



Turkey

Traditionally, Turkey has been known as a country of emigration. Starting from the early 1960s and well into the 1970s, large numbers of Turkish nationals migrated to western European countries, particularly West Germany. This emigration continued into recent times through family reunification and the asylum track.

Turkey is also a country of transit migration to the European Union for irregular migrants from the Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Somalia, and Republic of Congo. Turkey, whose population approaches 75 million, has also become a destination for irregular migrants from former Soviet Bloc countries.



Emigration

The economic downturn in western Europe that arrived with the oil crisis of 1973 ended the recruitment of labour from Turkey. However, Europe's recession coincided with an economic boom in the Middle East, allowed Turkish workers to emigrate to countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. As a result of this emigration, remittances sent by Turkish immigrants and workers abroad have been a major foreign currency input for the economy since the early 1960s. Since the mid-1980s, asylum seekers have been heading for Western Europe. Another aspect of emigration is an increase in the number of highly qualified professionals and university graduates moving to Europe or the Commonwealth of Independent States countries (CIS).

Immigration

The period of government-supported major immigration into Turkey lasted until about the early 1970s, after which immigration began to be discouraged on the grounds that Turkey's population had grown enough and that land to distribute to immigrants had become scarce. Turkey currently allows nationals of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and the Central Asian republics to enter the country either without visas or with visas that can easily be obtained.

Turkey also faces another issue, which is the number of irregular migrants using Turkey as a transit route to Europe. These people are mostly nationals of neighboring countries in the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan.

There is also an increasing number of EU member-state nationals that constitute a relatively new phenomenon in terms of immigration into Turkey, particularly in Istanbul, as well as European retirees in some of the Mediterranean resorts.

Turkey does not grant refugee status to asylum seekers coming from outside Europe, because the country maintains a 'geographical limitation' to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks, Tatars, and Turks - mostly from the Balkans - are able to immigrate to Turkey, while others will face a closed door. The overwhelming majority of asylum seekers in Turkey are actually non-Europeans.

Turkish Citizenship

Turkey's immigration policy - including regulations on refugees and asylum - is still strongly guided by the concept of national identity and its underlying principle of cultural unity. Still, it is not mandatory to be of 'Turkish culture and descent' in order to acquire Turkish citizenship, although being of Turkish descent facilitates the acquisition procedure. Today foreign nationals are entitled to apply for Turkish citizenship on the basis of marriage, residence, birth and the intention to settle permanently.

Turkey and the EU

The changing patterns of immigration into Turkey and Turkey's efforts to become a member of the European Union induce policies to improve immigration and asylum procedures. However there are concerns in Europe that if Turkey were to become a member of the EU, there would be a wave of immigration from Turkey to the more prosperous members of the union. On the other hand, there could be a reverse migration trend as some Turkish immigrants might choose to return to Turkey, as has happened in Greece, Portugal, and Spain.

Istanbul

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is the local authority of Istanbul, with a population of around 14 million citizens covering an area of 5,343 sq km and a total of 39 district municipalities. It is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world.

Urbanisation

Rapid population growth, traffic jams, poor public transport, earthquake risk and lack of a cohesive urban development strategy are all pressing issues. Unchecked population growth is the biggest strain on the city's resources. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that Istanbul's population will grow to 16m by 2017, and to 23m by 2023. Density levels are high compared with other European or US cities.

Migration

Internal migration to Istanbul tripled in 2010 after a static period, with many of the new arrivals coming from the Black Sea region, as opposed to previous waves that were predominantly from the East and Southeast Anatolia. According to figures from the Turkish Statistical Institute net migration to Istanbul - which had held steady in recent years at around 30,000 people annually - increased in 2010 to 102,000 people.

The city has seen other migrants leaving. TurkStat figures showed that 336,932 people left Istanbul last year, while 439,515 moved to the city, a net migration gain of 102,583. The high cost of living in Istanbul is a major factor in people's decision to leave the city. Retirees and other elderly people often relocate to coastal cities where the temperature is more moderate and the cost of living is lower.

Main sources

MPI - Migration Information Source, *Turkey: A Transformation from Emigration to Immigration*; The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK), *Country Profile Turkey*; Ahmet İçduygu and Kristen Biehl (2009), *Managing International Urban Migration: Türkiye-Italia-Espana, The Turkish Case-Istanbul*