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## New Trends in Turkey-Germany Migration

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## PREFACE

More than half a century after the signing of the labour recruitment agreement between West Germany and Turkey, Turkish so-called guest-workers gradually became permanent settlers and formed a heterogeneous transnational Turkish diaspora in Germany. For Germany Brief's current issue, Dr. Yaşar Aydın, lecturer at the Protestant University for Social Work and Deaconry in Hamburg, looks at the past 60 years of migration- and integration politics in Germany. Portraying various migration movements between both countries and the diversity of the Turkish diaspora in Germany, Dr. Aydın focusses on a new migration trend that started in 2015: The migration of academics and highly skilled people from Turkey.

With kind regards

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# New Trends in Turkey-Germany Migration

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Migration flows between Turkey and Germany have been getting a lot of attention in both countries – in negative as well as in positive terms. That is also because Turkish-German migration does not only interweave both societies, it also creates bilateral diplomatic tensions between Ankara and Berlin. In recent years, the nature of the migration movements along the Turkey-Germany corridor has been evolved in qualitative as well as quantitative terms.

This working paper has three purposes: *First*, outlining the historical and contemporary course of the Turkish-German migration. *Second*, analyzing the driving forces behind the migrations flows and the recent turning point. *Third*, identifying and discussing the effects of migration movements between Turkey and Germany.

The following analysis on German-Turkish migration is based on previous research, the results of which have been published elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> However, the statistical data has been updated.

## I. Historical Context of Turkey-Germany Migration

Germany and Turkey share a long-standing migration history that predates the signing of a formal labor recruitment agreement in 1961. However, as of 1961 a large-scale migration between two countries began, which was bi-directional. At the beginning, the

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<sup>2</sup> Cp. Yaşar Aydın, *Transnational statt nicht integriert*, Konstanz, 2013; Yaşar Aydın, 'Migrationsziel Türkei', Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 5.8.2014; Yaşar Aydın, 'The New Turkish Diaspora Policy', SWP Research Paper 2014/RP 10, October 2014; Yaşar Aydın, *The Germany-Turkey Migration Corridor: Refitting Policies for a Transnational Age*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016; Yaşar Aydın, 'Heimat Alanya', Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 25.5.2018.

‘guest workers’ were recruited for a limited time, so that they have had to leave by ending their contracts. Others returned to Turkey either forever or for a while and came back again. From 1960s to the 1980s, nearly four million people immigrated from Turkey into Germany. Half of them returned back, the other half stayed. In Germany, recruitment of foreign workers – not only from Turkey, but also from countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia and Morocco – was a tool to satisfy unmet labor demand in the midst of the postwar economic boom (*Wirtschaftswunder*). Labor recruitment from Turkey was also considered a form of development aid to Turkey, meant to stabilize the country socially as well as politically by releasing the pressure generated by high unemployment rate.<sup>3</sup> From 1961 to the present, the number of Turks<sup>4</sup> grew from a few thousands to more than 3 million. The Turkey-Germany migration occurred roughly in six waves, each with distinct characteristics.

*Labor recruitment:* The first emigrants after the ‘recruitment agreement’ from Turkey to Germany were contracted workers. While short-term contracts were abandoned due to criticism from German industry representatives and employers, Turks remained in the image of Germans as ‘guest workers’ who were supposed to turn back to Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

*Family reunification and irregular migration:* After the halt of foreign labor recruitment in 1973 (*Anwerbestopp*) amid worsening the economic conditions in Germany, 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 either entered illegally or overstayed their tourist visas. In most cases, these irregular migrants worked in the informal sector and some of them tried to gain legal status through either asylum application or marriage.<sup>6</sup>

*Asylum seekers and refugees:* During the late 1970s political turmoil in Turkey encouraged many Turks to seek refuge in Germany. A 1980 military coup d’état intensified this politically driven migration. Among these Turks seeking asylum were political actors and highly qualified persons who – in most cases – were prevented from entering the primary labor market due to unrecognized qualifications or a lack of legal status. Politicization gave fuel to the fragmentation of the Turkish community in Germany in social, political, and even cultural terms.

*Return migration:* From the beginning of the Turkish-German migration there have been always people returned to Turkey. However, between 1983 and 1985 there has been a return migration induced by the government. In 1983, the Christian-liberal coalition in

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<sup>3</sup> Cp. Sabri Sayarı, ‘Migration Policies of sending Countries’, in *Annales of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 485: 87–97. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, located on the southern flank of the Western military alliance and as a neighbor state to the Soviet Union, Turkey relieved the military pressure of the Soviets on Germany and Central Europe.

<sup>4</sup> In this working paper, I use the notion ‘Turk’ in terms of territory and citizenship to refer to all current and former citizens of Turkey without regard to ethnicity, religion and culture.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the course of Turkey to Germany migration see e.g. Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Karin Hunn, *Arbeitsplatz Deutschland, Heimat Türkei?* Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2011, p. 49 et. seqq.

Germany introduced the Foreigners Repatriation Incentives Law (Gesetz zur Förderung der Rückkehrbereitschaft von Ausländern) to encourage migrant workers and their families to return 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.

*Second refugee wave:* In 1990s, armed conflict between the Kurdish nationalist rebel organization PKK (*Kurdistan Workers' Party*) and the Turkish government 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.

*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. Another type of migration has attracted attention in the German media: the emigration of highly skilled Turks from Germany to Turkey in the years 2000 to 2013. Exact data on the share of the highly skilled among emigrants from Germany to Turkey is short. 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. As of 2015 migration from Turkey to Germany as well as people seeking refuge in Germany is on the increase.<sup>7</sup>

To summarize, migration between Turkey and Germany has been highly diverse, consisting of several different flows, including labor migration, family reunion, educational migration, political migration and (more recently) returnees and transnational migrants.

## **II. Drivers of Migration and of the Recent 'Turning Point'**

The year 2006 was a turning point in Turkish German migration. As of 2006 the number of emigrants from Germany to Turkey surpassed the number of those who immigrated from Turkey to Germany. The negative migration balance from a German perspective lasted until 2014. Central driver of this turning point was the economic dynamism Turkey gained after the deep economic financial and economic crisis in 2001. As of 2003, Turkish economy achieved high growth rates, domestic industry has increasingly been integrated into European and German value chains and production networks. Unemployment declined, the need for a highly qualified workforce with intercultural skills increased. This opened up employment and career opportunities in Turkey for

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<sup>7</sup> The circular migration is shown in the data as follows: In 2012, 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. Therefore, about 18,000 Turkish people must have entered Germany without visas. However, Turkish nationals are required to have visa to enter Germany. Consequently, these individuals were either in the possession of German citizenship or a resident permit, otherwise they could not entry without visa.

many European Turks. Added to this were developments such as democratization, the reform process or the prospect of EU membership, all of which made Turkey more attractive. While the economy was rather decisive and the politics supportive during the migration turnaround in the 2000s, in the migration turnaround in 2015, politics was the main, economy secondary factor.

As of 2013, authoritarian tendencies increased in Turkey, and relations with the EU stalled. Especially the Gezi Park protests, and the government's response to that revealed the state authoritarianism. In the following years the repressive authoritarian course continued and reached a climax after the failed coup attempt. All of this made Turkey unattractive for immigration from Germany and increased the push factors in Turkey. In 2015, German-Turkish migration showed a positive balance for the first time since 2005. Immigration from Turkey to Germany increased from 32,684 in 2015 to 41,296 in 2016, and the migration balance from - 4,137 in 2014 to + 2,144 in 2015 (cp. table 1, on page 8). This trend is likely to have continued due to political turbulences in Turkey,<sup>8</sup> however, there are no official data for 2019 and 2020 yet.

The turning point in the Turkey Germany migration was not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms. The profile of mobility between Germany and Turkey has also changed. The current German-Turkish migration does not only consist of family migration, which has become less important in recent years, and the pendulum migration of German and Turkish-born pensioners. There are also business mobility and holiday trips and temporary stays of students, scientists and other highly qualified people in both directions. From 2015 onwards, more and more academics and highly qualified people came to Germany who was in conflict with the Turkish government or were not satisfied with the authoritarian course in Turkey. After the coup attempt and the following repression towards the opposition and critical persons, even some army officers, high rank bureaucrats and entrepreneurs sought refuge in Germany.

This immense intensification and diversification in migration and mobility is both a result and a consequence of the transnationalization that bilateral relations between Germany and Turkey have experienced in the past. The transnationality is expressed in the bicultural orientations, the double identities and double loyalties of people of Turkish origin, but also in their socio-political activities that relate to both countries.

### **III. Effects and Outcomes: Transnational Turkish Diaspora**

In the course of immigration from Turkey, a transnational diaspora has emerged in Germany, in which social, cultural and political elements from Turkey continue to work, mix with local elements and influence both societies and political systems. The Turkish

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<sup>8</sup> These political turbulences include inter alia the prosecution of critical/oppositional academics for signing a January 2016 petition criticizing the Turkish government's military actions in southeastern Turkey against PKK as well as the attempted coup d'état on July 15, 2016, and the repressions during a state of emergency which lasted from 20. July 2016 to 18 July 2018.



media, which operate in Germany, as well as those in Turkey, which are also consumed in Germany, play an important mediating role: They form an 'intermediate world' of German-Turkish relations. A non-negligible mediating function between politics and those people of Turkish origin also take over the transnationally oriented migrant self-organizations, which offer various events to the people of Turkish origin and represent their interests. With their economic, socio-political and cultural activities, people of Turkish origin do not only shape society and politics in Germany in a sustainable way, but are also a part of German-Turkish and EU-Turkey relations.<sup>9</sup>

#### *a) Pluralization and Diversification*

Of the almost three million people living in Germany with roots in Turkey, about 1.6 million are German and 1.4 million are Turkish nationals. According to the 2011 census, the number of people of Turkish origin with a double pass is 530,596. The number of Turkish nationals is declining, which can primarily be explained by naturalizations, citizenship through birth<sup>10</sup>, the non-admission of dual citizenship and the restrictive entry requirements also for family reunification.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of Turkish citizens live in the four large countries: 33.57 percent in NRW, 17.38 percent in Baden-Württemberg, 13.3 percent in Bavaria and 10.48 percent in Hesse. In the three city-states, a total of 11.94 percent of Turkish citizens live; 7.23 percent in Berlin, 3.09 percent in Hamburg and 1.62 percent in Bremen. Saxony (0.3), Saxony-Anhalt (0.18), Brandenburg (0.17), Thuringia (0.14) and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (0.09) come in last.<sup>12</sup>

Once a labor diaspora, today the Turkish diaspora in Germany is highly diverse in social, economic, cultural, and political terms. It includes ethnic and religious 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. The transnational diaspora of Turkish origin in Germany is extremely heterogeneous in political terms too. At first glance, a distinction can be made between primarily conservative and religious people, but also Turkish nationalists who support the current domestic policy of the Turkish government. On the other side, there are leftists and liberals of various stripes as well as parts of the Kurds and Alevis. However, none of the groups can be described as homogeneous, especially among those of Turkish origin in Germany who are critical of the Turkish government, and sympathetic to social democratic or popular leftist parties as well as to the Kurdish nationalist PKK or other extremist left-wing groups which are classified as terrorist

<sup>9</sup> Yaşar Aydın, 'The New Turkish Diaspora Policy', p. 9 et. seqq.

<sup>10</sup> People born in Germany as of 2000 are entitled to German citizenship if their parents have a secure residence status and have been residing legally in Germany for more than eight years.

<sup>11</sup> BAMF, *Migrationsbericht 2018*, Berlin, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Cp. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/165266/umfrage/verteilung-der-tuerkischstaemmigen-bevoelkerung-in-deutschland-nach-bundeslaendern/>, download: 3.7.2020.



organization by the Turkish as well as German government. Turks are represented in almost all professions. There are currently around 96,000 Turkish entrepreneurs in Germany employing around 500,000 people and generating annual sales of around 50 billion Euro.

#### *b) Social Participation, Discrimination and Social Exclusion*

Although Turks in Germany were occasionally described as disintegrated, and despite discrimination and social exclusion they experience, social life between the 'native' and the Turks works today better than it is portrayed in the media and in politics. Migrants from Turkey are part of this society, participate in social life, have families here, pursue gainful employment and even have a say in politics. 19 percent of German women who had a binational marriage had a Turkish husband, 14 percent of German men with binational marriages were married to Turks.<sup>13</sup>

#### *c) Political Participation and Preferences*

Political transnationalism shows itself in the interest and participation in politics in Turkey. In the Turkish parliamentary elections in November 2015, people of Turkish origin in Germany with Turkish citizenship voted for the AKP with 59.2 percent, the pro-Kurdish left-wing HDP with 15.9 percent, the secular left-wing CHP with 14.8 percent and with 7.5 percent the nationalist MHP. Around 70 percent of the votes were thus given to parties on the right, around 30 percent to parties on the left.<sup>14</sup> At the constitutional referendum in April 2017, 69.1 percent of Turkish voters in Germany voted for the constitutional change, 30.9 percent voted against. In Turkey, 51.4 percent voted for, 48.6 percent against. However, it must be taken into account that only 46.2 percent of the 1.4 million Turkish citizens eligible to vote in Germany participated in the constitutional referendum (the turnout for the parliamentary election was 40.8 percent).<sup>15</sup> It can therefore not be said that a majority of the Turkish citizens living in Germany supported the constitutional reform.

The party preferences of people of Turkish origin with a German passport in relation to the German parties, on the other hand, are as follows: In a survey from 2016 with 69.8 percent approval, the SPD was clearly ahead of the Greens with 13.4 percent and the left with 9.6 percent. The bottom of the list is the CDU with 6.1 percent approval. With regard to the relationship between party preference and level of education, the following tendency emerges: The higher the level of education, the lower the approval of

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<sup>13</sup> Destatis, February 18, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Cp. Yaşar Aydın, 'Die Parlamentswahl in der Türkei im Juni 2015: Ist das Wahlergebnis ein Sieg für die Demokratie und für den nationalen Zusammenhalt?', *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, Jg. 55, 03-04/2015: 11–26.

<sup>15</sup> Cp. <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/2017Referandum/2017HO-Ornek134.pdf>

the SPD. The higher the level of education, the higher the approval of the Greens and the Left. The difference in the CDU is almost insignificant at + 2.6 percent.<sup>16</sup>

#### **IV. A case of ‘failed integration’ or of a ‘triple-win-situation’?**

German-Turkish migration is a good example for the openness, and how migration movements and their outcomes are unpredictable. Migration has had a significant impact on both societies by bringing people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions and lifestyles together. The integration process was not always smooth and was often accompanied by intercultural misunderstandings and sometimes tensions. However, the social coexistence between people of Turkish origin and locals works much better today than portrayed in the media and in politics. Migrants from Turkey are part of this society, participate in social life, have families here, pursue gainful employment and even have a say in politics.

Turkey also benefited, for example from money transfers, which accounted for a considerable share of total foreign exchange income up to the 1980s, money spent by migrant workers on vacation for consumption and investment purposes (property purchases).

Some of the people of Turkish origin have successfully integrated themselves into the central areas of society (*integration*). A small part has even given up its identity of origin and has merged into the dominant culture and the mainstream (*assimilation*). Another part of the group failed to find their way in society, and so they lived more or less separately from the majority society (*segregation*). At the same time, the well-integrated sometimes face exclusion, discrimination and non-recognition. Part of the majority society still perceives and treats them as non-belonging, strangers.

With their transnational orientations and relationships, people of Turkish origin also shape Germany's relations with Turkey. Domestic political debates, which particularly affect people of Turkish origin living in Germany – including dealing with the NSU murder series or the discussion about dual citizenship – have already advanced to foreign policy issues in this context. Conversely, tensions in the bilateral relations between Germany and Turkey also cause upset between – at least part of – the Turkish-born population in Germany and the majority society, politics and the media.

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<sup>16</sup> Cp.. Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, ‘Schwarz, rot, grün welche Parteien bevorzugen Zuwanderer?’ Policy Brief, 2016-5 (<https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/tuerkei/253189/heimat-almanya#footnode11-13>, download: 3.7.2020).

**Table 1: Emigration from Turkey and Immigration to Germany, 1991 to 2018, and GDP growth rate Turkey**

Direction/ Year	1991	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
to Turkey	36,639	35,612	37,058	34,595	<b>33,229</b>	<b>32,172</b>
to Germany	<b>82,635</b>	<b>49,699</b>	<b>42,222</b>	<b>36,341</b>	31,449	28,926
GDP growth rate Turkey, %		5.6	9.64	9.01	7.11	5.03
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
to Turkey	<b>38,889</b>	<b>39,615</b>	<b>36,033</b>	<b>32,756</b>	<b>32,788</b>	<b>33,644</b>
to Germany	28,742	29,544	30,171	31,021	28,641	26,390
GDP growth rate Turkey, %	0.84	- 4.7	8.48	11.11	4.79	8.49
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
to Turkey	<b>31,941</b>	30,540	30,505	27,049	29,735	
to Germany	27,805	<b>32,684</b>	<b>41,296</b>	<b>47,750</b>	<b>47,449</b>	
GDP growth rate Turkey, %	5.16	6.09	3.18	7.47	2.82	0.87

Compilation: Yaşar Aydın; source: BAMF, Migrationsbericht 2018, Berlin, 2020; for GDP growth rate cp. World Bank, <https://bit.ly/2OVrAhC>