

MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Doç. Dr. Nurhayati Ali ASSEGAF

Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi

Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

nurhayati_aliassegaf@yahoo.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-2345-6789

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ABSTRACT: The study provides arguments of the effect of highly-skilled migration on the economic development of Turkey. Literatures in economics have provided evidence that migration in overall has strong and positive economic dimension for the host country. In Turkey itself, studies have found similar conclusions that immigration bring about positive effect on its economy. As such, Turkey has stated in its 10th Development Plan and has made various efforts to recruit qualified international labor force and address the urgent need to attract foreign direct investment. Some of the factors that attract highly-skilled international workforce to immigrate to Turkey include booming Turkish economy, growing opportunities for higher education, research and development, and increasing foreign direct investment opportunities. All those efforts have resulted in a number of positive impacts that Turkey has enjoyed from its resources of highly-skilled migrants. In order for Turkey to further increase the positive economic impact from migration, this study provides some policy suggestions

Keywords: Migration, Turkish economy, highly-skilled migrants, policy, Turkey

Türkiye’de Ekonomik Kalkınma ve Göç

ÖZ: Bu çalışma, yüksek vasıflı göçün Türkiye’nin ekonomik kalkınması üzerindeki etkisine dair argümanlar sunmaktadır. Ekonomi literatürü, genel olarak göçün ev sahibi ülke için güçlü ve olumlu bir ekonomik boyuta sahip olduğuna dair kanıtlar sağlamıştır. Türkiye’de yapılan araştırmalarda da, göçün ekonomi üzerinde olumlu etkiler yarattığına dair benzer sonuçlara varılmıştır. Bu itibarla Türkiye, 10. Kalkınma Planı’nda belirttiği gibi nitelikli uluslararası işgücünün istihdam edilmesi ve doğrudan yabancı yatırımın çekilmesi konusundaki acil ihtiyacın karşılanması için çeşitli çabalar sarf etmiştir. Yüksek vasıflı uluslararası işgücünün Türkiye’ye göç etmesindeki faktörlerden bazıları, gelişen Türkiye ekonomisi, artan yükseköğrenim, araştırma ve geliştirme fırsatları ve artan doğrudan yabancı yatırım fırsatlarını içermektedir. Tüm bu çabalar, Türkiye’nin yüksek vasıflı göçmen kaynaklarından yararlandığı bir dizi olumlu etkiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada Türkiye’nin göçün olumlu ekonomik etkisini daha da artırabilmesi için bazı politika önerileri sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Türk ekonomisi, yüksek vasıflı göçmen, politika, Türkiye

Introduction

Migration could occur under various settings and motivations. Boswell (2002) divides migration into two major types, i.e. forced displacement and voluntary migration. Forced displacement is migration that occur without any visible choice from the participants, i.e. the migrants typically have no choice but to migrate in order to survive. This type of migration usually happens because of war, state repression, or conflicts that happen in the origin country. The other type of migration, that becomes the focus of this study, is voluntary migration. This type of migration characteristically has economic reasons behind it, such as for example better opportunities and prospects of higher wage at destination country, as compared to unemployment and low wage at origin country.

Turkey is considered a migrant-friendly country in both means. For the case of forced migration, since 2016, Turkey has taken significant steps toward facilitating refugee access to employment, education, and health services by making changes in the international protection laws and regulations for asylum seekers. Turkey is making efforts to convert these migrants into properly skilled individuals, and has been attempting to integrate them into Turkish workforce. As for migrants who are voluntary in nature (most of whom are skilled migrants), Turkish have, similarly, been working on designing regulations to attract highly skilled international workforce. Turkey has been focusing on this venue since the Helsinki

Summit of 1999, in terms of aligning its migration and integration policies with those of the European Union. From both types of migration, it is expected that Turkey is able to reap and enjoy economic benefits from its migration policies, either directly or indirectly.

The paper focuses to discuss the effect of highly-skilled migration from the perspective of economic development in Turkey. Literatures in economics, which is discussed in depth in the second part of the paper have provided evidence that migration in overall has strong and positive economic dimension for the host country, including Turkey. The impacts of migration on Turkish economy can be discussed from several aspects, i.e. conversion of Syrian refugees into skilled labors and entrepreneurs, impacts of migrants on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Turkey, and from international students in Turkey.

This paper is organized as follows: first the paper reviews a number of literatures related to migration topics, both from the point of view of economics, and sociology. Then the paper discusses an overview of migration condition in Turkey. Afterwards, economic impacts Turkey experienced from the migrants currently residing in its border. Lastly, the paper provides some policy suggestions aimed to further improve the migration condition in Turkey.

Litterature Review

Boswell (2002) documents a summarization and categorization of theories about migration into three major streams of theories. The first one is macro theories, such as Faist (2001). Under these theories, migration occurs due to the “push” vs “pull” factors between points of origin and destination. Hence, these theories tend to emphasize the difference in conditions of both "push" and "pull" factors in countries of origin and destination that trigger migration. Push factors are the ones “pushing” people out of the country of origin. These factors typically include adverse / subpar economic or political conditions such as unemployment, low salaries or low per capita income, state repression, or fear of violence or civil war in the country of origin relative to the country of destination. On the other hand, pull factors are those that “attract” people to come into a particular country. These factors would include friendly migration legislation and better labor market situation in receiving countries. Macro theories are able to explain forced migration well, but are less well equipped in accounting for the persistence of voluntary migration despite changes in economic conditions or legislation in receiving countries.

The second category is meso theories, as discussed in Bilsborrow and Zlotnik (1994) and Faist (2001). According to meso theories, migration occurs within a “migration system”, i.e. a group of countries linked by economic, political, or cultural ties. Meso theories posits that migration occurs within a complex system of linkages between states linked by economic, political and cultural ties. An important component for meso theories is “networks” between countries. Networks refer to a set of individual and collective actors and the multiple social and symbolic ties that link them together. Once formed, networks can substantially influence the direction and volume of migration flows. While meso theories can help explain the choice of destination for refugees, they are less relevant for explaining forced displacement.

The last category is micro theories, which focus on the factors influencing individual decisions to migrate, and analyze how potential migrants weigh up the various costs (financial and psychological resources for migrating) and benefits (higher salary or physical safety) of migrating. These theories posit that migration occurs based on each individual weighing cost-benefit of migrating, built on the assumption that the micro perspective (decision making of each individual) is an important level of analysis in terms of showing how individuals internally process and assess the various conditions generating migration. One of the drawbacks of the theories is that they often draw on “rational choice theory” of economics, which tend to make a number of controversial assumptions about how and why individuals take decisions.

Among the numerous theories in the field of economics, there are several that relates the most with the topic of migration. Seen from the viewpoint of economics, the phenomenon of migration is closely associated to economic relations between countries. Migration could arise due to the comparative advantage condition in labor-intensive sectors. These sectors, which have previously been sources of economic growth in the advanced countries, is rapidly shifting to the newly industrializing countries. The first one is regarding trade liberalization (Gilpin, 2016). Trade liberalization theories are based on principle of comparative advantage. These perspectives promote free trade among countries and argue against barriers of trade. Not only in economic aspect, but liberal thinkers also view cultural influences as well as political influences resulting from international trade in a positive way.

The liberal views are direct opposite to economic nationalism (Gilpin, 2016), which view international trade to have negative effects on the culture of the countries involved in the trade. Economic nationalism view gives rise to the new protectionism, which prefers trade between countries to be restricted to reduce the number of imports coming into a country (Lee, 2001). The new protectionism view would hinder the flow of goods and services (consequently includes migration), has also spread to the service sectors and to high-technology industries believed to be both strategic sectors and the future growth industries of the advanced countries. The protectionism policies are often established in order to minimize disruption to local businesses. Some of the means of protectionism includes monetary tariffs and some non-tariffs restrictions, such as quotas on imports.

As for the impacts of migration on a country's economy, there are at least two views from the economic perspective. The first one is material view, which emphasize the impacts of migration on a country's economic wealth. According to the research of Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005), migration evidently possesses a strong economic dimension in a country. This is deemed true not only from macroeconomic setting, but also in from microeconomic one, as discussed in Freeman and Kessler (2008) which despite not believing that immigration preferences always reflect underlying material interests, but the material stakes of migration are still critical inputs into the migration policy process that must be taken into account.

The second view is called the labor view, which focuses more on the impacts of migration on a country's labor market. In fact, the majority of work on migration from the field of economics addresses its role in labor markets. Some notable studies include Bauer and Zimmermann 2002; Borjas 1994; Smith and Edmonston 1997). Migrants are perceived as one component of labor power, or embodied "human capital". Hence, their introduction into national or local labor markets is presumed to increase an economy's productive resources and capabilities.

However, Borjas (1995) argues that there is always a trade-off with regards to immigrant's contribution to a country's economy. On the one hand, influx of immigrants increases the economy's labor supply and productive resources. This converts to the rise in national income (commonly called an 'immigration surplus'). However, at the same time, the migrants and capital owners takes a portion of income away from existing domestic laborers. This could escalate the potential for political conflict among diverse economic (and non-economic) interests.

Migration in Turkey: An Overview

Migration Condition

Turkey seemingly attracts many skilled and highly skilled EU citizens, descendants of Turkish origin migrants residing in the EU, and other citizens from the rest of the world. Sanchez-Montijano et. al (2018) mentioned several factors that attract highly-skilled international workforce to immigrate to Turkey:

- Booming Turkish economy,
- Growing opportunities for higher education,
- Research and development,
- Increasing foreign direct investment opportunities
- Turkey's potential to become a soft power in the region

According to OECD Data, in 2019, the U.S. is the country that has the highest number of permanent foreigner inflows in the world, while Turkey is placed 3rd highest. There are around 579 thousand foreigners obtained legal permanent resident status in Turkey, which represents 0.7% of its total population.

Country	Permanent inflows of foreigners, people, 2019	Permanent inflows as a share of population, %, 2019
United States	1 031	0.3
Germany	612	0.7
Turkey	579	0.7
Colombia	491*	1
Spain	409	0.9
United Kingdom	346	0.5
Canada	341	0.9
France	292	0.4
Chile	247	1.8
Italy	205	0.3
Australia	193	0.8

Figure 1: Number of Permanent Foreign Inflows and Permanent Inflows as a Share of Population Source: OECD Migration Database, 2019.

Migration Policies

Turkey has established a rather matured policy in order to properly handle migration issues. According to the report published by International Organization for Migration (IOM), there are several categories of foreigners in Turkey:

1. Temporary Protection (TP)

TP is a permit specifically granted to refugees coming in from other countries, as a result of forced displacement in their country of origin. Currently, the majority of TP holder in Turkey are Syrian refugees. As of 4th quarter of 2020, Turkey's Temporary Protection regime grants 3,643,769 Syrian nationals the right to legally stay in Turkey as well as some level of access to basic rights and services.

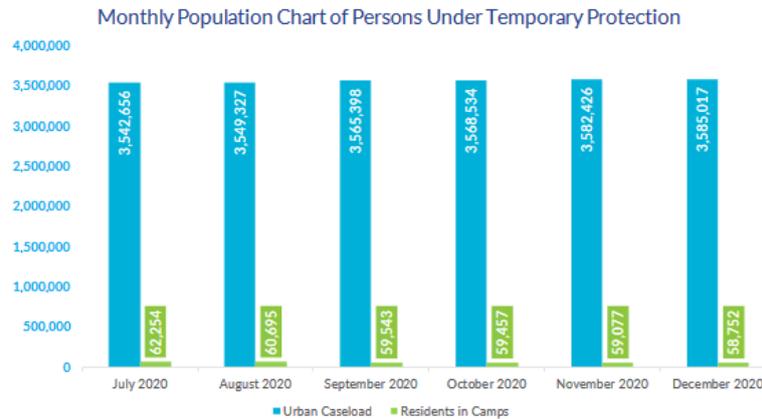


Figure 2: Number of Persons under Temporary Protection Status in Turkey Source: IOM, 2020.

2. Residence Permit (RP)

RP is a permit for foreigners who stay in Turkey beyond the duration of a visa or longer than 90 days. Types of residence permits include:

- short-term residence permit;
- family residence permit;
- student residence permit;
- working permits as residence permit.
- long-term residence permit;
- humanitarian residence permit;
- victim of human trafficking residence permit

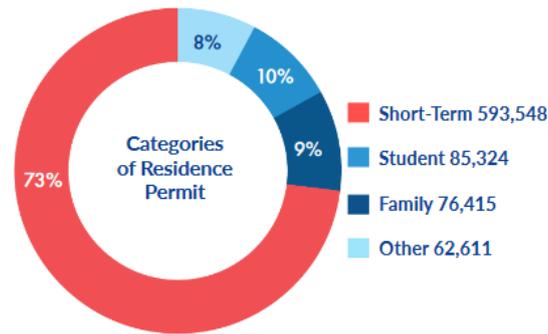


Figure 3: Numbers of Residence Permit Granted by Turkish Government, by Category Source: IOM, 2020.

3. International Protection (IP) Applicants

IP applicants are those who are in process of applying for legal migrant status in Turkey but have not been granted legal status yet. Applicants of IP are mostly from Afghanistan, followed by Iraq and Iran. As of 2019, there are 56,417 IP applicants.

4. Irregular Migrants (IM)

IM are the types of status granted to illegal migrants and their smugglers. Most IM entered Turkey from Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, and transited or resided in Turkey before attempting to cross the Aegean Sea to Europe. The three biggest countries of origin of IM in 2020 are Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Pakistan. During 2020, there are 122,302 irregular migrants and 4,282 migrant smugglers.

The 10th Development Plan of the Government of Turkey (2013-2018) explicitly mentions the recruitment of a qualified international labor force. The plan addresses the awareness and urgent need to attract foreign direct investment, improve research and development activities, increase the number of international students and introduce the Turquoise Card to attract qualified international workforce.

As the implementation of such plan, Turkey has established a number of laws to regulate its migrant affairs, such as the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law no. 6458) that came into force in April 2014, and Law on International Workforce (Law No. 6735), that was effective as of 13 August 2016. Main spirit of the regulations are to provide arrangements for better integration of non-nationals into the country's labor market.

Some of the key features of the aforementioned laws include:

- ▶ International masters and PhD students are possible to get work permits upon arrival,
- ▶ Undergraduate students are welcome to get work permits after two years' stay (Art. 41/1).
- ▶ Opens path for those who have legal refugee status to receive work permits (Art. 89/4/b).
- ▶ Law No. 6735 specifically introduces a new type of work permit, the "Turquoise Card", to attract a qualified international workforce, easing the conditions of stay and work for the spouses and relatives of qualified international workers.

The Turquoise Card

It is imperative to have a specific section about the Turquoise Card policy, as it was deemed as one of the most important breakthrough in the Turkey's migration laws. This law is a clear maneuver and serious effort by Turkish government to attract highly-skilled migrants from other countries in order to work in Turkey and assimilate into Turkish workforce.

The policy was introduced in the Law No. 6735 (Law on International Workforce). Article 11.1 states that the Turquoise Card will be granted to those foreigners whose individual applications are approved, according to their level of education, professional experience, contribution to science and technology, the impact of their activity or investment in Turkey on the country's economy and employment.

In order to be granted the status, applicants need recommendations from the International Labor Force Policy Advisory Board and have to follow the procedures and principles be determined by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (ÇSGB).

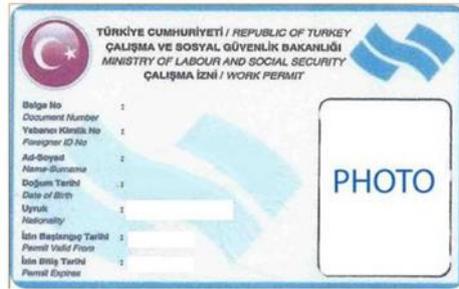


Figure 4: Illustration of Turquoise Card Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2021.

The effort to attract highly-skilled migrants could bring about significant economic benefit into the country. As stated in Nathan (2014), highly-skilled migrants have particular characteristics such as possessing formal qualifications (education to degree level or beyond), advanced training (scientists, engineers, researchers and other professionals), and/or attitudes and soft skills (entrepreneurial drive and aptitude).

Having such characteristics, Nathan (2014) summarizes previous literatures that highly-skilled migrants are expected to bring about innovation in the hosting country in a number of ways. First, the decision to migrate by a highly-skilled migrant usually involves balancing risks and expected future returns. Such decision would tend to lean towards selected highly skilled individuals, or those with sector/field expertise and experience (Borjas, 1987; Malchow-Møller et. al, 2011). Second, workforce diversity may generate externalities that contribute to knowledge creation. Diverse teams may be more effective than homogenous teams in problem-solving or generating new ideas, by leveraging a wider pool of perspectives and skills (Page, 2007; Berliant and Fujita, 2009). Third, diasporic networks may contribute to knowledge diffusion and sharing (Jaffe and Trajtenberg, 2002).

Economic Impacts of Migrants in Turkey

In general, Tanrikulu (2020) found the evidence that migration can turn out to be a positive influence on the Turkish economy, depending on how quickly the person in question find jobs and are integrated into the Turkish labor market. For highly-skilled migrants, integrating into Turkish labor market would prove to be achievable, given that most skilled migrants are migrating into Turkey with job offers in hand, so that they can work almost immediately. As such, highly-skilled migrants would contribute positive influence on Turkish economy within short period of time without any need for lengthy training and education process.

Meanwhile, as for migrants who strive in entrepreneurship sector, despite needing more time to prepare before starting to run their businesses, migrant entrepreneurs could potentially contribute more to Turkish economy than just material wealth. Unlike highly-skilled workers who bring about their individual skills and typically only strive for themselves, successful entrepreneurs could also contribute to absorb domestic workers in their businesses, hence aiding to increase employment rate in the country.

Other studies in other countries have similar conclusion, which is that migration contributes positively to the hosting country's economy. Such studies include IMF World Economic Outlook (2020), OECD (2014), Migration Council Australia (2015), and Quak (2019), among others.

The impacts of migration on Turkish economy can be discussed from several aspects, i.e. conversion of Syrian refugees into skilled labors and entrepreneurs, impacts of migrants on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Turkey, and from international students in Turkey.

Conversion of Syrian Refugees into Skilled Labors and Entrepreneurs

According to the figures from the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), the number of Syrian nationals in Turkey has reached more than 3.6 million individuals, who are granted “temporary protection” status. This huge number of people would prove to be a valuable asset in Turkish labor market in post-Covid era.

Tanrikulu (2020) noted that in order to convert Syrian refugees into skilled labor and integrate them into Turkish labor market, it is recommended that Turkey to continue to provide more education, language training, and support.

Furthermore, Cagaptay and Menekse (2014) mentioned that beyond just being part of the Turkish labor market, Syrians with entrepreneurial skills are candidates for bigger roles in Turkish economy.

- The share of Syrian companies comprises 26% of the foreign companies established in Turkey (Mostly carry out essential activities in the field of exports).
- The number of companies opened by Syrians, for example, increased 40-fold between 2010 and 2014 (Başıhoş, Özpinar, and Kulaksız 2015)

Ownership of FDI in Turkey

Environment for foreigners to make investment and do business in Turkey seems to be continually improving. In 2020, Turkey ranked 33rd in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking (10 positions higher than in 2019 which was 43rd). Migrants with capital funds to invest in Turkey has made relatively large contribution to investment in Turkey. Turkey in 2020 has managed to take 1% of global investment, amounting to around USD 17.7 billions.¹

According to data compiled by Santander Trade, Turkey is Europe’s 7th most popular destination of foreign direct investment in 2019. Accordingly, it has a 4% share in foreign direct investments and reached its highest level ever and broke its own record. Also in 2019, major FDI investors in Turkey comes from Netherlands and United Kingdom. Majority of FDI fund flows are invested in Finance and Insurance, and Retail trade sectors

Table 1.
Composition of FDI Fund Inflows to Turkey

Main Investing Countries	2019, in %	Main Invested Sectors	2019, in %
Netherlands	19.9	Finance and insurance	15.3
United Kingdom	14.9	Wholesale and retail trade	15.2
Qatar	9.7	Chemical industry	10.0
Azerbaijan	9.6	Information and communication	9.9
Germany	7.9	Construction	7.7
United States	5.8	Refined oil	7.2
Japan	5.2	Transport and storage	4.7
		Real estate	3.9

Source: Santander Trade, 2019.

International Students in Turkey

According to data from Study in Turkey, in 2020 Turkey hosted **185,047** international students. From the graph, it is also clear that Turkey is experiencing a boom in the number of international students, starting from around 2013. This indicates the successful efforts by Turkish universities to attract international students².

¹ <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkey-attracts-8b-in-foreign-direct-investment-in-2020>

² Study in Turkey, retrieved from <https://www.studyinturkey.gov.tr/StudyinTurkey/PartStatistic>

In 2018, President Erdogan has announced that Turkey is aiming to attract **350,000** international students. In economic terms, based on 2019 estimates from International Education Fairs of Turkey (IEFT), international students contribute around **\$1 billion** to Turkey's economy annually.

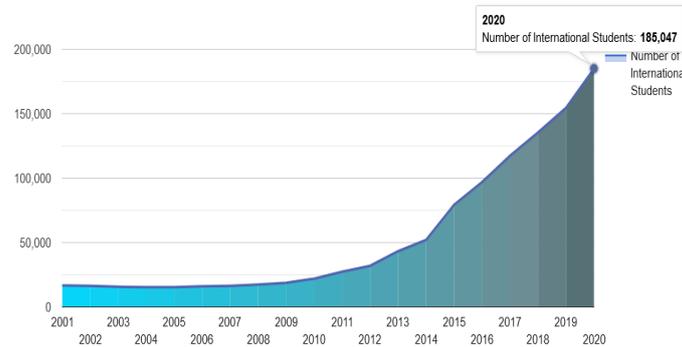


Figure 5: Number of International Students in Turkey Source: Study in Turkey, 2020

Policy Suggestions

Given the current condition of migration in Turkey, and possible potential Turkey could gain from the migrants, there are several policy suggestions that the government could consider taking a look at.

a. Strengthening Cooperation between Turkey-EU

Migration is an area in which the EU and Turkey are mutually dependent. As there are many EU Citizens in Turkey, there are also many Turkish diaspora living across EU (around 5.5 million people as of latest available data, according to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)³.

Back in March 2016, EU and Turkey have issued a joint statement (known as “2016 EU-Turkey statement”) as the final result of long discussion between the two parties on wide area of topics, including migration⁴. The statement provides overall framework for the EU-Turkey cooperation on migration. In the statement, Turkey and EU agreed to a number of terms in order to properly solve the migrant issues concerning the two regions. That was the start of Turkey opening its market labour to Syrian refugees in order to assimilate them into the country's workforce. Furthermore, Turkey agreed to accept the return of migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands, and to take back all irregular migrants intercepted in Turkish waters. Turkey and the EU also agreed to continue putting up measures against migrant smugglers and support the establishment of the NATO activity on the Aegean Sea. On the other hand, the European Union began disbursing the monetary Facility for Refugees in Turkey for projects and work on visa liberalisation and accession talks.

Fast forward 5 years, the action points defined in the statement remained valid, as confirmed by the statement of President of the EU following the meeting with President Erdogan in April 2021⁵. Some of the main action points mentioned in the statement include return operations of refugees from Greece to Turkey, combating human trafficking and smuggling, and support for Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey. Furthermore, Joint Communication by the European Commission in March 2021 also reiterates the need for comprehensive cooperation between EU and Turkey in order to restore a legal and orderly migrant admission system, put an end to irregular migration, prevent the loss of life, take action against migrant smuggling networks, and improve living conditions for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

All in all, it is imperative and would be mutually beneficial for both Turkey and EU to continue to promote policies that would support and safeguard the migration between the two parties.

b. Migration in the SDGs

All countries, including Turkey, has signed off the commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. As stated in SDG Target 10.7, each country should make effort to “facilitate orderly,

³ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_1603

safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.

The United Nations has recently assessed Turkey's achievement with regards to SDGs, including goal no. 10.7 concerning migration. In its 2019 report, the UN has appreciated Turkey's Open Door policy on Syrian war refugees, and also acknowledged Turkey's effort in combating illegal migrants. The report also appreciated Turkey's compliance to the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement.

As part of the next step in order to further advance Turkey's adherence to SDG goal 10.7, the report stated a number of policies set to be implemented in the upcoming years. One of the policies mentioned was "Devising a general-scope orientation training programme to support the adaptation of migrants". This policy is especially mentioned as an indication of Turkey's seriousness in assimilating migrants currently residing in Turkey into Turkey's overall workforce.

In the long-term, it is fundamental that Turkey continuously incorporate and/or consider the achievement of SDG 10.7 in designing policies related to migrants. This is crucial in order to make sure Turkey could achieve its 10.7 goal by 2030, as well as to properly facilitate migration which would in turn contribute positively to Turkey's own economy.

Conclusion

Several conclusions could be made from the study.

1. Migration has a strong economic contribution in a country.
2. Turkey has stated in its Development Plan and made various efforts to recruit qualified international labor force, address the urgent need to attract foreign direct investment, improve research and development activities, increase the number of international students and introduce the Turquoise Card to attract a qualified international workforce.
3. Impacts of migration on Turkish Economic development
 - a. Migration can turn out to be a positive influence on the host economy, including Turkey. However, that depends on how quickly the person in question find jobs and are integrated into the Turkish labor market.
 - b. The huge number of immigrants would prove to be a valuable asset in Turkish labor market in post-Covid era.
 - c. Migrants with capital funds to invest in Turkey has made relatively large contribution to investment in Turkey.
 - d. Turkey is experiencing a boom in the number of international students, starting from around 2013
4. Some policy suggestions to further improve the management of migration:
 - a. Turkey should strengthen cooperation with the EU and its members especially with regards to migration.
 - b. Turkey should make sure to adhere to and to consider SDG target in establishing policies about migration.

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