



# MIGRANTS REFUGEES

## Migration Profile

### TURKEY

#### A. Executive summary

The Republic of Turkey was created in 1923 and is located in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, on both sides of the Bosphorus, therefore forming a junction between Europe and Asia. As a result, flows of migrants have been taking this road irregularly in hope to reach Europe over the past decades. Heavily impacted by the neighboring Syrian war that started in 2011, Turkey now hosts the highest number of refugees in the world. Most of them are Syrians and benefiting from Temporary Protection status. However, other nationalities like Afghans, Iraqis and Iranians are present on Turkish soil. Although Turkey has not particularly been a country of immigration, recent influx of foreign workers, like domestic workers, have created situations of concern in a country where domestic work is not regulated by law. Also, the long lasting internal struggle against the Kurdish PKK and affiliates, which Turkey views as a terrorist movement, has led many Turkish nationals to be internally displaced (IDP, for Internally Displaced People). The amount of foreigners on Turkish soil, coupled with the mounting tensions with the European union and neighbors over military strategy disagreements, are making it increasingly difficult to reach agreements, often at the expense of migrants and IDPs.

#### B. Country Profile

##### I. Basic Information

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed by Mustapha Kemal Atatürk in 1923, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Its borders were set by the Treaty of Lausanne in the same year. Located on the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean basin, Turkey spans 783,562 square km on both sides of the Bosphorus. The country is bordered by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Turkey is inhabited by an estimated population of 82,017,514, being 76,1% urban. Istanbul is the economic capital and largest city of the country with 15,190,000 inhabitants, while Ankara, the political capital, is inhabited by 2,993,000. Clear religious or ethnic figures have historically been a delicate issue due to the State's original official secularism and a focus on Turkic ethnic purity. However, it is believed that the ethnic mix is as follows: Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 19%, other minorities 7-12% as per 2016 estimates (including Arabs, Turkmen, Circassians, Greeks and others). Turkey's population is reported to be officially 99,8% Muslim out of which 60% actually report to effectively practice Islam. Christians and Jews are now said to reach 0.2% of the Turkish population, while they used to reach over a quarter of the Ottoman

Empire's population. Rights of non-Muslim religious minorities, especially those not recognized under the government's interpretation of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, which includes only Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Greek Orthodox Christians, are reportedly subjects to limitations. Turkey is experiencing a consolidation of Presidential power in the wake of the 2016 failed military coup, while being embattled with the PKK and ISIS militants. Turkey is currently militarily active in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Armenia, and is asserting its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

Although Turkey has long been a country that did not specifically attract a high number of foreign workers, changes have been observed since the early 2000s. It must be underlined that the vast amount of foreigners mainly consists of Syrians refugees, owing to the shared border with Syria, whose situation will be evoked in the following sections. Foreigners who seek to stay in Turkey beyond the duration of a visa or a visa exemption or, longer than 90 days, should obtain a residence permit. There are 930,939 residence permit holders in Turkey within various categories: 74% for a short term, 8% are students, 7% are family, 6% for work, 5% classified as "other". According to DGMM, the "other" residence permit category includes humanitarian residence permit holders, and while the exact number is unknown, it is believed that the vast majority in this category are Iraqis. A 2016 study by the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) gives us a general outlook of the evolution of the situation over the past two decades: "one of the shifts in Turkish migration patterns is in the area of professional migrants like skilled-workers, and investors. When we look at the data about foreign workers since the beginning of the 2000s, the gradual increases in the numbers of foreign workers is remarkable. The number of foreign workers in 2003 was 7,302, which increased to 17,466 in 2011, and reached 64,547 in 2015." The fate of international domestic workers will be evoked below as most of them are undocumented.

## **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

As per communication of the Turkish Ministry for Culture and Tourism, Turkey signed agreements with Germany in 1961, with Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands in 1964; with France the following year and ultimately with Australia in 1967. As a result, Turkish migrant workers began to migrate primarily to the countries listed above. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that the total population of Turkish people living abroad exceeds 6.5 million, 5.5 million of which live in Western European countries. According to Germany's Federal Office for Statistics, around 2.7 million people with Turkish roots were living in Germany in 2017, being 3.4% of the German population. A new wave of Turkish immigrants has been identified in Germany as 47,750 people immigrated from Turkey to Germany in 2017, a 15% increase from 2016. The number of asylum seekers skyrocketed following the failed coup of July 2016, and the number of family reunifications has also increased. This new wave of immigrants is quite diverse: followers of Fethullah Gülen, the US-based Turkish cleric, believed to have masterminded the failed coup attempt in 2016, white-collar professionals, students, leftist oppositional figures, Kurdish political actors, academics, and intellectuals, among others. In 2018, 48% of the 10,600 Turkish nationals who applied for asylum in Germany reported having university degrees and are more urban. In 2019, Turkish asylum seekers in Germany were the third-most-registered group in Germany, after Syrians and Iraqis, according to the country's agency for migration and refugees.

#### **IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)**

As per the UNHCR's Global Focus profile of Turkey, the country continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide. According to the latest available figures from the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) published in the August 2020 situation report, there are 3.6 million foreign nationals seeking international protection in Turkey. Most of them are Syrians (3,610,022 individuals) who are granted a specially designed Temporary Protection (TP) status in the country. According to DGMM, as of end of 2019, there were 56,417 non Syrian international protection applicants, reported to be from Afghanistan (62%), Iraq (28%), Iran (6%), and others (4%). UNHCR ended the registration process in Turkey on 10 September 2018, as the procedure is now carried out by the Turkish authorities, and the number of international protection holders is not publicly available anymore. Over 98% of refugees in Turkey live among the host community, and less than 2% in Temporary Accommodation Centres. As the UNHCR states, the main challenges remain the pressure on national resources and the availability of services for refugees and host communities. While state institutions are addressing these challenges, the nature of the refugee situation has drawn public attention to the social impact of the refugees' presence. Owing to his dissatisfaction with the level of the European response to the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkish President Erdogan has recently repeatedly vowed to open the gates to Europe, leading to clashes at the Greek border and putting migrants at risk. Syrians and other refugees and asylum seekers experience significant legal barriers to accessing formal employment, as small and medium-sized enterprises often default to informal labor due to administrative and financial burdens related to work permits for Syrian employees. Existing regulations under the TP regime create additional barriers for the formalization of Syrians' work engagements, for instance through a quota limiting the number of TP beneficiaries to 10 percent of total staff at a workplace, a geographical limitation that work permit issuance is restricted to cities in which Syrians were registered upon arrival in Turkey and the need for acquiring additional permits by Turkish authorities for jobs in the education and health sectors. Access to formal employment is also impeded by economic barriers. The difficulties in formalizing employment mean that many Syrians are at risk of economic exploitation, being paid below the minimum wage, on an irregular basis or sometimes not at all. The economic sectors that Syrians are mostly engaged in, such as the textile, construction and agricultural sectors, were already prone to informality before their arrival in Turkey. Financial assistance provided to 1.26 million Syrians through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) is considered important to meet their basic needs. It is perceived as a reliable and regular source of income in the midst of economic uncertainty, and even more due to the Covid 19 crisis. Critically, it is reported that some Syrians do not try to pursue formal work for fear of losing access to this financial assistance, thus being forced to choose informal status. The necessity to meet basic needs such as food and shelter, coupled with income insecurity, prevents time and resources to pursue education opportunities that could pull families out of poverty. Human Rights Watch declares in its 2020 Turkey reports that the Turkish authorities unlawfully deported some Syrians from Istanbul and other provinces to Syria, including after coercing some of them through violence, verbal threats and the threat of indefinite detention into signing voluntary return forms. The border with Syria remains closed to new asylum seekers. President Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that Syrians in Turkey should be resettled in a safe zone in northeast Syria. Turkey also hosts a high number of internally displaced people resulting from the decades-long clashes between the government and armed Kurdish groups since the 1980s. The vast majority of the displacements were from rural to urban areas in the south-east of the country. The situation has been worsening since 2015 and led to further humanitarian concerns in southeast

Turkey, as up to 1.1 million people are estimated to have been internally displaced as a result of conflict, while the Government does not fully disclose numbers and limits humanitarian access in the areas most affected by violence, which makes the delivery of assistance more difficult, as well as contributes to large information gaps. As part of the authorities' response to what they identify as PKK terrorist activities, security operations were initiated in at least 30 urban and a number of rural locations throughout South-East Turkey, which eventually resulted in a number of deaths, displaced or disappeared, as well as in wide-scale destruction of housing and infrastructure. The authorities also reportedly imposed extended around-the-clock curfews on over 30 towns and neighbourhoods prohibiting any movement without permission for periods of time lasting up to several weeks, preventing evacuation of people. The military coup attempt in July 2016 against President Erdogan further negatively impacted on the country's political and security stability: the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) reports that a flow of 204,000 new displaced people was observed in 2016.

It must not be overlooked that Turkey is a major transit country for migrants en route to the European Union and the United Kingdom. Compared to 2019 figures, the amount of migrants reaching the European Union through Greece has reduced strongly in the first half of 2020. According to *Die Welt am Sonntag*, InfoMigrant, a collaboration of major European media co-financed by the European Commission, reports that German newspaper *Die Welt am Sonntag* had access to a confidential report stating that 10,257 people had crossed the Turkish border into EU territory since January. In 2020, 9,682 reached the EU via Turkey through Greece. Another 275 traveled to Italy, 289 to Cyprus and eleven migrants arrived in Bulgaria. As an August 2020 Turkey Situation Report issued by OIM states, "*Between 4 April 2016 and 27 August 2020, 2,139 migrants have been readmitted to Turkey from Greece. Main points of return from Greece include Lesbos, Chios, Kos and Samos, while the main readmission points to Turkey include Dikili, Çeşme, Bodrum and Adana airport. According to the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) sources, in August 2020, a total number of 3,012 irregular border crossings were registered; 2,929 of which recorded migrants entering Turkey from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Greece. TAF also registered 83 irregular crossings from Turkey into the Syrian Arab Republic, Greece, Iraq, Georgia and Bulgaria. Since 4 April 2016, when EU-Turkey Statement on the readmission of migrants to Turkey arriving in Greece after 20 March 2016 entered into force, a total of 26,166 Syrians were resettled to a number of European countries according to One-to-One mechanism with the assistance of IOM. According to Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) reports, 1,838 irregular migrants were apprehended and no fatality were recorded in August 2020. The top ten nationalities of apprehended or rescued migrants are Afghan, Somali, Congolese, Syrian, Central African, Pakistani, Palestinian, South African, Iranian and Eritrean.*"

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

The United States' Department of State's (DoS) 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report highlights that human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Turkey, and traffickers exploit victims from Turkey abroad. The victims are primarily coming from Central and South Asia, Eastern Europe, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Morocco, and Syria. Of the 134 victims identified in 2019, most were Uzbeks (44), followed by Syrians (31), Moroccans (28), Kyrgyz (26), and Indonesians (11). Traffickers reportedly exploited some Georgian men and women in forced labor and some Turkish men in trafficking and forced labor in Moldova. As is the case in many other European countries, Romani children from marginalized communities often were seen on the streets in major cities where they worked as garbage collectors, street musicians, and beggars, raising concerns about

exploitative conditions and forced labor. Human rights groups reported that commercial sexual exploitation remained a problem for people with different sexual orientations, as these people face discrimination and hostility from both authorities and the local population. In the context where Turkey hosts the largest refugee community in the world, refugee groups in certain areas remain vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in spite of government efforts to register refugees and asylum claimants. Some Syrian and other refugees, including children, are vulnerable to forced or exploitative labor, including street begging. Experts report some refugee children work long hours with low wages, in some cases in substandard working conditions. NGOs and others working with refugees have noted that in some cases, Syrians and girls of other nationalities were sold into marriages in which they were vulnerable to domestic servitude and sex trafficking. The US Department of State report concludes that the Government of Turkey does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Regarding the issue of foreign domestic workers evoked above, it is reported that many enter Turkey as tourists and stay irregularly. Without legal recognition, they are at the mercy of their employers and recruiting agencies often attract them via deceptive offers. It is not uncommon for migrant domestics to have their passports confiscated and toil for little or no pay. As Turkish law does not recognise domestic work, it leaves domestic aides, Turkish and foreign alike, in an extremely vulnerable position. It can only be worse for migrant workers who are mostly irregular. Their employers can act in all impunity, knowing that if workers report their abuse or mistreatment, they may be deported. Domestic workers frequently go missing, as explains the chairwoman of Evid-Sen, a union of domestic workers based in Istanbul. Since the majority are undocumented, it is difficult to assess the exact number of Central Asian workers in Turkey. Still, according to data from the Interior Ministry, Uzbeks and Turkmen are among the top-10 nationalities entering Turkey and applying for residence permits. An easing of visa restrictions for Central Asian citizens as well as a stagnant economy and rising xenophobia in Russia, where most Central Asian migrants go, have also spurred migration to Turkey. Their situation has undoubtedly worsened since the emergence of the novel coronavirus, as many have lost their irregular jobs with little safety net, for example relying on charity food cards provided by the Istanbul Municipality.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

The Republic of Turkey became a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, with a geographical restriction, applying the Convention and Protocol only to people originating from Europe, considering that people coming from outside of this zone should be resettled outside of the country. Nonetheless, Turkey still provides non-European refugees with protection and temporary asylum, pending UNHCR's search for durable solutions elsewhere. Since the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and the subsequent unprecedented influx of people fleeing Syria, Turkey has been undertaking extensive legislative and institutional reforms to build an effective national asylum system. In April 2013, Turkey's first ever asylum law, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, was endorsed by Parliament and entered into force on 11 April 2014, representing the most comprehensive legal framework to date dealing with matters of migration and protection of asylum seekers, and introducing the Temporary Protection regime for Syrians, giving them basic human rights, committing to non-refoulement. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection established that the DGMM was the main entity responsible for policy-making and proceedings for all foreigners in the country. On 22 October 2014, Turkey also passed the Temporary Protection Regulation detailing the rights, obligations and procedures for the beneficiaries of temporary protection. Turkish legislation provides people in need of international

protection with a broad range of rights upon registration with the authorities. Some protection gaps are nonetheless observed in the implementation of the legal framework, largely due to the scale of the refugee response. Despite the commendable step to improve Syrians' opportunity for self-reliance, very few work permits have actually been issued. This means that very few Syrians have access to sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance through formal employment. When it comes to economic integration however, the lack of a macro-level integration policy has meant that Syrians' participation in the Turkish labor market has not been adequately guided, with dynamics unfolding without a sense of structure and sustainability. The latter is strongly felt by the Syrian population, who are desperate to bring a sense of stability into their lives after years of displacement, as well as by Turkish host communities who support the assistance of Syrians in need but are getting impatient with the lack of structured approaches when it comes to policies for improving the economic situation of Turkish citizens and assisting Syrians. It has been reported in the press that Syrians have been deported back to Syria, including unaccompanied children, and that the Turkish and Syrians situation in some neighborhoods is worsening. President Erdogan acknowledged this degradation of relations and has been acting to establish a buffer zone in Northern Syria along the Turkish border. This attempt was joint to the 2019 military intervention in Northern Syria against the Armed Kurdish groups which Turkey allege to be linked to the PKK.

Regarding human trafficking, Article 80 of the penal code criminalising sex trafficking and labor trafficking prescribes penalties of 8 to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine equivalent to 10,000 days. The Turkish National Police (TNP) maintained the Department of Combatting Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking, comprising 30 officers at headquarters with 22 provincial offices. The Gendarmerie also operated the Department of Counter Smuggling and Trafficking with 16 provincial offices. The government did not designate specialized prosecutors for trafficking cases, and a lack of experience and specialization among prosecutors and judges regarding trafficking, particularly after the dismissal of more than 150,000 government workers during the 2016-2018 state of emergency, limited the judiciary's ability and means to prosecute complex crimes like trafficking. Experts continued to report misperceptions about trafficking among law enforcement authorities, including confusion between sex trafficking and "encouragement of prostitution" (Article 227) or between labor trafficking and "violation of freedom of work and labor" (Article 117). Judiciary officials reported cases were dropped or reclassified to lesser offenses due to a lack of evidence, particularly testimonies, as victims and witnesses rarely participated in court proceedings. Police reported difficulties in identifying sex trafficking victims due to victims' fear of deportation, and labor inspectors and asylum officers did not receive training or guidance on victim identification. The government continued efforts to identify vulnerable populations and limit trafficking by maintaining comprehensive migrant registration protocols for the nearly four million Syrian and other refugees, including by providing birth registrations for newly born refugee children. The law allowed both Syrians under temporary protection and non-Syrian conditional refugees the right to work, provided they were registered in the province they wished to work in for at least the preceding six months. Applying for a work permit was the responsibility of the employer, and refugee advocates reported the procedure was burdensome and costly, resulting in few employers pursuing that path. As a consequence, the vast majority of both conditional refugees and those under temporary protection largely remained without legal employment options, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking. Lastly, Turkey is not a signatory to the Domestic Workers Convention (ILO C189) at the General Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and does not have any law concerning domestic work.

## VII. Main Actors

### *The State and International organizations*

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP) and the Regional Refugee and Migration Response Plan (RMRP) are the two frames organising inter-agency coordination in Turkey. The Government of Turkey is responsible for managing the response while the UN supports to guide the coordination efforts among humanitarian and development partners. UNHCR and UNDP co-lead the 3RP in response to the Syria crisis, and coordinates the support of partners to Turkey's refugee response to address unmet needs and to avoid duplication and gaps; and UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM) co-lead the RMRP. UNHCR will continue to support Turkey's refugee response on the basis of the legal and institutional framework for international and temporary protection. UNHCR advocates access and admission to national asylum procedures for people in need of international protection. To that end, UNHCR will continue to prioritize cooperation with the DGMM. UNHCR Turkey has a country office in Ankara and field presence in Istanbul, Izmir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa and Van. UNHCR also chairs the International Protection and Migration Results Group of the Turkey 2016-2020 UN Development and Cooperation Strategy (UNDACS).

Although Turkey has become a major donor on the international stage, the World Bank's Data bank reports that Turkey's Net official assistance and official aid received reached USD 1,187 Billion. The OECD's 2019 Development Co-operation Report shows that Turkey is in the Top 10 of recipients of Bulgaria, Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain. Although the EU has reduced its pre-accession funding to Turkey due to bilateral relations becoming less amicable, it keeps funding a Facility for Refugees, managing a total of EUR 6 billion. The Facility reportedly focuses on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support. Brussels has helped over 80 projects in Turkey with more than 20 partner organisations in Turkey since 2015.

### *Other organizations*

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA) reports that SGDD-ASAM, the largest NGO and implementing partner of UNHCR in Turkey, has offices in more than 40 provinces. Other organisations such as Refugee Rights Turkey and International Refugee Rights Association in Istanbul and Mülteci-Der in Izmir have helplines and can be accessed by phone. Refugee Support Centre (*Mülteci Destek Derneği*, MUDEM) has presence in various provinces, while IKGV has different offices in Turkey and provides information and psycho-social support. Support to Life and YUVA are also mainstream organisations that are very active in the field, the former having a presence in eight cities. Faith-based organisations are also very active in assistance to applicants, Türk Diyanet Vakfı, a state-funded faith agency based in Ankara targets mostly educated young Syrians and provides humanitarian aid, financial assistance and language classes. İnsani Yardım Vakfı is another faith-based organisation active nearly in every province of Turkey.

Moreover, international protection applicants may also access the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and NGOs carrying out resettlement-related activities, such as the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) in Istanbul.

### *The Catholic Church*



Regarding Catholic NGOs, Catholic Relief Services began its operations in Turkey in November 2012, working through a network of partners in Turkey to implement formal and informal education and psychosocial support activities for refugee children and youth. Since 1991, Caritas Turkey has been helping to provide services in the fields of emergencies, health, education, social adjustment and employment. Among its activities are projects for assistance in securing personal documentation, providing food aid for the needy and response to emergencies such as flooding, earthquakes and refugee influxes. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has been running the Refugee Centre in Ankara to welcome refugees to the Turkish capital since October 2009 as part of the Ankara Refugee Support Group Programme. The centre offers a number of services to refugees including language lessons in English and Turkish, pastoral care, and legal and medical advice. Jesuit Refugee Service also work in Kirikkale, a city located 60 km from Ankara, to support the urban refugees living there. Many other international NGO are active in Turkey: Médecins Sans Frontières provide financial and technical support to local NGOs working on the Syrian-Turkish border, while their teams in Turkey also give remote support to medical staff in Syria. The biggest NGO remains the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS), who works through 258 branches and more than 5,400 staff country-wide in support of vulnerable people. It also has 9 regional and 23 local disaster management and logistics centres with the capacity to provide food and household items for 500,000 people in case of emergency or disaster. Acting as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field with a wide reach to vulnerable communities, TRCS works with to refugees and host communities in urban and rural areas. Apart from RCRC Movement partners, TRCS continues working with other programme partners including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme, enabling low-income refugee families to send their children to school. On 1 April 2020, TRCS began working with IFRC on the Emergency Social Safety Network (ESSN) programme, providing basic needs assistance through cash transfers. TRCS also continues to provide first-line response for newly arrived refugees as and when needed.

### **VIII. Other important issues.**

The Apostolic Nuncio to Turkey is Archbishop Paul Fitzpatrick Russell, also responsible for Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. Turkey is divided in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Izmir, headed by Archbishop Lorenzo Piretto O.P., the Roman Catholic Apostolic Vicariate of Anatolia, which is immediately subject to the Holy See, the Roman Catholic Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul, immediately subject to the Holy See, the Armenian Catholic Archdiocese of Istanbul, immediately Subject to the Holy See, the Greek Catholic Apostolic Exarchate of Istanbul, immediately Subject to the Holy See, the Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate of Turkey, immediately Subject to the Syriac Catholic Church, the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Diyarbakir, immediately Subject to the Holy See.

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