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## *Corridor Report on Sweden: the case of Iranian and Turkish immigrants*

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Since new rules on labour migration came into force in 2008, Sweden's migration policy has been recognized as the most liberal among Western countries with regard to integration areas (see MIPEX III). The Swedish institutional framework for integration involves different actors, belonging to both institutional structures and civil society; relies on a diversified set of policies and administrative tools targeting different dimensions of immigrant integration; and is implemented at both the national and local levels. However, integration and diversity are prominent problems on Sweden's political and public agendas, especially with regard to the labour market and education. These issues are also evident for the immigrant groups that are the subject of this report, namely immigrants born in Iran and Turkey.

KEY

FINDINGS



CEDEM





The following table summarizes their levels of integration according to the INTERACT Index:

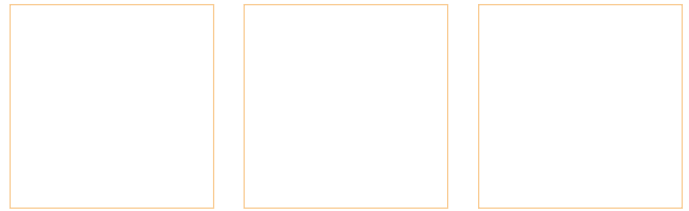
*Table 1. INTERACT Integration Index for Sweden: Iranian vs. Turkish immigrants*

	Iranian immigrants	Turkish immigrants
Labour Market Integration Index	0.59	0.51
Education Integration Index	0.34	0.17
Citizenship Integration Index	0.82	0.90

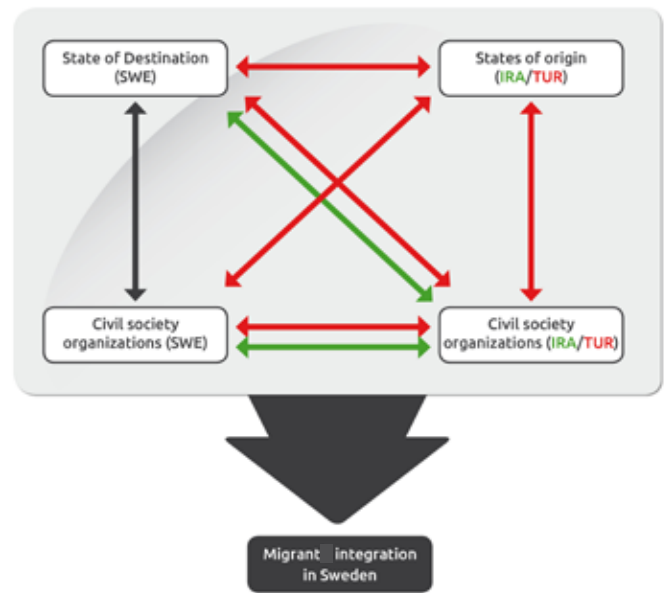
Source: Di Bartolomeo, Kalantaryan and Bonfanti (2015)

The overall scenario of integration appears tangled and complex. If we consider the citizenship dimension, both groups seem well integrated into the host society. However, the scores concerning education and the labour market highlight significant difficulties. Why is this? How can this be possible in Sweden, a country known for its ‘openness’ to immigrants and for being at the cutting edge of progressive integration policies? More generally, how best can we explain the integration process of Iranian and Turkish immigrants in Sweden?

This report tries to answer these questions following the INTERACT theoretical framework, which focuses on the complex network of ties linking institutional actors in the country of origin and country of destination together. The INTERACT framework pays special attention to the role played by the former, which will be labelled ‘the origin effect’.



*Figure 1. The impact of ties between institutional actors on migrant integration in Sweden*



The picture above outlines the network of institutional ties between destination and origin countries with respect to the immigrant groups that are included in this report. The differences are obvious and clear-cut. Turkish migrants are able to call upon an extensive network of actors situated within both the state and civil society of their country of origin. Their actions are complemented by those of other actors in the country of destination, with which the country of origin is often linked by agreement or practice. In contrast, Iranian migrants rely on a much smaller network comprised primarily of civil society organizations. The attitude of Iranian policy-makers toward emigrants oscillates between hostility and indifference, resulting in the lack of a concrete policy framework that addresses emigrants and the diaspora community. Such differences between these states of origin are illustrated in the following table, which summarizes the respective systems of legal and political measures targeting emigrants.



*Table 2. State-level framework of emigration/diaspora policies: Iran vs. Turkey*

	Turkey	Iran
<b>Legal framework for emigrants/diaspora</b>	Formal and organized structure	No formal structure
<b>Approach towards emigrants</b>	Control, protection and empowerment of diaspora	Indifference (feeble recognition of diaspora)
<b>Main state-actors</b>	Prime Ministry Presidency for Turks Abroad and Relative Communities Advisory Committee for Turkish Citizens Living Abroad High Committee for Turkish Citizens Living Abroad	High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad
<b>Socio-economic rights</b>	Blue Card Bilateral agreement in force with Sweden	Retirement plan ensured in special cases
<b>Political rights</b>	Right to vote in presidential elections, general elections and referendums	Right to vote in general elections
<b>Language and cultural rights</b>	Cultural programmes and language courses. Turkish teachers sent abroad.	Informal support for the preservation of an Islamic identity abroad.
<b>Dual citizenship</b>	Actively supported as a tool for integration abroad	Formally forbidden, but increasingly tolerated informally

Despite these differences, both immigrant groups rely on a large network of associations and organizations operating in both Sweden and the origin countries. Yet, if on the one hand associations targeting Turkish emigrants in Sweden work in line with Ankara, those addressing Iranians abroad tend to

operate precisely in opposition to the central government (see Figure 1).

Given this discrepancy, it is possible to envisage some lines of interpretation in order to understand the index scores and, more generally, to clarify the integration dynamics of Iranian and Turkish immigrants in Sweden. For clarity of explanation, the analysis will be divided according to the index's dimensions: citizenship, work and education. Finally, some concluding remarks concerning the 'origin effect' are provided.

### Citizenship

According to the citizenship index scores, both groups appear highly integrated with regard to the nationality dimension. Every year, on average, 1,700 Swedish passports are given to people born in Iran and to those born in Turkey. Based on the evidence provided by qualitative surveys, it is reasonable to assume that states of origin have a significant 'origin effect'. As regards Turkish immigrants, the legalisation of dual citizenship in 1981 and new policy goals pursued by policymakers in the last decades have had a positive impact on the naturalization process. It is also possible to speak of an 'origin effect' with regard to Iranians, even if it follows a different logic. Most emigrants who left the country in the 1980s, as well as in recent years, did so in order to escape the theocratic regime ushered in by the 1979 Revolution. In these cases, the decision to acquire Swedish nationality represents a rupture with the past and with the origin state. This difference concerning the nature and logic of the 'origin effect' is confirmed by data regarding onward migration: both Turkish and Iranian immigrants present high rates of onward migration. However while the former tend to return to their home country, the latter are inclined to move onward to other Western countries (Klinthäll 2006, Kelly 2013).



## Labour market

Despite average scores for both groups with regard to the labour market integration index, the unemployment rates are especially worrying: 15.4% and 15.6%, respectively, for Turkish and Iranian immigrants. This is far higher than the unemployment rate for Swedish natives, which was approximately 4.3% in 2014. Given the scarcity of data and information, it is difficult to estimate an 'origin effect' as regards integration in the labour market. However according to the literature, it is possible to point out different potential drivers of integration for the groups examined. For Turkish immigrants, it is reasonable to assume a lack of human capital due to the low average level of education of this population. The same cannot be said for Iranians who, on the contrary, represent the foreign-born community with the highest share of tertiary-educated individuals (even higher than Swedish natives). As pointed out by Kelly (2013), an individual factor related to status can come into play in this case. Following the author's explanation, it is reasonable to think that many of the tertiary-educated Iranians living in Sweden prefer to take advantage of benefits granted by the Swedish welfare system than accept low-skilled jobs.

## Education

Integration problems are even more pronounced in education than in the labour market, particularly for Turkish immigrants. The difference between index scores – 0.34 for Iranians and 0.17 for Turkish immigrants – might be explained on the basis of the aforementioned difference in educational levels. Another key impediment to integration in this area is surely the lack of an agreement between the countries of origin and destination regarding the recognition of educational qualifications.

That said, it is difficult to come up with a clear picture concerning the 'origin effect' in this corridor, given the scarcity of data and the lack of relevant information in the literature. The result of such an effect is ambiguous and strictly related to the actors involved, the relations among them, and the historic migratory profile of each group. As regards Iranian immigrants, if on the one hand civil society organizations represent a positive factor, on the other hand the central government represents a concrete obstacle for integration in the host country (as pointed out by qualitative surveys). In-depth interviews highlight the 'obstructionist' approach followed by the Teheran government, which seems to take advantage of difficulties experienced by Iranians residing in Sweden in order to promote nationalistic sentiment abroad.

The Turkish case is different. It is characterized by a substantial merging of central administration and organizational interests: both of which aim to promote integration in the countries of destination and strengthen ties with the diaspora community. Still, even in this case, it is difficult to identify a single or clear 'origin effect'. On the one hand, the policy framework issued by the Turkish government favours the socio-economic integration of emigrants into the host society. On the other, it maintains a staunch defense of Turkish culture and language abroad (Bilgili and Siegel 2011), suggesting that current and past administrations see distinct limits regarding 'how much' integration is desirable.



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## INTERACT

*Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration*

The INTERACT project studies the impact of sending countries on migrant integration. It looks at the ways in which institutions and organisations in origin countries thicken transnational bonds by developing tools to boost financial transfers, maintain cultural heritages, enhance migrant political participation, and protect migrants' rights. It seeks to understand how these efforts impact migrant integration, as well as how origin country policies complement or contradict the integration measures of receiving country governments.

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