration management has been dominated by the immigration country perspective, and has ignored the emigration country perspective in spite of its significance (Senay 2010). It is, indeed, only recently that researchers look at emigration management, and explore how emigration states engage with their citizens abroad (Gamlen 2006). I aimed, in this paper, to take into consideration different positions a country takes with regards to migration and migrants in a historical manner, adding to this perspective the idea that an emigration country can be simultaneously a country of immigration and return migration. While doing this I attempted to show how contextual factors and evolution through time compel countries to adapt their attitude towards migration. A country perspective is *not* a static one. Countries react to situations and adapt their attitudes according to the conditions and their needs. Having a very diverse and dynamic migration history, Turkish migration stands as an enriching example to observe in more depth.

In this paper, I analyzed the attitude of Turkey towards migration at three stages: first, as a country of emigration, second as a country with a permanent population abroad; and third as a country of immigration. The analysis shows that the history of international migration in Turkey has been characterized by different objectives. These objectives range from nation building to development to the legitimization of European Union membership. Moreover, changing patterns in emigration have led Turkey to adapt its migration management strategy and the mechanisms through which it engaged with its migrants abroad. The transition of temporary labor migration in Europe to permanent migration is a good example of this turnaround, as it has greatly influenced Diaspora engagement policies. It is during this time that the country improved institutional arrangements and provided more services to its citizens living abroad.

Finally, I discussed Turkey's attitude towards immigration and, as part of this pattern, the return potential of current migrants. This is, indeed, a huge topic including not only labor immigrants, but

also transit migrants, asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Turkey. Nevertheless, immigration in Turkey has not been encouraged or reinforced by concrete immigration policies as it has been in many other immigration countries. Rather, immigration to Turkey is particularly influenced by its geopolitics and also by entry facilities to the country. As a result, immigration management in Turkey is an issue of security, human rights and relations with the European Union. In this sense, Turkish immigration policies face the challenge of controlling the inflow of asylum seekers and transit migration without causing more irregular labor migration (İçduygu and Yüksekler 2010). I conclude by suggesting that return migration is not a “hot” topic for Turkey as there is doubt about the economic advantages of return migration and that the country does not define itself as a country of emigration that is in need of the return of its migrants from abroad for economic development. On the contrary, Turkey is a country of emigration with a large population with whom it aims to establish positive relations. The objective here is both to contribute to the well-being of migrants but also the achievement of international objectives through the lobbying power of the migrants.

What I sought to achieve in this paper was to show how different socio-economic, political and contextual factors influence a country's migration management strategies and its maintenance of contact with its migrants residing abroad. Having taken Turkey as an interesting case study, the historical analysis revealed how dynamic the migration management processes are and how they need to be studied meticulously with regards to their impact on actual inflows and outflows and relations that countries establish and maintain with their emigrants and immigrants. This paper points, from the perspective of globalisation, to the need to take into account different patterns of mobility, nation-states' struggle to maintain contact with its citizens residing abroad and the management of competing internal and international objectives.

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## Appendix

### List of Useful Websites for Further Information

The Council of Higher Education for the law number 5978 :  
<http://www.yok.gov.tr/content/view/868/183/lang,tr/>

The Department of Religious Affairs, Turkey Website:  
<http://www.diyenet.gov.tr/dinsurasi/sura/default.asp>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-expatriate-turkish-citizens.en.mfa>

The Ministry of Interior: [http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri\\_2.aspx?id=5851](http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri_2.aspx?id=5851)

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Turkey, FRWASGD website:  
<http://www.csgb.gov.tr/csgbPortal/diyih.portal?page=genelmudurluk&id=2>

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Turkey Website, Information on Homeland-Advice Bureau: <http://www.csgb.gov.tr/csgbPortal/diyih.portal?page=yurtdanis>

The Office of Prime Ministry, The General Secretary of the European Union, Turkey Website:  
<http://www.abgs.gov.tr/abis/index.php?p=20&l=1>

The Office of Prime Ministry, Turkey Website:  
<http://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/pOrganizationDetail.aspx>

Turkish Grand National Assembly Website, Commission Report on the Problems of Turks Living Abroad: <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem22/yil01/ss335m.htm>

Turkish-Islamic Association of Religious Affairs (Diyanet Isleri Turk-Islam Birliđi – DITIB) website:  
<http://www.ditib.de/index.php?lang=en>