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Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe

Executive Summary

Turkey

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Multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-denominational, Turkish society embraces various ethno-cultural and religious groups that have been the agents of several different emigration and immigration processes. Since the early 1960s, people from Turkey have been emigrating to various parts of the world, mostly to Western European countries based on bilateral labour agreements. While some left Turkey due to economic hardships, others left for political, ethnic, cultural and religious reasons, in search of refuge. Turkish labour migrants were mainly men between the age of 20 and 39 years and, starting from the second half of the 1960s, predominantly consisted of low educated rural workers originating from Central Anatolia and Black Sea regions. Since 1973, with Europe's oil recession, the composition of the Turkish migrant population has become a more general population in the form of family reunification and political asylum rather than mainly labour migration. According to EUROSTAT, the total number of Turkish-origin emigrants residing in European countries is currently about 4.5 million.

There were some 2.5 million returnees in the early years of emigration between 1961 and 1974, when migration used to have a circular form, which mainly prompted males to emigrate. Another substantial return took place in 1984 when Germany introduced an attractive return scheme for voluntary returnees. The number of returnees in 1984 and 1985 was around 300,000 - a figure that has steadily declined since. Recently, a new phenomenon has emerged: the return migration of qualified middle- and upper-middle class migrants of Turkish origin. It is estimated that around 8,000 Turkish-origin emigrants (and their children) come to Turkey each year for employment opportunities in international companies and tourist resorts. The fact that net-migration has become positive in the last couple of years indicates that Turkey has turned into a destination country, attracting immigrants from various parts of the world - including the EU. According to EUROSTAT, the out-migration of Turkish citizens from Germany has exceeded their emigration to Germany since 2006.

Domestic migration has also been an important matter for Turkey since the early days of the Republic. Internal migration can be divided into three chronological categories: a) migration in the pre-1950 period, b) migration from 1950 to 1985, and c) migration in the post-1985 period (Internally-Displaced People - IDPs). The first involves rural-urban migration in the early years of the industrialisation process. The second period is characterised not only by rural-urban migration, but by urban-urban migration as well, which had a great demographic impact on overcrowded big cities. The third period covers the migration of IDPs who had to leave their rural homes and move to the suburbs of big cities as a result of the armed conflict in the South-eastern region, due either to state pressure or fear of staying in the middle of the conflict.

While studies on the impact of the great migration waves on the Turkish labour market are widely missing, migration has greatly affected the economy through remittances. Especially in the 1960s, remittances were regarded as a major source of external financing, catering for offsetting the trade deficits in particular. Their share in GDP reached its maximum of 4.73% in 1973. Remittances have been mainly used for consumption and improved the welfare of the recipients' households. There are only few examples of successful investments of migrants/returnees; most initiatives failed due to lack of entrepreneurial expertise, wrong choice of sectors, and bureaucratic problems.

Besides several multilateral agreements, Turkey has signed 22 bilateral social security agreements to date, first of which was with the UK in 1961, and the last one with Luxembourg in 2006. Turkish migrants moving within the EU additionally profit from the Association Agreement of 1963, which has granted them the transfer of social security rights according to the principles of the EU co-ordination law. However, Turkey has been experiencing certain problems in terms of social security payment transfers recently, resulting from the global financial crisis that was damaging the economies of European countries.

One of the key social issues arising from the age and gender selectivity (mostly young men emigrating) of Turkish migration was family separations, the abandonment of many old people and child outcomes in terms of labour, health and education. Perhaps the most serious problem concerned elderly people who have lost their family and social support. Even though Turkish custom obliges the children to take care of their parents in their old age, migration breaks down the tradition.

Another group vulnerable due to migration are IDPs who are mainly people of Kurdish origin who were forced to leave their homes due to the conflict that has taken hold in the eastern and south-

eastern parts of Turkey for the last three decades. They are unable to fully enjoy their fundamental rights of education. Turkey's minority and anti-discrimination laws define minorities as "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities" (Armenians, Greeks, and Jews) so that IDPs even lack the protection granted to officially-recognised minorities. Besides the lack of education, IDPs face high rates of poverty and unemployment. Particularly vulnerable are women and children due to poor access to health and social services.

Internal migration and displacement have apparently caused the so-called "shanty towns" such as in Istanbul and Izmir on the one hand and least populated regions in Eastern Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia on the other hand. While the shanty towns display high shares of unemployment and underemployment and considerable informal employment, unemployment is relatively low in the out-migration regions in the Eastern parts of the country due to high shares of (self-) employment in (subsistence) agriculture and non-paid family workers including women.

Turkey has so far developed policies geared to encourage qualified Turkish emigrants to return, facilitate the educational and social reintegration of returnees, and promote the social and economic inclusion of internal migrants. However, attempts to incorporate internal migrants into the labour market and legitimate political channels have not been sufficiently successful. Turkey has also failed to channel labour remittances towards economic investments to integrate returnees to the labour market.

Circular migration: Assuming that the nature of migration is circular in normal circumstances, the study proposes that both sending and receiving countries should try to encourage circular forms of migration that do not necessarily lead to the permanent settlement of migrants in destination countries. Turkey should also take active part in laying the grounds to promote circular migration, involving the diaspora in economic development, and validating skills acquired abroad.

Return migration: It is suggested that Turkey should take further actions to encourage emigrants to return by generating attractive schemes that would appeal to scientists, academics, researchers and entrepreneurs originally from Turkey, so that they take an active part in advancing the Turkish economy and academia. Turkey should, for instance, adopt a more flexible legal framework that offers legal emigrants the possibility of free movement between Turkey and the destination country, while preserving their immigration status in the country of residence. The "Blue Card" system may be substantialised for emigrants who relinquished their Turkish citizenship, permitting them to retain social, economic, and civil rights, with the exclusion of political rights.

Reintegration of returnees: Both national and local authorities should generate schemes with the assistance of relevant NGOs and academics to assist the reintegration of returnees into Turkish society. Public institutions such as the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, and the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities could enrich their collaboration with relevant institutions abroad to generate new schemes to encourage emigrants to return. Such efforts could include, for instance, educational support and activities for children.

Social inclusion of IDPs and other minorities: Policy makers at both the national and local levels should systematically tackle the social, economic, cultural and political problems stemming from the inclusion of IDPs, Roma, Alevis, Armenians, Arabs and Balkan-Caucasian Muslims into Turkish society. Effort should be spent on developing schemes to combat institutional discrimination, and to eradicate the social, economic and political conditions which force them to emigrate. For instance, medical tourism could be endorsed in places other than metropolises to generate employment opportunities in these regions; or organic agriculture might be promoted and subsidised in rural areas to incorporate the rural segments of the population into globalisation processes. Eventually, Turkey should support all local, national and international initiatives to build up a secure and prosperous environment in the Middle East so that the local populations in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia may prosper.