

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AS A FACTOR IN EU-TURKEY RELATIONS Some introductory remarks

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Three fundamental questions

Three fundamental questions lie at the core of the debate on the role of international mobility as a factor in EU-Turkey relations:

a) Is there demographic incompatibility or complementarity between Turkey and the EU? Even in the most optimistic scenario, it is unlikely that Turkish citizens will be able to enjoy unrestricted freedom of circulation in the rest of the EU for the next twenty years. By then, the demographic outlook of most of the current EU members will have changed dramatically. In that scenario, and in sheer demographic terms, Turkish migration could be a blessing, rather than a threat.

The problem is that future Turkish migrants are likely to follow the paths of past flows and not to disperse evenly on the EU territory. This would create a disproportionately high concentration in Germany and in a few other countries. It is reasonable to expect that such countries will demand longer transition periods and therefore only parts of the EU territory will be open to free circulation of Turkish European citizens.

b) What migration and human mobility regime should exist between Turkey and the EU between the opening of negotiations and full membership? The currently very restrictive migration and human mobility regime between Turkey and the EU ought not to remain unchanged until the date of full recognition of freedom of circulation. A selective and gradual softening of the Schengen regime for short-term circulation between Turkey and current Member States is a crucial confidence building measure, to be adopted in the first phase of negotiations. Total lifting of visa obligation for short stays should then be the next step in the reform of the EU-Turkey migration and human mobility agenda. As with other current candidates, visa-free travel should ideally anticipate accession by a few years.

c) How should we meet the challenges connected with the management of irregular transit flows crossing Turkey westward? Turkey is a crucial partner for the EU in the management of mixed transit flows, in which undocumented economic migrants are confused with persons in need of protection. During the last few years, the intensity and quality of cooperation between EU Member States' and Turkish authorities in this field has grown. In order to raise further the degree of Turkey's effectiveness and human rights compliance in this area, the European Union should aim more rapidly and consistently towards a common migration policy, entirely based on solidarity criteria, both in the field of immigration control and of asylum.

Demographic complementarity, with some asymmetries

Much has been written in the last few years about the emigration potential of the Turkish society and about the likely impact of EU-wide freedom of circulation. Without entering technical demographic discussions, one key aspect is nevertheless worth emphasizing here. In the most optimistic scenario, Turkish nationals will be free to move and work on the territory of the EU at 28 or more Members, at the earliest in 2022. As a matter of fact, 2015 is pointed out as the closest possible date for accession, and 7 years is the transition period for freedom of circulation that the EU imposed to countries with very low or no potential at all for emigration as the new Eastern European members. So, when we talk about Turkish migration to the current EU, we have to think of what Europe will be like in around two decades.

In 2025, according to the medium variant projections of the United Nations, Italy for example is expected to shrink to 51 millions inhabitants, from current 57.

As for the European Union, the population of the 15 older members is expected to fall to 367 millions by 2025, and further down to 331 millions by 2050. This loss would be equivalent to the combined present population of the seven smallest States of the EU-15, namely Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden.¹

As for the 10 new Member States, their population – apart from Slovakia – is *already* declining, with a particularly dramatic demographic outlook in some countries, such as the Baltics.

On the other hand, according to the same UN projections, Turkey – as you know - is expected to grow by 43%, up to 98 millions inhabitants by the middle of this century.

Therefore, from a general, purely arithmetical point of view, the scenario is more of a sort of *demographic complementarity, rather than incompatibility*. If the aim were demographic stability of the continent as a whole, an increase of human mobility from Turkey to the rest of Europe would rather be a blessing than a threat.

Such reasoning is obviously very abstract, and therefore highly disputable. The problem, in practice, is that Turkish migration would *not* go where it is most needed, and in any case it would not spread evenly on the EU territory.

It is well known that almost two thirds of the about 3.8 millions persons with Turkish origin or Turkish nationality in the EU live in Germany. And more than 90% of the so-called Euro-Turks - but the term itself is quite disputable - are settled in four EU countries: Germany first, then France, the Netherlands and Austria.²

It is probably not by chance that prominent politicians of precisely these four countries were among the most vocal opponents of a rapid start in accession negotiations, during the last few months.

What can derive from that? As with the current enlargement, it is likely and maybe unavoidable that the future enlargement of the European area of freedom of circulation to Turkey will be not only a gradual, *but also an asymmetrical process*.

It is very likely and it should not be seen as a tragedy, that circulating freely in the continental core represented by the four countries mentioned above (and possibly some other one) will take longer than in other parts of the EU, such as in Southern Europe and in Italy in particular. For some time, indeed, we could have a *Southern European area of freedom of circulation*, with more rigid boundaries (in terms of labour circulation, not of physical circulation of persons) to the North.

Which mobility and migration regime in the meantime?

The future of EU-Turkey relations is highly uncertain and in any case full membership will take years if not a couple of decades. Therefore medium term perspectives are of key importance. As the horizon of unrestricted freedom of circulation is rather distant, the crucial question is: *what will happen and what should we do in the meantime?*

Is it envisageable that the migration regime between Turkey and the EU-25 remains the same as today, during the next twenty years or so? Obviously not. It is certainly in the interest of Turkey,

¹ Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, *Replacement Migration. Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?*, ST/ESA/SER.A/206, New York, 2001, p. 89.

² See for instance the figures supplied by U. Manço, *Turcs en Europe: dimensions sociales et économiques d'une migration*, Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Coopération Méditerranéenne et Euro-Arabe, Bruxelles, available on www.medea.be.

but also of the current MS, that such mobility and migration regime be gradually modified, and made more flexible and open, although in a selective manner.³

The first step is a more favourable treatment of Turkish nationals for short term circulation in the EU. This would mean, in practical terms, a quick softening of the rules for granting Schengen visas, possibly via the negotiation of some form of *Visa facilitation agreement* between the Schengen club and Turkey. Something similar is currently being discussed with the Russian federation; although the situations are different, inspiration could be drawn from there.

Visa facilitation for certain categories could be a rather close objective, but the real question is: when will the visa obligation be lifted for Turkish nationals at large?

Turkey is expected to implement soon the Schengen visa black list, but nevertheless it will remain on the black list itself. This somewhat paradoxical situation can not be avoided for some time at least. The question obviously is: how long?

In the case of Romania, a rather problematic country from the point of view of irregular migration, the lifting of the visa obligation came in 2002, five years ahead of the expected accession. There is no set rule here, but the date of the visa-free travel from Istanbul to Brussels will be an extremely important step, both in symbolical and practical terms, during the long transition phase from the opening of negotiations till the day of accession.

We focused until now on short-term mobility. What about proper migration, then, between Turkey and the EU, during the next couple of decades?

Turkish westward migration will obviously continue in the form of family regroupment and marriage migration. This is a very sustained trend for EU countries with large, long-established Turkish communities and it will not stop at all in the next few years.

But besides that? Europe should positively think of opening new legal migration channels from its neighbourhood and particularly from Turkey, before the date of accession and before the final recognition of the freedom of circulation.

Several EU States currently experience substantial shortages in human resources, both high-, medium- and low-skilled. During the next two decades, such shortages will become increasingly acute and evident.

Part of the human capital that Western and Southern Europe need can be produced internally, by raising productivity, the rate of activity, particularly among women, and by making working life last longer. All of these structural adjustments will be necessary, but not sufficient: the human capital needed to make Europe competitive will increasingly need to be produced elsewhere and then imported.

However, producing and importing human capital is a task that can not be performed unilaterally. In order to avoid brain and skill drain dynamics, it ought to be a cooperative endeavour. This is especially true - and it is also a realistic and promising perspective - in the relations with a country like Turkey.

Special efforts should therefore be addressed at jointly designing special policy programmes aimed at better gearing education and training systems in Turkey, not just with the structural needs of national development - which is obvious - but also with more flexible and open systems of legal migration at a continental level.

³ For a broader analysis of the EU migration control regime and its current evolution trend, see F. Pastore, *Formation, Structure and Current Evolution of the EU Entry Control System*, in N. Walker, ed., *Europe's Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp. 89-142.

Managing transit flows as a European responsibility

Finally, a few words should be devoted to the issue of migration *to and through*, rather than *from* Turkey. Turkey is obviously not just a sending State, but also, at a large scale, a receiving country and a major transit area towards Western Europe.

Overall figures on foreign residents in Turkey are uncertain: 1990 census produced a figure of 1,150,000 residents born abroad (2% of the population). Figures published by the OECD show flows of around 200,000 new residence permits in 2001.⁴ Estimates about irregular residents run wildly – as everywhere else – from 100,000 to one million and many more.⁵

It is reasonable to expect that, once legal barriers to international movements of people towards Western Europe will be softened or lifted, also a share of Turkey's foreign population could express a reinforced propensity to move further West.

As for transit flows, reliable numbers are even more difficult to produce and find. It is a matter of fact that, during the 1990s, Turkey and Iraq were respectively the second and third source countries of asylum seekers in industrialised countries, according to UNHCR. It is also a matter of fact that, in the period 2000-2002 a major smuggling route was opened from the Turkish shores to Southern Italy, through Greece, Cyprus and Malta.⁶

The geopolitics of irregular migration are fast evolving, and now new smuggling routes are much more visible. But it is undisputed that Turkey is still and will long be an absolutely crucial partner for current Member States, in the management of forced and irregular flows aiming westward.

During the last few years, the level and quality of cooperation of Turkish authorities with their EU counterparts in this area has increased substantially. The effects of this improvement are tangible: talking from an Italian point of view, it is remarkable that mass arrivals of irregular migrants by boats from Turkish harbours to the Calabrian and Sicilian coasts have dropped in the last three years.⁷

There is no doubt therefore that Turkey is *technically* able to control unauthorised flows across its territory. The real problem is: what are the costs of such new role of Turkey as a filter for transit flows directed towards the current EU territory? I am talking here both of *human* and of *financial* costs, the two being very closely connected.

When we talk about human costs, we should mean one very concrete thing: is Turkey now, and will it be tomorrow, able and willing to manage transit flows - which are typically mixed flows, including illegal migrants and refugees - in a manner fully compatible with human rights standards and with international protection obligations?

The question is complex - and current EU members certainly do not have a clean and transparent conscience in this field.

⁴ SOPEMI, *Tendances des migrations internationales. Rapport annuel 2003*, OECD, Paris, 2004, pp. 311-314.

⁵ P. Martin, E. Midgley, M. Teitelbaum, *Migration and Development: Focus on Turkey*, International Migration Review, vol. 35, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 597.

⁶ On irregular migration to and through Turkey, see A. İçduygu, *Irregular Migration in Turkey*, IOM Migration Research Series, No. 12, February 2003, International Organization for Migration, available on www.iom.int. See also N. Narli, *Illegal Forms of Human Mobility and Security: Human Smuggling and Migration of Illegal Labour to Turkey: Preliminary Findings from the Field Work*, paper presented at the 7th International Workshop on Defence and Security Policy, Rakovski Defence and Staff College, Sofia, http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/crime_narli.pdf.

⁷ P. Monzini, F. Pastore, G. Sciortino, *L'Italia promessa. Geopolitica e dinamiche organizzative del traffico di migranti verso l'Italia*, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI), Working Papers, No. 9/2004, available on www.cespi.it. An English version is also available at page http://www.cespi.it/cnr/human_smuggling.htm.

Lifting the geographical reservation and becoming a fully fledged and fully engaged asylum country would be certainly possible, but extremely costly for Turkey. And this brings us to the financial dimension. And more broadly to the issue of *burden sharing*.

Turkey fears - as Kemal Kirişci has put it in several of his writings⁸ - to become a “dumping ground” for irregular migrants and asylum seekers that are clearly unwanted in the rest of Europe. Such fear could be a major obstacle to the future of the relations between Turkey and the EU. And such fear could weaken the Turkish engagement and the Turkish will to cooperate, and/or it could push Turkish authorities not to pay enough attention to the human rights dimension of transit migration management.

But preventing such negative evolution is primarily a European responsibility. Coming from an “external border country” such as Italy, it is easy to realise how less exposed EU countries can be tempted by leaving the dirty and costly job of illegal migration management to peripheral members. Such attitude is unacceptable and politically unsustainable in general, but it would be particularly unsustainable in the case of Turkey.

Financial solidarity, enhanced technical cooperation, Union-wide resettlement schemes, joint management of asylum screening at EU's external borders. All of these are necessary tools, that only now start to be discussed seriously at EU level.

Making such tools operational will be a long and difficult process. And still, all this will not be enough. Turkey is likely to remain, for decades maybe, a collector for forced migration flows issuing from a vast instability basin, that goes from Palestine to Central Asia, and beyond.

Managing such flows more effectively and fairly is only a partial response. *Prevention* is the only real solution. And this brings us to the crucial contribution that Turkey - a stable and democratic Turkey - could make to a European global strategy to promote peace, democracy and stability. But this lays outside the scope of this brief note.

⁸ J. Apap, S. Carrera, K. Kirişci, *Turkey in the European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice*, Centre for European Policy Studies, EU-Turkey Working Papers, No. 3, August 2004, available on www.ceps.be, in part. 23-26.