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Highly Skilled Migration between the EU and Turkey: Drivers and Scenarios

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ABSTRACT

Attracting and retaining highly skilled migrants has become a priority for countries looking to address labour shortages and to strengthen their positions as knowledge-based economies. In this framework the EU and Turkey have, in recent years, been introducing policies aimed at facilitating the arrival of highly skilled migrants. Based on the recognition that migration/mobility is a bi-directional issue, this paper analyses the movement of Turkish highly skilled migrants to the EU and of European highly skilled migrants to Turkey. It focuses on the drivers that affect the mobility of such migrants.

The paper argues that in spite of the lack of cohesive legal frameworks on high-skilled migration between the EU, member states and Turkey, the presence of high-skilled migration frameworks and policies has been a positive driver in EU-Turkey relations. It notes that from 1999 to 2013, political, societal and economic developments in EU and Turkey were drivers that increased the mobility of highly skilled migrants (including students), particularly from the EU to Turkey. The same drivers, in general terms, reversed this trend from roughly 2013 onwards (marked by the Gezi protests in Turkey). In sum, highly skilled migration stands out as an area of mutual benefit, particularly to drive EU-Turkey relations in the direction of “convergence” in 2023.

ÖZET

Yüksek yetenekli göçmenleri çekmek ve muhafaza etmek, işgücü eksikliğine çare arayan ve bilgi temelli bir ekonomi olarak konumunu güçlendirmek isteyen ülkeler için bir öncelik haline gelmiştir. Bu çerçevede AB ve Türkiye son yıllarda yüksek yetenekli göçmenlerin gelişini kolaylaştırmayı amaçlayan politikalar uygulamaktadır. Göç ve hareketliliğin çift yönlü bir konu olduğu varsayımına dayanan bu çalışma, Türkiye’den AB’ye ve Avrupa’dan Türkiye’ye yüksek yetenekli göç hareketini analiz etmekte, bu göçmenlerin hareketliliğini etkileyen unsurlara odaklanmaktadır.

Bu makale, 1999’dan 2013’e kadar (öğrenciler dahil) yüksek vasıflı göçmenlerin özellikle AB’den Türkiye’ye hareketliliğini arttıran unsurların AB ve Türkiye’deki siyasi, toplumsal ve ekonomik gelişmeler olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Aynı unsurlar 2013’ten (Gezi Parkı eylemlerinden) itibaren bu eğilimi tersine çevirmiştir. AB’nin, üye devletlerin ve Türkiye’nin yüksek yetenekli göç konusunda ortak yasal çerçevelerinin olmamasına rağmen, yüksek yetenekli göç tasarısı ve politikalarının varlığı ilişkilerde olumlu bir unsur olmuştur. Yüksek yetenekli göç, iki tarafın da çıkar sağlayabileceği bir alan olarak öne çıkmaktadır.



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1. Introduction

Attracting and retaining highly skilled migrants has become a significant policy for many countries, mainly for two reasons: addressing labour shortages and strengthening countries' positions as knowledge-based economies (OECD, 2009). In this framework, in recent years countries have been introducing policies aimed at facilitating the recruitment and retention of such workers. Attracting highly skilled migrants is also a priority for the EU, as seen in its “Europe 2020 Strategy”. At the same time member states have put in place measures at the national level to improve their capacities to attract highly skilled migrants (OECD and EU, 2016). Turkish state actors have, similarly, been working on legal regulations to attract a highly skilled international workforce. Turkey has been particularly active in this regard since the Helsinki Summit of 1999 in terms of aligning its migration and integration policies with those of the European Union.

Based on the recognition that migration/mobility is a bi-directional issue and against the background that only a few existing studies deal with highly-qualified immigrants, this paper analyses the movement not only of Turkish skilled labour migrants to the EU, but also of European skilled labour migrants to Turkey. Until now, highly skilled migration has not been a central issue in, or an influential driver of, EU-Turkey relations. Although the topic appears as a focal issue in the major strategies and plans (e.g. the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy or Turkey's 10th Development Plan), the political and economic conjuncture has prioritised other issues over highly skilled migration due to the relatively light weight of the issue compared to more pressing matters on the agenda regarding migration such as international protection, irregular migration and integration issues.

This paper works from the premise that highly skilled mobility has an impact on EU-Turkey relations only if it occurs on a significant scale and affects the politics and policies of both parties. As a result, unless analysed within the broader legal, social, political or economic context, highly skilled migration on its own does not play a significant role in EU-Turkey relations, and this trend is likely to continue. As such, this paper looks at the role of highly skilled migration in relation to (1) the legal framework and policies on highly skilled migration, (2) economic, and (3) social, cultural and political drivers that affect its direction. The paper will focus on analysing the EU and Turkey's efforts to attract and retain highly skilled migrants, together with the main obstacles that come up when identifying drivers that have helped to develop the existing framework.

The paper argues that, in spite of the lack of cohesive legal frameworks on high-skilled migration between the EU, member states and Turkey, the presence of high-skilled migration frameworks and policies, e.g. the Blue Card and Single Permit Directives, Erasmus and various scholarship programmes, has been a positive driver overall. It notes that from 1999 to 2013, political, societal and economic developments in the EU and Turkey were drivers of increasing mobility among highly skilled migrants (including students), particularly from the EU to Turkey. The same drivers reversed this trend from 2013 onwards, the year marked by the Gezi protests in Turkey and the government's shift away from its initial democratisation track. In conclusion, highly skilled migration stands out as an area of mutual benefit. Depending on the evolution of the current



drivers identified, either cooperation or conflict will be the most likely scenarios for EU-Turkey relations on this issue.

The structure of the paper is as follows: it first presents a brief overview of high-skilled migration globally, where its importance for an internationalised economy is highlighted. This is followed by a short section dedicated to one of the main concerns related to high-skilled migration: brain drain. Secondly, the document dedicates a section to presenting the methodology. Thirdly, drivers regarding high-skilled migration between the EU and Turkey are analysed. To do this, findings from field research will be discussed in order to understand the strategies and policies of the different actors to attract a highly skilled international workforce. In the conclusion section, the main findings will be outlined and the most likely scenario for EU-Turkey relations in 2023 will be discussed to predict mobility trends for skilled and highly skilled migrants between the EU and Turkey.

2. High-skilled migration: growing importance at global level

Increasing flows of highly skilled migrants can be associated with the emergence of skill-biased technical change in developed labour markets as well as with the internationalisation of multinational firms' internal and external markets. The changes in the magnitude and direction of migration flows reflect the changes in macroeconomic conditions. This new mobility is a win-win mechanism both for highly skilled migrants and host countries. For migrants, receiving countries provide them with relatively better living conditions than their home countries. For the receiving countries, there are mainly two economic arguments (Berkhout et al., 2015: 3): migrants are seen as a solution to labour market shortages in developed countries with ageing labour forces, and skilled migrants make a positive contribution to economic growth and competitiveness. In sum, human capital is seen as an important input for economic growth.

Governments are increasingly designing policies to make their countries more accessible for selected groups of migrants (OECD, 2009; Facchini and Lodigiani, 2014), and the international competition for skilled migrants is expected to intensify in the near future. Most Western countries have attractive opportunities for professionals from third countries. The best known among these are the Green Card programmes in the US, Canada, and Germany. Similar programmes exist in the UK, Australia, the Netherlands and France, all in an effort to attract researchers, IT workers and students (IOM, 2012). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that some 300,000 professionals from the African continent live and work in Europe and North America. Since the 1990s, around 900,000 highly skilled professionals, mainly IT workers from countries like India, have migrated to the United States under the H1B temporary visa programme.

According to Sassen (2006), this new transnational professional class of highly skilled migrants is generally considered economically beneficial and therefore unproblematic by national governments, which is not the case for low-skilled migrants. While policies targeting highly skilled migrants have made the movement of this group easier and more common, Findlay (1995) argues



that this is also due to the growing antagonism of national governments towards the immigration of manual labour; the contribution of highly skilled migrants is not only good for the economy but also for the receiving society – migrants bring economic benefits without placing social burdens on the destination country. Developed countries, which are likely to prevent the entry of non-qualified or semi-qualified migrants, are eager to welcome qualified human resources from emerging countries such as India, China, Russia and Turkey.

Because of advanced liberal rationalities, migrants who can make the utmost contribution to host societies are given priority in welcoming policies whereas others are rejected. In this regard, migrants are discriminated against in terms of skills, education, countries of origin and their contributions to the host countries. For instance, the points-based system in Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand provides residence permits or asylum to applicants on the basis of grades varying according to migrants’ education level, language ability, experience, employment, age, adaptability and their partners’ qualifications. Hence, a points-based system is designed to protect host societies from inflows of “undeserving migrants” and downgrades migrants’ rights. Yet in this high-skilled global market migrants also play a role. Emigrants often prefer to choose pre-existing paths to where fellow country (wo)men have already settled.¹ Verwiebe et al. (2010) found that economic factors are mostly decisive in the choices made by emigrants. Language also influences emigrants’ choice of a destination country. This factor is important for skilled workers searching for an adequate job abroad. In contrast, geographical proximity has lost relevance.

3

Brain drain or brain gain?

The risk of a serious brain drain in sending countries becomes more prominent as more and more qualified young nationals leave their home countries. Given the high unemployment rates among skilled young people in the sending countries, taking a job abroad is a better alternative than inactively staying at home. Longer periods of unemployment, especially at the beginning of their career, are frustrating for young people, as they see their qualifications devalued. Young generations’ incentives to invest in education and qualification are impaired even more if they miss the opportunity to try their luck abroad, while a period of overseas work experience can boost career opportunities, especially for university graduates.

OECD findings reveal that the efforts by OECD countries to attract highly skilled workers affect the supply of skilled people in the sending countries, which are often among the poorest in the world. Brain drain mainly hits small African and Caribbean countries, with some smaller countries such as Fiji, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Malawi and Mauritius having more than 40% of their highly skilled population living abroad. For instance, the World Bank estimates that about 70,000 African professionals and university graduates leave their country of origin each year to work in Europe or North America (IOM, 2003: 6). The situation creates a problem of brain drain especially in the health and technology sectors that deprives the sending African countries. Nowadays, more Ethiopian doctors are practicing in Chicago than in Ethiopia (IOM, 2005: 173). In contrast, most

¹ For a detailed discussion on the Network Theory in migration studies see Thomas and Znaniecki (1918), Castells and Cardoso (2005), and King (2012).



OECD countries as well as non-OECD countries with large populations, including Brazil, China, India and Russia, had low emigration rates of the highly skilled (below 3.5%) (OECD, 2013). There is also a gender dimension to brain drain: women from developing countries with tertiary degrees are more likely to migrate to OECD countries than highly skilled men: 17.6% versus 13.1% (OECD, 2008).

Certain countries provide better quality of research, study and employment opportunities. The Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme in the UK, the Marie Curie Fellowships, European Research Council grants, 6th and 7th Framework Research Programmes, and Horizon 2020 Research Programme in the EU are some of the academic funding programmes attracting the citizens of other countries to study and/or do research abroad. Mobile PhDs are mostly a brain gain for OECD countries. International doctoral students make up more than 20% of enrolments in advanced research programmes in Australia, Belgium, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and the Nordic countries. This ratio is more than 40% in Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (van der Wende, 2015).

Some of the foreign graduates of Western universities stay where they receive their degrees. For instance, surveys indicate that 79% of 1990–91 doctorate recipients from India stayed abroad and 88% of those from China were still working in the United States in 1995. In contrast, only 11% of Koreans and 15% of Japanese who earned science and engineering doctorates from US universities in 1990–91 were working in the US in 1995 (OECD, 2002). As such, only a handful of countries have been successful in luring their talented emigrants back home.

However, the migration of skills is not restricted to developing countries. The countries on the southern periphery of the EU, mainly Greece, Spain and Portugal, have faced the same problem. Outward migration from these countries, particularly after the 2008 crisis, could potentially entail serious structural problems and undermine the growth potential of the sending countries. Yet the stabilisation of their economies has made these problems less likely.

In this framework, return migration has become a constant process of mobility for those trans-migrants between the country of residence and the country of origin. A substantial number of emigrants today, including the skilled ones, are willing to move back home when the labour market in their home country improves. A survey conducted on young people in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia shows that almost one in three young people willing to migrate has the intention to return to their home country after spending a certain amount of time in the receiving country (Sánchez-Montijano and Martínez, 2017). A similar trend is observed in the case of Turkey: many Turkish emigrants from various European countries, a significant proportion of them born and raised in their countries of residence, are returning to Turkey, though not with the idea of staying there permanently.



3. Methodology

The research was conducted using a varied set of research techniques ranging from desk research to in-depth interviews with experts and members of the relevant public institutions as well as content analysis of official texts and websites. This paper tries to uncover different skilled migration dynamics between the EU and Turkey and relies on primary sources (official documents, higher education acts, laws, regulations), interviews with relevant state actors, international institutions, and secondary literature. For the part on the EU, key respondents, mainly policymakers from the European Commission and the European Parliament, were interviewed. For the analysis of skilled migration to Turkey, European citizens in Turkey were interviewed in 2017, as well as relevant state actors and representatives of national and international institutions. The method of triangulation was employed, meaning data was collected from interviews, legal documents, reports, and other relevant secondary literature. The paper employs the methodological toolkit of process tracing to attempt to explain how the mobility of skilled Turkish citizens towards the EU and EU citizens towards Turkey was practiced and perceived by the bureaucracy; and for the second case (EU citizens toward Turkey) by the mobile EU citizens themselves as well.

In the case study of high-skilled migration from Turkey to the EU, the institutional affiliations of the interviewees were the European Commission (Migration and Home Affairs, Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations), the European Parliament, the European External Action Service (Turkey Division), the Ministry of Security and Justice-Immigration and Naturalisation Service of the Netherlands, Turkish bureaucrats in Brussels, the Netherlands and Germany, and, finally, migration experts based in Europe from four European and Turkish think tanks.

In the second case study of high-skilled migration from the EU to Turkey, the following state actors were approached for interview: the Higher Education Council (YÖK), the Presidency of Turks abroad and Related Communities (YTB), The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), the Directorate General of Migration Management (GİGM), the Ministry of Development, and the Yunus Emre Institute. However, it was impossible to get an appointment with YÖK and TÜBİTAK despite many formal and informal attempts, while there were no difficulties conducting interviews with the relevant persons in the other institutions. Individuals in the European Union Delegation in Ankara and the International Organization for Migration were also interviewed during the field research. Some academic experts and NGO representatives were also interviewed in Ankara and Istanbul. Finally, some highly skilled EU citizens were interviewed in the last stage of the fieldwork in Istanbul and Italy.

In both cases, the interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. During the interviews, notes were taken with the interlocutors' consent. None of the interlocutors gave their consent to recording the interviews due to the fragile political conditions in Turkey. These interviews were analysed using the discourse analysis method with specific emphasis on the concepts of mobility, integration, everyday life, the financial crisis, the refugee crisis and the political crisis (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2010; Torfing, 2005). Through the data, the researchers



looked for the main discursive topoi,² which enable to understand how individuals’ discourses on and state actors’ frames on highly skilled migration are constructed and articulated.

4. Highly Skilled Migration: Main Drivers

Highly skilled migration is not a central issue for the EU or Turkey, so its effect on their relations is very limited, or even non-existent as it currently stands. In the following section, some drivers that can reinforce highly skilled mobility are identified: (1) the legal framework and policies, (2) economic factors and (3) social, cultural and political drivers.

4.1. Legal framework and policies

The first driver identified is the legal and policy context. Both the EU and Turkey have a legal framework to improve the mobility of highly skilled migrants from third countries in general terms. Yet there is still a lack of policies addressing the mobility of citizens between the EU and Turkey, as detailed below.

A semi-perfect framework to attract high-skilled migrants to the EU

Attracting highly skilled migrants is a priority in the “Europe 2020 Strategy”. In this regard, the strategy identifies the need for economic migration in sectors with emerging labour and skill shortages, as well as the need to attract highly skilled third-country nationals in the global competition for talent (OECD and EU, 2016). The political argument is that European countries are committed to being among the most dynamic knowledge-based economies in the world, of which skilled students and workers are a part (Berkhout et al., 2015: 3). In this line, eight directives have been adopted at EU level, four of them regulating admission for low and highly skilled work purposes, among which is Directive 2009/50/EC on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment, namely the Blue Card Directive.

Nonetheless, highly skilled migration has not been a salient issue in the negotiations between the EU and Turkey, as most interviewees stated. An expert in EU-Turkey relations from the European Parliament pointed out that

The issue of highly skilled migration has never been on the political agenda between the EU and Turkey. Turkish students have many problems studying abroad in EU member states. Many qualified Turkish students with an undergraduate degree say that it is not possible to find an internship. This gets even harder when the motivation is to find a job; member states’ labour markets are almost closed to highly skilled Turks (Interview 11, Brussels, 5 June 2017).

² Reisigl and Wodak (2001) define *topoi* as parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable, premises. *Topoi* are the content-related warrants, or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument, or arguments, with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion. In other words, *topoi* are highly conventional and core elements of argumentation.



As this interviewee noted, although highly skilled migration has been an integral part of EU frameworks on mobility through different initiatives (e.g. the Blue Card Directive and the Education and Research Directive) there are no specific European policies addressing highly skilled Turks.

The Blue Card Directive

In 2009, the European Commission initiated the “Blue Card” which, for highly skilled third-country nationals, facilitates access to the labour market, entitles holders to socio-economic rights, favourable conditions for family reunification and movement around the EU. The Directive was adopted with a low profile amidst the context of the 2008 economic crisis and rising unemployment levels across the eurozone (Triandafyllidou and Isaakyan, 2014: 2).

The Blue Card Directive (2009/50/EC 2009: Article 2(b)) defines “highly qualified employment” as “the employment of a person who: in the EU State concerned, is protected as an employee under national employment law and/or in accordance with national practice, irrespective of the legal relationship, for the purpose of exercising genuine and effective work for, or under the direction of, someone else; is paid; [and] has the required adequate and specific competence, as proven by higher professional qualifications”. “Higher professional qualifications” are “qualifications attested by evidence of higher education qualifications or, by way of derogation, when provided for by national law, attested by at least five years of professional experience of a level comparable to higher education qualifications and which is relevant in the profession or sector specified in the work contract or binding job offer” (2009/50/EC 2009: Article 2(g)).

The EU Blue Card Directive has had various benefits for member states, such as providing an official definition of a “highly qualified” third-country national; the facilitation of intra-EU mobility for third-country nationals; and facilitating access to long-term residence and family reunification (European Migration Network, 2013: 7). In fact one of the most attractive benefits of this scheme, family reunification access, is functioning quite properly, as some key informants stated. Most of the requests for family reunifications received from Turkish citizens in the Blue Card framework are granted, according to Eurostat data (code: migr_resbc2).

Despite its use as an instrument of attraction from the outside and its benefits, the scheme has so far had limited success from its launching in 2012. The number of Blue Cards issued remains relatively low, also among Turkish citizens, and only Germany is taking advantage of this legal framework (see Table 1). They are unequally issued by different member states, and the EU is still attracting fewer highly skilled workers than other OECD members. Restrictive admission conditions and the limits on intra-EU mobility combined with the different sets of parallel measures that apply across EU member states decrease the Blue Card's attractiveness (European Commission, 2016: 2). As one interviewee pointed out, “bureaucratic hurdles make the Blue Card inaccessible; it is not a pull factor for highly skilled migrants” (Interview 2, Brussels, 20 June 2017).



Table 1. EU Blue Cards distributed by country, 2012–2016

All citizens	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total EU	3,664	12,954	13,860	17,072	20,947
Germany	2,584	11,580	12,108	14,620	17,630
France	126	371	604	657	750
Poland	2	16	46	369	673
Turkish citizens					
Total EU	112	409	447	559	715
Germany	86	369	392	499	631
Luxembourg	8	8	4	7	21
France	5	8	14	18	19

Source: Eurostat, code: migr_resbc1.

Note: Desegregated data for the three main destination countries, 2016 as a year of reference.

On the 7th of June 2016, a Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council was submitted for the revision of the Blue Card Scheme. The proposal offered a more simplified and streamlined approach to attracting highly skilled workers through an EU-wide scheme. The Commission points out that “the revised proposal (...) remains targeted to highly skilled workers only” or, in other words, “the Blue Card will remain a scheme for workers with an employment contract”, excluding entrepreneurs or service providers who are also highly skilled (European Commission, 2016) in order to restrict mobility to the relevant sectors only. Furthermore, the transposition of the Blue Card Directive has fallen short in attracting highly skilled migrants to combat skill shortages, because

many of the provisions of the Blue Card Directive, and the way transposition into national legislations was conceived, are geared to restricting the number of beneficiaries rather than to facilitating the matching between EU labour demand and international skilled workers; as such, they tend to discourage talented workers rather than attracting them, in particular if these workers have alternatives (Kalantaryan and Martin, 2015: 9).

Another crucial aspect of the Blue Card concerned the right to family reunification (2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003) for third-country nationals who are long-term residents. The new proposal seeks to provide more favourable conditions for family reunification and more facilitated access to long-term resident status, both problematic in application across the EU. The Commission acknowledged that the purpose of an enhanced framework for family unification would also complement the Qualifications Directive and enable beneficiaries of international protection who are highly skilled to also partake in the family unification rule.



The Single Permit Directive

The Blue Card is not the only measure targeting highly skilled migrants from Turkey. The 2011 “Single Permit Directive” allows the entry of high-skilled Turkish migrants to the EU and is an instrument for their permanence, as it can be issued to immigrants residing in an EU member state independent of their initial reason for admission (European Commission, 2015). The Single Permit applies to third-country nationals, independent of their professional category, combining work and (temporary) residence permits for the purpose of employment. But, for example, the Directive does not include a facilitated procedure for family reunification, which could be an obstacle to highly skilled mobility. Still, skilled Turkish migrants, as Table 2 shows, have used this channel as a legal entry more frequently than the Blue Card, particularly in northern European countries.

Table 2. First permits issued for remunerated activities: highly skilled workers, 2008-2016

All citizens	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total EU	23,982	38,988	39,877	36,927	33,321	32,458	35,536	35,278	35,961
Netherlands	6,411	4,895	5,531	5,594	5,514	7,046	7,123	7,909	9,084
Denmark	0	3,594	5,392	4,157	4,088	5,730	5,698	5,457	5,762
Sweden	0	2,810	3,476	4,406	4,751	4,666	5,012	4,527	5,288
Turkish cit.									
Total EU	701	694	966	709	558	606	666	818	974
Netherlands	341	255	444	213	146	186	219	295	466
Denmark	0	62	65	32	53	74	59	84	101
Sweden	0	41	53	72	68	50	59	48	82

Source: Eurostat, code: migr_resocc.

Note: Desegregated data for the three main destination countries, 2016 as a year of reference.

Like the EU Blue Card, the 2014 “Intra-corporate Transfer” (ICT) Directive also targets highly skilled workers in the framework of intra-company transfers that exceed 90 days, especially for the senior management/executive and trainee positions. It responds to the occasional need of multinational companies to transfer staff from one country to another, particularly from outside the EU to inside its territory. The ICT permit may be extended to a maximum of one year for trainee employees and to a maximum of three years for managers and specialists. ICT gives mobility rights within the EU, including the right to work in any member state (according to Article 20). This scheme is not used by companies very often.

The new 2016 directive on “the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing” (2016/801/EU, 2016) is also worth mentioning. Depending on the member state, the authorisation can take the form of a residence permit or a long-stay visa. For long-term stays, researchers and students, respectively, need a hosting agreement (or sometimes a contract) and proof of acceptance to the higher education institution. The number of Turkish citizens with a first permit of residence for research purposes is 297, representing 2.7% of the total of first permits for research granted in the EU in 2016.



There is no doubt that the academic sector is among the most attractive for Turkish citizens, motivated by the quality of some European higher educational institutions (e.g. in the United Kingdom or France), affordable cost and access (e.g. Poland and the Czech Republic, mainly for easier access for visa applicants and the number of exchange programmes) or existing networks in host countries (e.g. Germany), as mentioned by the interviewees. According to the directive, students are subject to some limitations on employment or self-employment. The directive also states that a period of at least nine months shall be allowed after the completion of the research or study period in order for them to seek employment or set up a business (Article 25). While these restrictions can act as an obstacle to attracting Turkish students, there has been a significant increase in Turkish students' arrivals in European institutions, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3. First permits issued for education reasons for Turkish citizens, 2008-2016

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total EU	13,836	15,820	14,320	15,542	15,016	15,674	14,420	13,755	21,714
United Kingdom	5,410	5,548	4,430	3,305	2,427	2,209	1,773	2,099	8,375
Poland	73	82	701	1,762	2,425	3,824	4,154	3,781	4,340
Czech Republic	320	338	482	506	526	613	466	959	1,251
Germany	1,571	1,737	1,410	1,456	1,494	1,572	1,353	454	1,020
France	526	650	901	938	885	1,025	1,010	1,017	1,019

Source: Eurostat, code: migr_resedu.

Note: Desegregated data for the five main destination countries, 2016 as a year of reference.

The Schengen Visa

Nowadays researchers, business people, investors and entrepreneurs are limited to travel to the EU for a short period of time because of the conditions of the Schengen Visa. Even though the Schengen Visa is considered more for the purposes of travelling, business or study, the requirements are hindering the interests of Turkish citizens and the attraction capacity of the EU, as many interviewees mentioned. One interviewee highlighted that

The European Parliament is constantly trying to give a political message through this visa liberalization process, and hampering it. They don't understand that this is not a process targeting the whole Turkish population, but to regulate the visas of investors and businessmen, etc. (Interview 3, Brussels, 20 June 2017).

Despite the effect of the Schengen Visa requirement on short-term stays for Turkish citizens, particularly on the mobility of the highly skilled, the number of visas has continued growing in the last years (see Table 4).



Table 4. Short-stay visas issued to Turkish citizens, main five countries, 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total EU	668,997	781,124	813,508	900,942	937,680
France	98,336	103,680	98,900	134,249	133,093
Germany	167,378	190,537	197,079	222,319	234,333
Greece	92,992	131,598	147,468	145,878	164,377
Italy	115,794	139,072	149,167	152,510	140,505
Netherlands	45,536	47,556	49,008	55,116	62,352

Source: Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen states, Migration and Home Affairs, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy_en#stats.

Visa liberalisation

The possibility of visa liberalisation for Turkey reached the negotiation table during the EU-Turkey readmission agreement in 2013. Although a roadmap towards a visa-free regime with Turkey has been initialised, implementation strongly depends upon the performance of both sides in terms of fulfilling their commitments. In a securitised context in which some EU countries are planning to suspend the Schengen Agreement and re-start controls at the border gates, visa liberalisation for Turkey becomes a contested issue to decide (Yıldız, 2016). The refugee deal signed between the two sides in March 2016 was based on this premise. For Turkey, the implementation of the readmission agreement in all its provisions is conditional on the execution of a simultaneous visa liberalisation agreement. This clearly highlights that full and effective implementation of the readmission agreement is highly dependent on the EU’s incentives to be clear and credible on visa liberalisation and on concrete cooperation on migration and asylum issues.

11

The importance of attracting highly educated European citizens

Turkey attracts many skilled and highly skilled EU citizens, descendants of Turkish origin migrants residing in the EU and citizens from the rest of the world. A booming Turkish economy, growing opportunities for higher education, research and development, increasing foreign direct investment opportunities and Turkey’s potential to become a soft power in the region have been very decisive for attracting a skilled and highly skilled international workforce. The 10th Development Plan (2013-2018) explicitly mentions the recruitment of a qualified international labour force, addressing 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.

Turkish state actors have been working on legal regulations to attract a highly skilled international workforce. Following the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law no. 6458), which was put into force in April 2014, state actors prepared a new International Workforce Law (Law No. 6735) under the guidance and coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. It was initiated and implemented by state actors in consultation with relevant civil society actors, academics, migrants and international organisations, and is hence a good example of the Europeanisation of Turkey institutionally. This law makes it possible for international masters and PhD students to get work permits upon arrival, and for undergraduate students to get work



permits after two years’ stay (Art. 41/1). It also provides for those who have legal refugee status to receive work permits (Art. 89/4/b). Hence, the new law considers the general arrangements for better integration of non-nationals into the country’s labour market. The law, which came into force on 13 August 2016, also introduced 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 Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), established in 2010 and affiliated to the Prime Ministry to coordinate Turkish citizens living abroad, is generating schemes to attract highly skilled workers to come to Turkey (Aydın, 2016). Metin Atmaca from the Presidency has stated that “we no longer want Turkey to lose her brains, we want Turkey to recruit bright brains” (Adaman and Kaya, 2012). The Presidency is also now taking over the Central Higher Education Exam for Turkish Emigrants’ Children to select successful Turkish-origin students to come and enrol in Turkish higher education institutions, and to increase the contingent reserved for such candidates by universities. The Presidency is also generating schemes in collaboration with private companies, universities and public institutions to attract highly skilled children of Turkish emigrants to continue their professional career in Turkey.

Despite all these efforts, there still are issues to be addressed in order to create a favourable space. For instance, Turkey has not set up any particular scheme to support the returnees and their families to reintegrate into the society. Furthermore, the highly skilled mobility trend towards Turkey has been interrupted due to regional and domestic politics, weakening Turkey’s position in attracting and retaining highly skilled migrants.

The Turquoise Card

One essential innovation of Law 6735 on the International Work Force is the introduction of the Turquoise Card. 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, as well as the recommendations of the International Labour Force Policy Advisory Board and the procedures and principles to be determined by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (ÇSGB). The Law also defines who is eligible to be identified as a qualified foreigner: “those with internationally accepted studies in the academic field, those who have come to the forefront in a scientific, industrial and technological area that is considered to be strategic in terms of our country, or those who have made or are anticipated to make significant contribution to the national economy in terms of exports, employment, or investment capacity, shall be deemed as qualified foreigners” (Art. 11 (5)).

Previously, employers were the ones applying for the work permits of their skilled international employees. The new law made it possible for skilled migrants to individually apply to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for recruitment opportunities. The Turquoise Card will be first granted for an initial transitional period of three years. The law also has clauses to make it easier for the spouse and dependent children of a Turquoise Card holder to integrate into the country.



Accordingly, the spouse and dependent children of a Turquoise Card holder are issued with a document indicating that they are relatives of a Turquoise Card holder which replaces the residence permit (Art. 11 (3)).

In the meantime, the new law introduces some important privileges and exceptions for EU citizens. For instance, qualified EU citizens are not asked to go through the same track as other foreigners. EU citizens are privileged in terms of the probability of the rejection of their applications, as specified in Article 9. Hence, their application is evaluated more favourably. Finally, EU citizens are also privileged in terms of the evaluation of their application for the extension of their stay in Turkey. The regulations on the Turquoise Card were accordingly prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in close collaboration with the Directorate General of Migration Management (Personal Communication with an Expert working in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ankara, 26 January 2017)

The interlocutors interviewed addressed the time and energy attributed to the new law by different ministries and the successful collaboration between the state actors, bureaucracy, non-governmental organisations and academia to prepare the new law. However, they all expressed their concerns about the tumultuous state of politics in the country after the failed military coup of 15 July 2016 and the state of emergency leading to a delay in the enactment of the law. An expert working in the Ministry of Development made the following statement with regard to the collaboration:

We have gone a very long way to prepare the Law to attract qualified labour to our country. We have worked hard to find out about the legal specificities of different countries that are successful in attracting qualified labour. We have specifically scrutinised the laws and regulations of the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada with regard to the specific visa types introduced for qualified foreign labour. We have tried hard to formulate the most suitable legal framework to make Turkey a centre of attraction for qualified foreign labour. We are proud of the Turquoise Card. Now we are preparing the regulations of this card. I should confess that the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law No. 6548) which was put into force in April 2014 made our job much easier (Interview, Ankara, 4 January 2017).

Similar narratives were also encountered during the other interviews conducted with bureaucrats, who expressed their feelings and frustrations that all the efforts that they spent seem to have gone in vain.



Higher education: the Bologna Process and the academic sector

The Bologna Process was launched after 29 education ministers signed a declaration in Bologna in June 1999 to reform and harmonise the structures of their higher education systems.³ Each signatory country committed itself to reform its own higher education system in order to create overall convergence at European level by 2010. The objectives adopted include a common framework of readable and comparable university degrees, the introduction of two cycles of degrees at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries with the first degrees no shorter than three years, equipping universities with the instruments to respond to the needs of the labour market, and providing them with the possibilities of mobility for students, academics and administrative staff. It also referred to the creation of a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The goal is to render higher education in Europe more compact, comparable and compatible, and to increase student mobility.⁴

The process originates from the recognition that in spite of their “valuable differences”, European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates and the expansion of private and transnational education. The Bologna Process, thus, has urged member states to respond to the growth of today’s challenging knowledge society and the impacts of globalisation by rendering the “Europe of Knowledge” internationally competitive. In practical terms, it refers to the harmonisation of cycle degrees and to the creation of a common credit transfer system and evaluation criteria that would enable students to address demanding labour market needs and the impact of globalisation.

Turkey officially joined the Bologna Process in 2001. Only after 2004 were there attempts to create awareness in higher education institutions regarding different aspects of the Bologna Process such as the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Socrates-Erasmus academic exchange programmes. The Council of Higher Education only became actively involved in the Bologna Process after 2008, and started to impose it on higher education institutions. Accordingly, on 13 February 2011, an addendum was made to Article 44 of the Law on Higher Education (Law No. 2547) to prompt universities to make the required changes in their administrative and academic structures. Turkey is more at the sending end of the programme than the receiving end, as Table 5 shows (Mızıkacı, 2005: 71).

³ Additional process extensions occurred in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2010. The Bologna Process now encompasses 47 countries.

⁴ For the official website of the European Higher Education Area see: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>, access date 19 December 2016.



Table 5. Erasmus Statistics for Turkey, Erasmus students’ and teachers’ mobility, 2006–2016

	Outgoing student	Incoming student	Outgoing staff	Incoming staff
2006–2007	4,438	1,321	1,378	666
2007–2008	7,119	1,982	1,905	932
2008–2009	7,794	2,658	1,595	1,184
2009–2010	8,758	3,336	1,740	1,321
2010–2011	10,065	4,320	2,166	1,660
2011–2012	11,782	4,700	2,643	1,900
2012–2013	16,983	5,500	3,886	2,570
2013–2014	14,708	6,608	2,744	2,206
2014–2015	14,936	6,983	2,323	1,210
2015–2016	15,556	NS	1,358	NS

Source: Turkish National Agency, <http://www.ua.gov.tr>.

In line with the Bologna Process, Mızıkacı observes a shift from bilateral cooperation programmes to multilateral cooperation programmes owing to the European integration process (2005: 72). In her research on Turkey’s status among the OECD countries, she observes that Turkish students study mostly in Germany and the US, followed by France, Austria and the UK, where state and public funding is more available for foreign students. Most of the incoming foreign students in Turkey are from Russia, Jordan and Greece (Mızıkacı, 2005: 74).

The academic sector has been particularly active in this matter. Some state institutions are transferring European policies on science and research through research schemes such as the Framework Projects, Horizon 2020, and Marie Curie Projects. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) has generated several different programmes to attract qualified researchers, scientists and PhD students of Turkish origin to conduct their research in Turkey by providing them with financial resources for their research activities under the “Target Turkey” project. The Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) and the Higher Education Council of Turkey (YÖK) have also recently become active in designing programmes within the framework of newly established research schemes to attract Turkish-origin researchers to conduct their research in Turkey (YÖK, 2007). Growing numbers of foundation universities are also creating attractive grounds not only for Turkish-origin scholars and researchers, but also foreigners to come and pursue professional careers in Turkey. As the language of education in most private and some public universities is English, it becomes more attractive for international researchers and scholars to invest in their career in Turkey.

Visa regime in Turkey

Throughout the accession process, Turkey was to rearrange its visa policy in accordance with EU legislation, especially with the Schengen visa regime. Therefore, Turkey needs to apply a uniform policy towards all the EU citizens with regard to the visa obligation, and to adopt a Schengen negative list, meaning its nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing EU borders. Furthermore, in line with Turkey’s changing foreign policy towards the Middle Eastern countries in the second half of the 2000s, Turkey abolished visas with its neighbouring or regional countries,



such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, which are on the EU’s blacklist and subject to strict visa regulations. The EU also requires Turkey to tighten its borders with countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. In 2003, Turkey approved opening negotiations on a readmission agreement with the EU. Later on, in collaboration with the EU, Turkey implemented the Integrated Border Management Strategy in 2006 in order to comply with the EU acquis on tackling irregular migration and trafficking in human beings.

In regards to visa requirements, aliens must have an entry visa affixed to their mandatory passport or substituting documents in order to enter Turkish territory. Generally, a visa is issued by the Turkish consulates and embassies in the country of origin or permanent residence and citizens of countries subject to visa requirements must apply to Turkish missions abroad. Since 2005, Turkey has been following a liberal visa policy via which several visa-free agreements were signed with neighbouring countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Russia. Turkey’s main motivation was mainly economic gain from more integration into the region, but its liberal visa regime brought the construction of a new Schengen area in the Middle East under discussion (Elitok and Straubhaar, 2010: 7).

A new law put into force on 1 February 2012 makes it more difficult for foreigners to continue living and working in Turkey without a residence and work permit.⁵ It seems that the new law prompted thousands of Georgians and Armenians to leave the country very quickly. Until now, many foreigners were used to running to the nearest country to officially exit Turkey after their 90-day visa expired and then immediately to re-entering with a new 90-day visa. However, the new law prepared by the Labour and Social Security Ministry only allows foreign citizens entering the country with a tourist visa to stay in Turkey for three months, and they will not be allowed to re-enter for the following months.⁶

There is also evidence that the new visa regulation negatively affects lifestyle migrants, freelancers (sailors, alternative groups, home-office professionals), self-employed EU citizens and creative migrant groups (novelists, poets, academics, painters). One of the labour economists who was interviewed in Ankara stated that there is no tradition of studying the demand side of qualified migrants, and that one of the biggest problems with the Turkish labour market is its inability to attract international freelance professionals and members of the creative industries (Interview, Ankara, 4 January 2017).

4.2. Economic drivers

The second driver identified is the economy. The impact of the economic context on high-skilled mobility has had different effects in the last 20 years, depending on various economic cycles. Hence, the economy has been both a push and a pull factor.

⁵ For the revision of the Law 5683 dated 15 July 1950, see:

<http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/Metin.Aspx?MevzuatKod=1.3.5683&MevzuatIliski=0&sourceXmlSearch>.

⁶<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/foreigners-leave-turkey-amid-new-residence-law.aspx?pageID=238&nID=12391&NewsCatID=339>.

For the law 2011/2306, see the Official Gazette <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/10/10111024-9.htm>.



The EU and the global financial crisis

The free movement of labour is a right afforded to all EU citizens. The principle of the free movement of workers is enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and should allow them to move where they are best suited or where there are jobs. Over time, this right was extended to all EU citizens, not just workers, under certain conditions. Despite the advances made in recent years, however, a number of serious limitations and obstacles to internal mobility remain within the EU for EU citizens. Compared to countries such as the USA, Australia and Canada, internal mobility inside the EU is very low. According to the OECD, only 3% of working-age EU citizens live in a member state other than the one where they were born.

In times of economic, political and societal crises, skilled and highly skilled individuals tend to become more mobile than others to try to find better working, living, researching and studying conditions. The global financial crisis severely hit EU member states, and some were hit harder than others. The increase in migration flows in the EU has been accompanied by an increase in the migrants' skills level.⁷ The global financial crisis has resulted in the mobility of highly skilled Europeans from one corner to another within the Union, as well as outside it.

Europe intends to tackle labour market shortages due to the financial crisis with a dual approach. One involves promoting an intra-EU labour mobility in a bid to increase the efficient distribution of labour between EU countries and channel national emigrants to the countries for which their skills will be most productive. The second involves the attraction of migrants from outside the EU. Both issues are linked, since the lack of a genuine European labour market to facilitate and promote intra-EU mobility will present the EU with serious difficulties in attracting skilled immigrants. The two approaches are not complementary, and each brings its own specific benefits and trade-offs. The mobility of EU citizens within Europe can, for instance, mitigate the negative effects of a brain drain from the European countries most affected by the financial and economic crisis, as is the case of massive skilled migration from Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain (GIPS) to Germany, although at least the highly qualified remain in EU countries rather than migrating elsewhere. Concentrating on highly skilled migrants from abroad, meanwhile, fosters the accretion of knowledge from non-European education systems.

The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 resulted in a regularisation of mobility and promoted an increase in migration, mostly of the high-skilled migration form, although many EU15 countries applied transitional, restrictive arrangements. The stock of EU8 plus EU2 (new member state) nationals residing in EU15 countries increased between 1997 and 2009 from 1.6 million to 4.8 million, a figure that represented 2% of the EU-15's working-age population. Since then, the financial crisis has negatively affected migration flows in the EU.

In the past few years, intra-EU and intra-eurozone migration have largely been driven by the

⁷ The average population with a tertiary education rose from 19.5% in 2004 to 24.7% in 2013. Among the peripheral countries, Portugal has seen the largest increase in the number of graduates, rising 59% in the last decade, followed by Ireland and Italy at 44% and 43%, respectively.



economy. In the GIIPS (GIPS, plus Italy), decreasing immigration and surging emigration are clearly related to the deterioration in the labour markets there. Emigrants, particularly from the southern periphery of Europe, have shown higher educational achievement and skill levels.⁸ Highly educated migrants from the GIPS moving to other Euro-member countries rose from 24% of the total in 2005 to 41% in 2012. Among these migrants, the highly skilled percentage of the total that found work rose from 27% to 49%.

Accordingly, the destination countries have experienced an increase in skilled immigration. Germany is the EU country attracting the most highly skilled labour from the rest of the EU. In Germany, 29% of all immigrants aged 20 to 65 who arrived in the last decade or so (2001 to 2011) held a graduate degree, while among the total population the respective figure was only 19% in 2011. Among immigrants, more than 10% had a degree in science, IT, mathematics or engineering compared to 6% of the rest of the population aged 25 to 65.

It is also no coincidence that Germany has become the leading destination country in the EU. Given the ongoing expansion in employment and the low unemployment rate, Germany has become more and more attractive for jobseekers from the GIIPS. It is hardly surprising that foreign workers are more mobile and more prepared to leave their host country again when they become unemployed due to a labour market shock. It is obvious that the economic situation has markedly influenced and altered migration patterns in the eurozone. Recently, young skilled Italians have been heading towards Germany while their Spanish peers are becoming less likely to leave their homeland.

As some interviewees stated, the global financial crisis, the absence of a prosperous European labour market and the increase of intra-EU mobility of highly qualified migrants – particularly from the GIIPS – make it harder for third-country nationals to enter the European skilled labour market. In the last years, as analysed in the previous section (see Tables 1 and 2), there were only few countries where highly skilled Turkish migrants could enter the labour market in considerable numbers, mainly Germany and the Netherlands. This trend could be reversed with the improvement of the labour markets in other European countries.

A booming Turkish economy

While Turkey continues to be a country of emigration, it has also become a country of immigration, particularly for returnees or European citizens with Turkish backgrounds. In the year 2000 (latest data available by country of origin) some 1.3 million, or 1.9%, of Turkey’s 67 million inhabitants were foreign born. In same year, the share of Germans in the foreign-born population of Turkey amounted to 21.4% (273,500). The numbers and the share of Germans in the Turkish population are growing, mostly highly skilled second-generation migrants who return to their parents’ home country to take advantage of employment opportunities as Turkey rapidly restructures and needs skilled workers to support the export-led growth strategy. The profile of the returnees has

⁸ Deutsche Bank Research, “The Dynamics of Migration in the Euro area,” https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD000000000338137/The+dynamics+of+migration+in+the+euro+area.PDF.



radically changed. Highly skilled men and women now prefer to come to Turkey, mostly to Istanbul or other big cities, to search for alternative lifestyles, to work in international companies, tourism sector, the IT sector, or to study.

Return migration of qualified middle- and upper-middle-class emigrants of Turkish origin is a new phenomenon. It is estimated that around 8,000 Turkish-origin emigrants, who are mostly the children of emigrants come to Turkey each year in order to be employed in international companies as well as in tourist resorts or international call centres.⁹ Some of the return migrants directly become employment-seekers as they return with skills and work experience for which the labour market in Turkey has limited demand (Içduygu, 2009). Nowadays, the Turkish labour market is also providing such migrants, especially qualified middle- and upper-middle-class ones, with convenient grounds to put into practice their innovative plans in the communications, arts and culture and design sectors. While Turkish returnees used to buy taxis or trucks, build rental housing, or set up small businesses and become part of the service economy, they now work in different sectors ranging from arts and culture to telecommunications, engineering and banking (Içduygu, 2009; Mandel, 2008; Abadan-Unat, 2002).

Abadan-Unat (1991) and Gitmez (1991) both underline that Turkish origin returnees of the 1980s and 1990s did not really bring about a remarkable social-economic impact in Turkish society. Similarly, Gitmez (1991) affirms that the majority of the returnees did not get involved in the economy of the country upon their return to Turkey. Around 50% of the returnees (out of 1,9 million returnees) between 1974 and 1984 became involved in agricultural production. The rest were either not at a productive age or failed in the businesses they decided to run.

Several German-Turkish returnees interviewed in a focus group meeting at Manzara Istanbul argue that they were overqualified in their workplaces, working in different German-based companies in Turkey.¹⁰ This corresponds to what several scholars call “brain waste” or “brain abuse”, like when a professional history teacher from Cameroon works as an office cleaner in Paris (Offe, 2011; Kofman, 2012; Cornelius and Rosenblum, 2005). This has become a common phenomenon in the migration context as many skilled and highly skilled migrants are being employed in under-qualified positions, a widespread practice which feeds into their de-qualification and de-skilling (Sert, 2016; Kofman, 2012). In this regard, Deniz Sert (2016) finds that the practice of de-qualification in Turkey is not only limited to the returnees. Eleonore Kofman (2012) reveals that it is also a common practice in the EU to de-qualify and de-skill migrants, especially females.

In her studies on EU citizens residing in Turkey, Bianca Kaiser (2003, 2008) explains why there has been a growing tendency among European citizens to go to Turkey since the early 1990s. She argues that various factors shape the decisions of these EU citizens. First, Turkey has demonstrated a political and economic opening to the West since the mid-1980s. Turkey’s incorporation into the global and European markets and life-worlds is the primary factor for EU

⁹ There are several dissertations scrutinizing this emerging phenomenon, see: Ehrcsam (2011), Kaiser (2003), and Südaş (2016).

¹⁰ German-Turkish returnees, interview in focus group meeting, Manzara Istanbul, Istanbul (11 May 2012).



citizens' willingness to migrate to Turkey for private, business or other reasons. Second, the relative increase in remigration of Turkish-origin citizens in the EU, sometimes together with their EU spouses, has played a role. Kaiser (2008) estimated that there were around 200,000 EU citizens in Turkey as of 2008, and probably a quarter of this figure was made up of returning Turkish-origin migrants residing in western European countries. Third, Turkey has become an increasingly attractive tourist destination for EU citizens/tourists, mostly from Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands, etc. Fourth, the growing trade volume between the EU and Turkey has also made Turkey a favourable country of residence for EU citizens. Fifth, Turkey's economic "miracle" in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2001 has attracted many investors from the EU to invest in Turkey and send posted personnel to reside there. Eventually, and probably mostly importantly, Turkey's ongoing bid for full membership of the EU has been the main driver for EU citizens to prefer to live in Turkey. In any case, when asked, all interviewees stated that Turkey benefited from the global financial crisis, which hit the European Union countries, especially the southern members. They reported that they knew some Greek and Italian scholars, IT specialists and intellectuals who came to Turkey to find jobs. Some of them found jobs at universities and private companies.

4.3. Political and socio-cultural drivers

The political sphere and the socio-cultural context also affect the mobility of highly skilled migrants between the EU and Turkey, both in a positive and negative manner.

Turkish citizens in the EU

In a recent empirical study conducted by Özçürümez and Aker (2016), the authors state that Turkish youngsters with higher education degrees have a strong inclination to go abroad for the opportunities of education, employment and social services provided by Western countries, as well as expected and lived personal experiences in destination countries. They also reveal that the selection of the country of destination is made in accordance with the already existing social networks and the language skills of the youngsters. The results emerged from the primary data collected throughout this study also confirms these overall findings. According to the interviews carried out, among the main motivations for migrating from Turkey to the EU are political and ideological concerns. These issues are also becoming prominent among skilled EU citizens in Turkey. Political instability, the growth of terror and violence, the violation of human rights, feelings of insecurity and a lack of safety, societal and political polarisation, gender problems, social pressure, lack of ecological consciousness, pessimism about the future of the country, Islamisation, lack of proper career opportunities, and the absence of welfare policies in Turkey were reported to be the main reasons behind their act of emigration. The popularity of countries such as Germany and the Netherlands as destination countries is explained by their high standards of living, availability of job opportunities, higher salaries and feeling of security and safety.

As one interviewee pointed out, with the current Turkish political situation, the EU is not for the moment interested in starting or activating the mobility of highly skilled migrants. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is related with the question of who will form the opposition if



the country is “emptied” of highly skilled workers. In other words: “who is going to stay in the country to defend democratic values” (Interview 10, Brussels, 7 July 2017). The second reason is linked to the way in which mobility programmes are understood by the Turkish government, which suspects that these programmes are helping the dissidents to leave the country and oppose from abroad. The same interviewee stated

The Turkish government cancelled last year the Jean Monnet scholarships for the study of the EU. The programme was understood as a way to flee the country by dissidents. Likewise the Turkish government has left the “Creative Europe” programme, which aims to support the European audio-visual, cultural and creative sector. The reason is because one of the projects, in which several countries of the Union were involved, was a theatrical performance about the Armenian genocide. Turkey asked that the play be removed and the EU did not want to do it. So, what is going to be next, the Erasmus? We are very concerned about the Erasmus programme (Interview 10, Brussels, 7 July 2017).

Nonetheless, most interviewees point out that there are some socio-cultural barriers to migration to an EU state. Language barriers and the lack of language courses prior to arrival are mentioned by many. Moreover, discrimination based on nationality and religion has also been mentioned frequently. A Turkish officer in Germany said that

Turks have difficulties finding a job because of bureaucratic reasons, but also because of the double standards applied to them in general – for example, having a Turkish name is a disadvantage when looking for houses, jobs, etc. Even the physical appearance, having a Turkish look is a disadvantage. As a highly educated person (...), I myself have been discriminated against so many times because of my Turkish accent when speaking German, or my physical appearance (Interview 6, Berlin, 7 July 2017).

This issue was also mentioned by a Dutch officer when explaining why the return numbers to Turkey were higher than the number of migrants arriving in the Netherlands from Turkey. This person stated that the cause of return was “probably because of the positive economic developments in Turkey that happened in that period, also the negative attitude of the Dutch society towards migrants” (Interview 5, The Hague, 4 July 2017).

EU citizens (and returnees) in Turkey

The interviews conducted with skilled EU citizens have revealed that there are several dynamics that shaped their decisions to come, to stay, and/or to leave Turkey. Many of the interlocutors stated that Turkey’s European integration, which became very visible in the early 2000s, shaped their decision to come to Turkey. Turkey’s dynamic economy and everyday life became attractive for many young Europeans. The charm of living in a big metropolitan city such as Istanbul, İzmir, Ankara and Antalya with the combination of sun, beaches and nature on the shores of the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, and the growing number of investments in the other parts of the country were decisive elements for these EU citizens to come to Turkey. The interviewees talked about many positive aspects of living in Turkey. Generosity, hospitality, different forms of reciprocity in everyday life, and staying calm in times of crisis were some that were frequently mentioned.



Several negative aspects also came up. “Once a foreigner, always a foreigner!” This statement popped up from time to time in interviews with those acquainted with Turkish society for a long time. This is mainly due to the popularity of the holistic and inflexible notion of culture which is very common among Turkish citizens. This notion of culture does not let the bearers of that particular cultural identity relate themselves with those of a different ethno-cultural, national and/or religious origin. Accordingly, this notion of culture assumes that cultures are intact, separate, distinct, and closed entities, which are not supposed to breed with other cultural traditions (Kaya, 2001).

Similar experiences of those staying in Turkey for a relatively long time were translated into a feeling of insecurity that is culturally and structurally reproduced. European citizens were often being reminded by structural and legal factors that they are not included in the different spheres of life. The difficulty of securing a long-term job contract was reported as the biggest worry by many interlocutors who had spent a long time in Turkey. In addition to job insecurities, there were several other practical issues in everyday life, such as difficulties with regard to the purchase of property, registering telephones, collecting premiums from private retirement insurance, burial services, getting credit cards, buying cars, among others (Kaiser, 2008; Pusch, 2013, 2016), which are only possible through naturalisation.

In contrast to European citizens in Turkey, the returnees (Europeans with Turkish backgrounds) migrate mainly for economic reasons, as explained in the previous section, but not only for this reason. Many of them said that they felt discriminated against in the German education system, which blocked their road to higher education. Furthermore, most of them highlighted similar experiences of social exclusion. They all mentioned the rise of xenophobia, Islamophobia and discrimination targeting immigrants and their children, particularly those of Muslim origin.

Despite the bureaucracy adopting competitive laws and regulations aligned with the European Union acquis to attract skilled and highly skilled international workforces, political choices made by the Turkish government in the last few years have jeopardised these legal regulations. Critics of Turkey’s neo-Ottomanist and Islamist aspirations in the Middle East, Caucasus and Africa, growing Euroscepticism and authoritarianism in the country, the failed coup attempt in July 2016, the transition from parliamentary democracy to a presidential system and the economic crisis indicate that all these developments have posed obstacles to the Europeanisation of migration and integration policies.



5. Conclusions: Drivers and Scenarios

This research was conducted to portray the state of the mobility of skilled and highly skilled European citizens towards Turkey and Turkish citizens towards the EU since the 1999 Helsinki Summit where Turkey was given the status of candidacy to the European Union. To this end, a literature review was conducted to understand the mobility dynamics of skills within the European Union and Turkey in the last two decades; the impact of the global financial crisis on the European labour market and the booming of the Turkish economy in the 2000s; the Europeanisation process of Turkey’s migration and integration policies; and the impact of the de-Europeanisation process of Turkey on these. Relevant primary sources were also scrutinised and interpreted, such as legal documents, official websites of the relevant state actors, statistics and surveys. Field research was conducted on multiple occasions from early to late 2017. The main drivers identified were (1) the legal framework and policies, (2) the economy, and (3) the social, cultural and political conditions in the EU and Turkey, from 1999 to the present.

In the period from 1999 to 2013 (marked by the Gezi protests and the government’s gradual shift from democratisation to authoritarian tendencies), there was an upward trend in the movement of highly skilled EU citizens or young returnees/migrants of Turkish origin from the EU towards Turkey. This was driven by positive political, societal and economic developments in Turkey (e.g. Turkey’s accession process, democratisation, a relatively healthy economy) and negative societal and economic developments in the EU (e.g. economic crisis, high unemployment levels, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes). For both sides, even though legal frameworks and policies for high-skilled migration were not fully cohesive, the presence of a framework and policies acted as a positive driver in itself. In the period after 2013, the rapid escalation of security concerns and political and economic instability in Turkey reversed this trend.

Until now, highly skilled migration has not been a central issue in or an influential driver of EU-Turkey relations; only when analysed within the broader legal, social, political or economic context, as this paper has aimed to do, does highly skilled migration become a driver itself. With that in mind, from now to 2023, a convergence scenario is not a likely option due to the current constellation of socio-cultural, economic and political drivers that reinforce highly skilled mobility. In any case, the following scenario could push the relations towards cooperation in this area: an EU leadership led by pro-Turkey, progressive, liberal and social democratic forces could reinforce the reinstallation of the Europeanisation process among state actors in Turkey. At the regional level, if the civil war in Syria is over, the Turkish state and society may remember and revisit the gains of Europeanisation in the first half of the 2000s, such as the merits of freedom of speech, coming to terms with the past, social cohesion, economic stability, the end of the military legacy, and most importantly the rule of law. Such positive developments in Turkey, the EU and the region may result in the continuation of the prospering of the Turkish economy and democracy in a way that leads to the further mobility of skilled and highly skilled European citizens towards Turkey as well as the other way around. This scenario would reinforce the collaboration of Turkey and the EU in creating more cohesive and better defined mobility schemes and policies in areas varying from highly skilled migration to the resolution of the refugee crisis.



Migration, particularly in the context of security, is an area in which the EU and Turkey are mutually dependent. As such, rather than a full conflict scenario, a scenario of cooperation with conflictual elements is more likely. In this scenario, the introduction of the presidential system in Turkey may lead to a complete end to the Europeanisation process leading to more nationalism, xenophobia and vigilantism in Turkey. At the European level, if the populist, nativist, Islamophobic and Turcophobic rhetoric continues in the EU, Turkish-origin skilled and highly skilled individuals may still opt to migrate to Turkey, but native EU citizens may not risk their careers by coming to a politically turbulent Turkey. This would make highly skilled migration an even less relevant issue in EU-Turkey relations, leading to difficulties in mobility for those willing to migrate. In this scenario, Turkey would be face to face with the serious threat of societal brain drain, which could finally push the government to take measures against it – to little end. This would bring the issue of highly skilled mobility from Turkey to EU countries into conflict, with either Turkey blaming EU countries of utilising its skilled population, or EU countries securitising the new waves of Turkish migrants in fear of deep social and political divides between the existing and the more recent Turkish communities, or an intervention by the Turkish government in such divides. Together with hampering any migration framework, this scenario would also put the Turkey-EU refugee deal and readmission agreement at great risk.



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ABOUT FEUTURE

FEUTURE sets out to explore fully different options for further EU-Turkey cooperation in the next decade, including analysis of the challenges and opportunities connected with further integration of Turkey with the EU.

To do so, FEUTURE applies a comprehensive research approach with the following three main objectives:

1. Mapping the dynamics of the EU-Turkey relationship in terms of their underlying historical narratives and thematic key drivers.
2. Testing and substantiating the most likely scenario(s) for the future and assessing the implications (challenges and opportunities) these may have on the EU and Turkey, as well as the neighbourhood and the global scene.
3. Drawing policy recommendations for the EU and Turkey on the basis of a strong evidence-based foundation in the future trajectory of EU-Turkey relations.

FEUTURE is coordinated by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels, Director of the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies at the University of Cologne and Dr. Nathalie Tocci, Director of Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome.

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