

THE REFUGEE ISSUE IN TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE EU

Project Report

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THE REFUGEE ISSUE IN TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE EU

Five years after the 18 March statement, agreed under the main aims of dismantling irregular migration and improving EU-Turkey cooperation, Ankara's expectations to strengthen its link with the EU dramatically failed. Migration has shifted its status quo and changed its scope, from being the main pivot of the agreement to become a sort of 'weapon of pressure' towards Europe. That being said, Turkey's role in the international political scenario is historically, culturally and economically of fundamental importance. Due to the flow of investments and shared interest, Turkey is still an important interlocutor for Europe and its stability. Moreover, in a time of geopolitical changes and emerging crisis, the migration policy is a common thorny issue, which requires joint action.

This research aims at analyzing EU-Turkey relations, particularly through the lens of migration, by providing both an overview of the diplomatic relations between the parts and a detailed analysis of the technical aspects of this cooperation. The first section provides an historical perspective of the evolution of Turkey-EU relations through the main historical steps of both the negotiation to join the EU and the national developments in Turkey. To better understand the role of each stakeholder, the second section gives a mapping of the EU-funded intervention to Turkey as well as of the assistance programs for refugees implemented by both the international community and the Government of Ankara.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Modern Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, its relations with the European countries and later with the European Union have been continuous. The process of modernization initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was based on several principles aiming at forging a Western-oriented Country. Hence, the socio-political design on Western values has produced a peculiar dichotomy: on the one hand, the West was an ideal model of civilization while it has been simultaneously perceived as imperialist force determined to colonize and divide Turkey. Until the 1999 Helsinki Summit, however, the political vision towards Europe and the rhetoric on Turkey's EU full membership has been relatively straightforward, with a fairly stable consensus between the major political parties and the established secular elite. Although the European enthusiasm has passed through various stages and it has been declined in various ways by the political parties, with some more extremist exceptions rejecting the idea of a Turkey embedded in the western values, the general perception has been substantially in favor of the EU membership. In other words, while the European imprint of Turkey and its related Europeanization process was a key point of Kemalism and its secular elite, a concrete reforming domestic process has been launched once Turkey was formally recognized as a candidate country. At the same time, the emphasis on the European membership, coupled with its reformist logic, has begun to divide Turkish political spectrum, emerging as a core issue of political controversy. Turkey was the 13th member state to join the Council of Europe in 1950¹ and joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952², just 3 years

¹ See

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/turkey#:~:text=Turkey%20became%20the%2013th%20member,Europe%20on%2013%20April%201950.>

² See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm

after its creation. In addition, due to the flow of investments³ and shared interests, such as the fight against terrorism and the reduction of irregular migration, Turkey has been an important interlocutor for Europe and its stability. In this framework, indeed, migration management has been a key component in the relations, contributing, according to different circumstances, to shape cooperation and to raise mutual credibility or reciprocal doubts. Among the latest examples in this sense, the EU-Turkey statement, agreed under the main aims of dismantling irregular migration and improving conditions of refugees in Turkey, shifted temporarily its scope at the beginning of 2020 with Ankara's 'open door policy', becoming a sort of 'weapon of pressure' towards Europe.

Lately, the relations have experienced times of downs rather than ups, particularly due to the EU concerns on the degrading situation of the respect of human rights in Turkey; on Ankara's military operations in northern Syria and its positioning in the neighboring conflicts; on the drilling activities carried out by Ankara into the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, criticism have been raised by Turkey on the alleged Brussels' double standards towards Ankara's accession process and, most recently, on the lack of progress particularly on the non-migration elements of the 18 March Statement, especially regarding visa liberalization, the upgrade of the Custom Union and the progress in the negotiations for Turkey's EU full membership.

To better understand where relations currently stand and how the issue of migration has shaped them over the years, this research provides an overview on the evolution of Turkey-EU relations through the main historical steps of both the negotiation to join the EU and the national developments in Turkey. In addition, the paper gives an analysis of the EU technical and financial assistance to Turkey on migration, since the phase of pre-accession to date, with a particular focus on the FRIT mechanism, established under the EU Turkey statement of 2016.

The paper is developed into two sections, divided as follows: the first one is elaborated by CeSPI⁴ and is made up of five chapters providing an historical perspective of Turkey-EU path. Namely, it refers to: the phase of pre-accession, when Turkey committed to a series of reforms aiming at aligning to EU standards; the ten-year period after the starting of the negotiation, made by step forward and backwards in the relations; the 2015-2016 period that led to the adoption of the Turkey-EU Statement; the years 2016-2020 which have seen the progressive deterioration in Turkey-EU relations; the most recent institutional developments. In parallel, this section sheds a light on the evolution of the Turkish domestic policy following or determining its relations with the EU.

The second section, developed by GAR⁵, is divided into two main chapters and related sub-chapters which cover: Turkey's emerging migration management mainly supported by the EU's financial mechanism called Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA); Humanitarian and development assistance to Turkey by the EU and other donors following the Syrian crisis, including a special focus on the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement and on the FRIT mechanism, its implementation modality, projects, challenges and achievements; Turkey's government refugee response.

Some conclusions on the effectiveness of the agreement and its related criticalities in the light of future road maps and developments, are drawn.

³ According to EU statistics, in 2020 Turkey was the sixth largest partner of the EU for both export (70 billion) and import of goods (67 billion). See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Turkey-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics

⁴ CeSPI-Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale is an independent think-tank based in Rome that carries out policy-oriented research and analysis, consultancy, evaluation and training on a number of relevant international relations issues. Since 2019 CeSPI has launched the Turkey Observatory, a space dedicated to the constant monitoring of the country system and of Turkey's regional and international connections through in-depth analysis and timely reflections on the latest developments.

⁵ GAR-Göç Araştırmaları Derneği (Association for Migration Research) is a non-governmental organization based in Istanbul. GAR aims to encourage and initiate interdisciplinary research on migration, to disseminate knowledge produced in these studies, and to increase awareness about the situation and vulnerabilities of immigrants and refugees on national and international level.

FIRST SECTION. TURKEY-EU RELATIONS: A LONG JOURNEY

1.1. The road for accessing negotiation: the golden age of EU-Turkey relations?

At the Helsinki summit⁶ held on December 1999 Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate state to access the European Union. During the summit, the Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit expressed his belief that Turkey would have been a full member of the Union in a short period of time “given the dynamism of the Turkish people and their attachment to democracy”⁷. Within his passionate statement, he reiterated the importance of Turkey to Europe at cultural, economic, political and security levels by reminding the role of the country within NATO during the decades of the Cold War; its importance as “energy terminal where the gas and oil riches of the Caspian Basin and the Caucasus will be transported to world markets”⁸; its richness in terms of coexistence of different religious beliefs. Ecevit was fully aware of the adjustments needed to reach a place within the EU member states, especially regarding the improvement in human rights standards and economy, but he expressed optimism and determination to overcome the obstacles considering the “propensity and the quest of the Turkish people to change and modernization”⁹.

In Turkey, this was a period politically characterized by great political coalition governments. After the so-called February 28 post-modern coup and the dismissal of the Islamist led-government, Ecevit resumed the power in 1997. The effect of February 28 trial in the domestic dynamics was peculiar: the most conservative soul of Turkey began to organize itself into conservative parties, which, however, did not oppose Turkey's accession to the European Union as it happened in the past. On the break of 1999 elections, the newly funded Fazilet party entered the Parliament as the third largest party in Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey's EU candidate status marked the politicization of the domestic debate over Ecevit's tenure: the reference to Europe suddenly turned into a political confrontation between the nationalist groups, who were the main opponents to Turkey-EU accession. In other words, as the fulfillment of the criteria required a considerable political, economic and social change, some criticisms arose by further polarizing the society. In this regard, the army, as main guarantor of the Turkish Constitution, have always been very careful to distance themselves from the "anti- EU" block, believing that much of the country's political and economic destiny lays in Europe. On the other hand, the keenest support to the European cause came not only from business circles and liberal groups, but also from some conservative parties. However, in this time the national block led by the National Movement Part -MHP took on a noteworthy role both as a member of the ruling coalition and as a key element in approving or blocking the reform proposals required by the Copenhagen Criteria. The nationalist tendencies of the party have revealed themselves negatively especially with the adoption of the National Program for the *Acquis Communautaire*, proving to be inconsistent in blocking any progress. Although the MHP leader, Devlet Bahçeli, supported Turkey's membership to the European Union, he wished for a Turkey's membership in accordance with the greatness, the history and the potential of the Country. Those were the assumptions of the nationalist clashes with Prime Minister Ecevit, contributing to the government crisis; hence leading to 2001 early elections. On the islamist front, a break between the

⁶ See https://www.ab.gov.tr/brief-history_111_en.html

⁷ For the statement of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit on Turkey's Candidacy to the EU (December 11, 1999, Helsinki) see http://www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-of-prime-minister-bulent-ecevit-in-helsinki-on-turkey_s-candidacy-to-the-eu_br_december-11_-1999-.en.mfa

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

old guard, mainly based on the traditional Islamic discourse, and the reformists with a conservative liberal agenda occurred, paving the way to the success of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party- AKP.

As foreseen by the Helsinki European Council conclusions, the EU Commission started preparing an Accession Partnership¹⁰ for Turkey, which was adopted in March 2001, providing a road map for Turkey's accession process. The Accession Partnership for Turkey included short-term objectives to be fulfilled for the end of 2001 and medium objectives expected to be concluded in more than one year. Among the short term provisions,¹¹ there were the enhancement of political dialogue and political criteria including the support to UN Secretary General's efforts to bring to a successful conclusion the process for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue; strengthening legal and constitutional guarantees for the right of freedom of expression; undertaking all necessary measures to reinforce the fight against torture practices; improving the functioning and efficiency of the judiciary, including the State security court in line with international standards. In addition, criteria on economy, justice and environment were requested, also as mid-term priorities¹². After the approval of the Accession Partnership (then revised 3 times) the Turkish Government announced its own National Programme for the Adoption of the EU *acquis*¹³ (2001)¹⁴.

In the general elections held on 3 November 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) got the power and put at the core of its political agenda the relations between Turkey and Europe. In the government program, the AKP announced that the full European Union membership was a top priority for Turkey, aimed at ensuring economic and democratic progress and development in full compliance with the EU institutional standards and regulations¹⁵. Since its foundation in August 2001, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has declared its attachment to the idea of transformation and reformism that has differentiated it from the rest of the other political parties already within the political spectrum. The AKP presented itself to the public with the declared desire to initiate a profound transformation both of itself and of Turkey, removing all those bonds that within the domestic sphere would have slowed down the democratization process. This new conception of politics, also based on the importance accorded to foreign policy as a viaticum to avoid a break with the Kemalist establishment, has strengthened the image of the party in the eyes not only of the Turkish electorate, but also of the economic and media elite. The new political style, giving priority to the reforms proposed by the Copenhagen criteria, was a necessary step both for Turkey's democracy consolidation and for the party's legitimacy from the international community. The 2002 AKP election manifesto clearly underlined the commitment to the required criteria, emphasizing the need to proceed along political and economic reforms aiming as well at amending

¹⁰ The Accession Partnership is an agreement between the EU and the country that applies to enter the Union. The AP sets the areas in which the candidate country needs to make progress in the short and medium term, based on the accession criteria (better known as the Copenhagen criteria). They are: 1) stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; 2) a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU; 3) ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the 'acquis') and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. For EU accession negotiations to be launched, a country must satisfy the first criterion. In addition, the AP sets pre-accession assistance which involves financial and technical help to support economic and political reforms in the candidate country, preparing them for the rights and obligations that come with EU membership. Candidate countries draw up national programmes for the adoption of the *acquis* (NPAs). See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accesion_partnership.html#:~:text=When%20a%20country%20applies%20to,based%20on%20the%20accession%20criteria;https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accesion_criteria_copenhagen.html

¹¹ For the Accession partnership with the Republic of Turkey (2001) see https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Apd/Turkey_APD_2001.pdf

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ The *acquis* is around 130,000 pages of legal documents grouped into 35 chapters and forms the rules by which Member States of the EU should adhere. See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/accesion-negotiations-720>

¹⁴ See https://www.ab.gov.tr/brief-history_111_en.html

¹⁵ See Giannotta V., *Erdogan e il suo partito*, Castelveccchi, 2018, p. 113.

the still valid Constitution adopted under 1980 military regime. Those key points were also taken up in the government program, pivoting on “Turkey’s full membership to the European Union as a priority aimed at ensuring economic and democratic development, in full compliance with the institutional standards and regulations established by the EU”. At that time, this goal represented the largest project after the foundation of the Republic. Thus, the pragmatic nature of AKP electoral support, based mainly on economic assessments and expectations of increased welfare, leads back to religious conservatism, which contributed to playing a fundamental role in the AKP's party affiliation. Its definition of democracy was conditioned by both domestic and external dynamics: the membership to the European Union meant marking an important step towards the contemporary level of civilization and opening the way to transform Turkish politics into a truly democratic one. Furthermore, the reforms would have been of great benefit to people. Under the European umbrella, Turkey had therefore embarked on a process of internal reforms aimed primarily at rebalancing civilian power over the military and at normalizing the distortions of the Turkish political system in a liberal key. Overtime, a careful work of internal adjustments helped to increase the consensus around the AKP, by leading it towards an increasingly dominant positions within the public space.

At the Copenhagen Council of 12-13 December 2002, the EU committed itself to starting accession negotiations with Turkey, if it had determined, based on European Commission’s reports and recommendations, that Turkey would have fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria by December 2004¹⁶. Thus, through the National Programs for the Adoption of the EU *aquis* of both 2001 and 2003 Turkey committed itself to a series of reforms aimed at enhancing the alignment of Turkey’s political asset at both economic and political level to the EU standard. Those reforms included the reduction of the military power in political affairs; the abolition of the death penalty, the extension of freedom of expression and freedom of press; the alignment of the judiciary with the European standards and the supremacy of International agreements over the domestic legislation¹⁷. Moreover, between 1999 and 2004 many progresses into EU-Turkey relations had been made, also regarding the cultural cooperation. As an example, in 2001, Turkey signed the Bologna Declaration aimed at integrating its system into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and facilitating the mobility of students and academics to increase their global competitiveness¹⁸. Later in 2004, Turkey started its participation in European Community programmes, within the frame of “an integrated set of actions designed to promote cooperation between the EU member states and candidate countries in various specific fields related to EU policies”¹⁹, as the Erasmus program.

At the Brussels summit held in December 2004, the European Council welcomed the progress made by Turkey in its reform process and also expected Turkey to pursue its efforts to bring into force six items of legislation²⁰ (associations act; new penal code; jurisdiction of appeal; Code of Criminal Procedure; establishment of the judicial police; execution of sentences²¹), former identified by the Commission within a report released in October 2004.

Hence, accession negotiations have been launched on 3 October 2005 and the Negotiation Framework Document was announced²². As for the latter, the Union expected *Turkey to sustain the process of reform and to work towards further improvement in the respect of the principles of liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*; to

¹⁶ See Preamble to the 2003 National Program for the Adoption of the EU *aquis* (NPAA) https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/UlusalProgram/UlusalProgram_2003/En/pdf/1-preamble_eng_.pdf

¹⁷ Valeria Giannotta, *Erdogan e il suo partito*, Castelveccchi, 2018, p. 114.

¹⁸ See V. Giannotta, A. Ianni, *Migration for Education: gli studenti internazionali negli istituti di istruzione superiore in Turchia*, April 2020, https://www.cespi.it/sites/default/files/osservatori/allegati/approf.8_-_studenti_internazionali_nelle_universita_turche.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/erasmus-programme-189>

²⁰ For the 16/17 December 2004 Conclusion of the European Council see https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/83201.pdf

²¹ See <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=891>

²² See https://www.ab.gov.tr/brief-history_111_en.html

consolidate legislation and implementation measures *in relation to zero tolerance policy in the fight against torture* and of provisions *relating to freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women's rights*, among others. It was also stated that the progress on the negotiation framework would have been *closely monitored by the Commission* and that Turkey would have been required to provide regularly information on progress *in the alignment with and implementation of the acquis, even after provisional closure of a chapter*²³.

The Turkish Government's willingness to sign the Protocol to extend the Ankara Agreement to the ten new Member States before the start of the negotiations (Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic²⁴), including the Republic of Cyprus²⁵, was fundamental to the decision taken by the European Council in December 2004.

At this point, two main issues need to be attentioned to better understand the evolution of the accession process from that time on: the Cyprus issue and the extension of the Ankara Agreement to the southern part of the island as full member of the EU.

As we have already outlined, the economic cooperation between Turkey and Europe dates back to the early sixties of the nineteenth century. The Ankara Agreement was developed between the European Economic Community and Turkey in 1963 with the aim of promoting *the continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between the Parties, while taking full account of the need to ensure an accelerated development of the Turkish economy and to improve the level of employment and the living conditions of the Turkish people*²⁶. The Agreement can be seen the first official document putting on the table the possibility for Turkey to access the Community “*as soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community*”²⁷. Turkey’s integration to the EEC was based on three phases spread over 30 years: preparation (which started in 1963 and was aimed at reducing economic differences between parties), transition (which was set by the Additional Protocol of 1970. In this period, free movement of industrial and agricultural products as well as persons were foreseen²⁸) and final phases. The final phase of the relations between the EC and Turkey under the Ankara Association Agreement 1963 was to achieve the EC-Turkey Customs Union²⁹. The process had taken more than 30 years as the final phase entered into force on 1 July 1996.

The Cyprus issue is one of the main matters of dispute between the EU and Turkey in the accession process. It needs to be remembered that since 1974, Cyprus is divided in two sides. The Republic of Cyprus is part of the EU since 2004 while the Turkish Republic of Cyprus is not recognized from the international community. The Republic of Cyprus became EU full member just after the failed referendum on the Adoption of the Annan Plan, which was basically aimed at finding a solution for reunifying the island under the creation of a United Cyprus Republic, “composed of a Greek Cypriot constituent state and a Turkish Cypriot constituent state linked by federal government”³⁰. Turkish population voted in favor while the majority of Greek Cypriots rejected the Plan as it was

²³ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/turkey/st20002_05_tr_framedoc_en.pdf

²⁴ The ten member states accessed the Union with the Treaty of Accession signed in Athens in 2003, which entered into force in May 2004.

²⁵ See <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=891>

²⁶ Art. 2 of the Ankara Agreement. See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f8e2f9f4-75c8-4f62-ac3f-b86ca5842eee.0008.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

²⁷ Art. 28 of the Ankara Agreement. For the document https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f8e2f9f4-75c8-4f62-ac3f-b86ca5842eee.0008.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

²⁸ See https://www.ab.gov.tr/brief-history_111_en.html

²⁹ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/d-tr/documents/eu-texts>

³⁰ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2004/04/101352-cyprus-misses-historic-chance-it-rejects-un-reunification-plan-annan-says>

perceived inadequate on the aspects of Security, Property, Settlers and Legal Status³¹. Conciliation between the parts was at the time (and later on) far to be reached especially due to the progressive broadening of the Cyprus issue to a regional dispute over gas exploration in the East Mediterranean³².

When in July 2005 Ankara signed the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement, it annexed a declaration reiterating that Turkey did not recognize the Republic of Cyprus³³, which was by that time already member of the European Union. Thus, since the very beginning of the negotiation process, the Cyprus issue has been among the most challenging points of Turkey-EU relations.

1.2. The path towards membership: between openings and deadlocks

After the opening of the negotiation process in 2005 and following the screening process of the Turkish legislation, the Commission prepared detailed reports for each of the 35 chapters, which are opened or provisionally closed depending on the candidate country's fulfilment of opening/closing benchmarks, which are determined by the EU Council³⁴.

Negotiation started with Chapter 25 on Science and Research that was opened and provisionally closed in June 2006³⁵. During the same year, however, the European Union expressed concern over restrictions to the free movement of goods, including restrictions on means of transport to which Turkey had committed by signing the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement³⁶. Turkey was requested to eliminate all restrictions to free movement of goods, including restrictions on means of transport regarding the Republic of Cyprus. However, Ankara continued to apply partially the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement.

For that reason, in 2006 December summit in Brussels, the European Council decided *to suspend negotiations on eight chapters relevant to Turkey's restrictions with regard to the Republic of Cyprus*³⁷, (Chapter 1 Free movement of goods; Chapter 3 Right of establishment and freedom to provide services; Chapter 9 Financial services; Chapter 11 Agriculture and rural development; Chapter 13 Fisheries; Chapter 14 Transport policy; Chapter 29 Customs union Chapter; 30 External relations³⁸) and declared that no chapters would have been closed until Turkey fulfilled *its commitments under the additional protocol to the EU-Turkey association agreement, which extended the EU-Turkey customs union to the ten member states, including Cyprus*³⁹.

³¹ See A. Lordos, *Rational Agent or Unthinking Follower? A survey-based profile analysis of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot referendum voters*. <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/b67d4879-d016-4fa1-8a15-d3ac021a937b.pdf>

³² Particularly in 2019 and 2020, Turkey increased drilling operations within the Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone to research and extract Hydrocarbons. The operations are considered illegal from the European side while Turkey does not recognize Cyprus exclusive sovereignty over the area. Moved by several economic and geopolitical reasons, Ankara's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean have tightened EU-Turkey relations progressively reaching the point of sanctions. See Paragraph 1.4.

For a broader overview of Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy see V. Giannotta, *La Turchia in Libia, I motivi della decisione di Erdogan*, Osservatorio Turchia, CeSPI, January 2020, https://www.cespi.it/sites/default/files/osservatori/allegati/brief_4_giannotta_gennaio_2020.pdf; C. Marsili, *La Turchia di Erdogan nel grande gioco mediterraneo*, Osservatorio Turchia, CeSPI, October 2020, https://www.cespi.it/sites/default/files/osservatori/allegati/brief_16_marsili_ottobre_2020_final.pdf

³³ See <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=891>

³⁴ See https://www.ab.gov.tr/current-situation_65_en.html

³⁵ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/current-status-742>

³⁶ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/current-status-742>

³⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_06_352

³⁸ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/current-status-742>

³⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_06_352

Although the European process has introduced important issues within Turkey's political debate, the AKP government has always reiterated its strategic priority of EU full membership. After the deadlock on the negotiations due to Cyprus issue, Ankara showed its disappointment by accusing the EU over a lack of perspective. By claiming that the negotiation process was encountering unnecessary obstacles and that Europe shows no desire to streamline it, the Turkish government started to stress its determination to formally proceed with the reforms envisaged in the agenda. Moreover, by facing the proposal of some European offices to revert the negotiation for the full membership in something like a 'privileged partnership', Turkey underlined the existence of some obstacles contradicting the spirit of the negotiations urging Europe to preserve its political consistency and to respect the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*. Nevertheless, the relations between EU and Turkey proceeded and in January 2007 the negotiations resumed on the chapters that were not suspended⁴⁰. The EU Progress report covering the Period 2007-2008 states that both access negotiation and enhanced political dialogue between the EU and Turkey continued and the EC-Turkey customs union contributed to a further increase in bilateral EU-Turkey trade⁴¹ in that period. Indeed, in 2008 both the Accession Partnership and the National Program of Turkey for the adoption of the EU *Aquis* were updated and in the 2008 NPAA Preamble, Turkey expressed willingness to continue its efforts for achieving a permanent solution to the Cyprus issue, "based on the existence of two separate people and democracy, bi-zonal, political equality of both sides, equal status of both founding states and parameters of new partner state"⁴².

In May 2012, the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, the Turkish Minister for European Affairs and Chief EU negotiator launched in Ankara the Positive EU-Turkey Agenda while the chapter 22 was opened. The Positive agenda *intended to keep the accession process of Turkey alive and put it properly back on track after a period of stagnation*⁴³. The Positive Agenda represented a mean for completing the negotiation process through areas of *joint interest* and in which reforms were needed, including, among others, *the alignment with the EU legislation, political reforms and fundamental rights, visa, mobility and migration, trade, energy, counter terrorism or dialogue on foreign policy*⁴⁴.

The scope of the Agenda was to keep the accession process of Turkey going not to replace it as expressed both by the two sides and in order to achieve this working groups containing experts from the Commission and their counterparts from Turkish ministries focusing on eight negotiation chapters namely on "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights" and the others were established. The accession process remained the most effective framework for promoting EU-related reforms, developing dialogue on foreign and security policy issues, strengthening economic competitiveness and diversifying supply of energy sources in Turkey. However, in the accession negotiations it has regrettably not been possible to open a new negotiating chapter for over a year and it was added that a new constructive phase in the relations with Turkey needed to be triggered based on concrete steps in areas of common interest. Basically, the reasons behind this agenda are mainly related to the fact that Turkey-EU relations were experiencing a negative phase, by further undermining EU credibility. EU, indeed, had been showing a sort of fatigue in its enlargement policy and the extension to Turkey provoked some criticism in the public opinion. Moreover, in a time of increasing external threats related to Russia-Crimea crisis and the war in Syria, huge concern over immigration inflow and internal security were rapidly arising. In that period, although the initial perception of the government was related to a 'transitional crisis', Turkey started to be busy in accommodating the first groups Syrians fleeing the war, which at the end of June 2012 counted

⁴⁰ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/current-status-742>

⁴¹ See TURKEY 2008 PROGRESS REPORT https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/turkey_progress_report_en.pdf

⁴² For the 2008 NPAA preamble:

https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/UlusalProgram/UlusalProgram_2008/En/pdf/i_preamble.pdf

⁴³ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_12_359

⁴⁴ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_12_359

around 33,000⁴⁵. Meanwhile, the developments in Ukraine portrayed Russia as a rival; hence, Turkey, as a NATO member, would be functional to Europe in contrasting the wide spreading Russian influence in the region. Ankara was already in good terms with Moscow over energy issues, moreover if Turkey continued to feel rejected by the EU, would have easily gravitated under Russian umbrella with dramatic spillovers on European stability. Furthermore, the situation in Syria was dramatically deteriorating while Ankara proved to be able to accommodate in its territories huge numbers of Syrians fleeing the war. Taking into account those challenges, the Positive Agenda towards Turkey was a tool to avoid violent spillovers on Turkey, perceived as a valuable EU partner.

In 2013, another step forward in Turkey-EU relations was recorded. In December, Turkey and EU signed the Readmission Agreement and started the Visa Liberalization Dialogue for Turkish citizens⁴⁶. Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement aimed at establishing, “on the basis of reciprocity, procedures for the rapid and orderly readmission, by each side, of the persons having entered or are residing on the territory of the other side in an irregular manner”⁴⁷.

The Visa Liberalization Dialogue aimed at “making progress towards the elimination of the visa obligation currently imposed on the Turkish citizens travelling to the Schengen area for a short-term visit”⁴⁸. The visa liberalization agreement has been based on a Road Map identifying five areas in which Turkey needs “to undertake legislative and administrative reforms with a view to establishing a secure environment for visa-free travel”⁴⁹. The five areas are related to document security, migration management, public order and security, fundamental rights, readmission of irregular migrants⁵⁰. Interestingly, securing borders and preventing illegal migration were key components of the cooperation between the parts also in 2013. With regard to the migration management section indeed, Turkey was requested to carry out border checks and border surveillance along all its own borders, especially along the borders with the EU member states, to reduce the number of illegal border crossing⁵¹.

Domestically, some important turning points were recorded at the time. In the beginning of spring 2013, the democratic peace process addressing the Kurdish issue was launched, intending to mark ‘the beginning of a new era’. The main step to accomplish the process was the full withdrawal of PKK terrorist organization affiliated members from Turkey. The decision was the outcome of Turkey’s regional strategy of influencing the political developments in Syria and Iraq and the litmus test of Turkey’s democratic maturity, but things evolved differently. At the same time, after Gezi Park protests the popularity of Turkish government, previously perceived as a success story in the mixture of democratic and conservative values, began to decline. Gezi events, known for the disproportionate use of tear gas by the police to disperse the riots, brought to surface AKP’s great difficulty in accommodating the democratic standards. This was the first public crack in Erdoğan’s popularity and on the state of Turkish democracy. Meanwhile, the political alliance between the AKP and Fetullah Gülen’s movement broke up along domestic scandals testing Erdoğan’s power. However, with his new election to the Presidency, Turkey experienced a more centralized management of public affairs marking the beginning of the ‘New Turkey’ (*Yeni Türkiye*). In that time, the regional challenges to face were many. Along the pressure of ISIS in Syria, Turkey experienced another big influx of refugees, mainly Kurds fleeing the city of Kobane, and, although

⁴⁵ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>

⁴⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2013/20131216_01_en

⁴⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_210

⁴⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_14_210

⁴⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131216-roadmap_towards_the_visa-free_regime_with_turkey_en.pdf

⁵⁰ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/visa-liberalisation-dialogue-6896>

⁵¹ See benchmark 8 of migration management section as of Turkey’s progress on the visa liberalisation roadmap, May 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160504/turkey_progress_visa_liberalisation_roadmap_en.pdf

initially it was reluctant to join the American-led coalition, at the end Ankara vaguely granted its support, simultaneously backing ground actions to the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The escalation of violence on Turkey's southern border also affected the internal process of dialogue with PKK, perceived as main supporter of the Syrian Kurdish militias. While these groups were gaining legitimacy in the Western public opinion as key elements in the fight against terrorism, the AKP government froze the negotiating chapters of the peace process. Nevertheless, on 7 June 2015 elections, the AKP did not obtain the absolute majority, hence a period of internal instability followed. Politically, along the main opposition parties (CHP and MHP) difficulties in finding common ground for forming a new government, the President refused to give the political mandate to CHP, the second political force within the Parliament. Moreover, couple of days before the end of the Constitutional terms set by August 23 he called for 'repeating the elections' in less than three months. While the wave of terrorist attacks highlighted all fragility of Turkey in coping with the domestic and regional fractures, the AKP's return to the political scene was celebrated in November, 1 with an increasing consensus of over 8 percentage points (49.4%). Meanwhile, the bilateral relations with Russia, actively engaged in Syria against ISIS alongside Assad, became tense until a diplomatic crisis erupted over the down of a Russian jet at Turkish border.

In this frame, along the line of cooperation in crisis management, 2015 can be seen as a year of closeness between Turkey and the EU. High-level meetings had been held and joint decisions had been taken, particularly in terms of migration management and reduction of irregular flows to the EU. Turkey has also joined the EU Protection Mechanism -the EU framework for cooperation in disaster management and emergency response⁵². In addition, in May 2015, EU and Turkey agreed to modernize the Customs Union Agreement and to enhance EU-Turkey bilateral trade relations⁵³ since the enhancement of bilateral trade relations was not an alternative to the negotiation process but "complementary to it"⁵⁴.

1.3. Affording the migratory crisis: a potential breakthrough for Turkey-EU cooperation

Year 2015 marked a significant turning point in Turkey EU-Relations. The European Union experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees, especially fleeing Syria, to its border countries: 1.255.600 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU), more than double than the previous year,⁵⁵ and almost 1 out of three first time asylum seekers originated from Syria.

Massive pressure on the south European shores of the Mediterranean led to a series of tragedies, human losses and human rights violations. The image of the three-year old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, lying on the Turkish shore of Bodrum, became the tragic symbol of both the failure of European migration policy and of the deaths in the East-Mediterranean route, which happened to be at the time, the most beaten track to reach the EU. Especially people fleeing from Syria arrived in Greece by sea, through an intermediate step in Turkey. The emergency became increasingly serious considering that a country like Greece was unable to sustain a high number of people within its reception facilities. Already in 2012, according to UNHCR⁵⁶ Greece attempted to control the rising

⁵² See https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/turkey-joins-eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en#:~:text=Turkey%20has%20joined%20the%20European,Protection%20Mechanism%2C%20together%20with%20Dr.

⁵³ See <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1307>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6>

⁵⁶ See <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/5592bd059/sea-route-europe-mediterranean-passage-age-refugees.html>

number of land crossings by building a security fence on the border with Turkey. Sea-born arrivals then began to rise and tripled in 2013 passing from 3.600 to 11,400, quadrupled again in 2014 (43,500) and reached 68.000 (40.000 Syrians) within the first six month of 2015 and mainly concentrated in the North Aegean and Dodecanese islands⁵⁷. At the time, any humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies, as well as organization for the monitoring of human rights reported the lack of protection and degrading conditions as well as overcrowding of reception facilities in Greek Islands, in particular due to the inability of Greek authorities to cope with these large numbers, given the country's ever-deepening economic crisis⁵⁸.

Meanwhile, Turkey recorded around 2.5 million Syrian refugees at the end of 2015⁵⁹, when the Syrian crisis entered in its fourth year. Until today, Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees in the region.

Table 1. Syrian refugee distribution per country as of March 2021

<i>Country</i>	<i>Registered Syrian refugees</i>
<i>Turkey</i>	3,660,449
<i>Lebanon</i>	865,531
<i>Jordan</i>	664,603
<i>Iraq</i>	243,890
<i>Egypt</i>	13,0577
<i>Other (North Africa)</i>	31,657

Source: Figure developed by the authors on UNHCR data⁶⁰

As of the unprecedented migration crisis that swept in 2015 across both Europe and neighborhood Syria countries, the EU and Turkey decided to “step up their cooperation” to address the consequences of the Syrian crisis. With the Joint Action Plan⁶¹ agreed in October 2015, EU and Turkey identified collaborative actions to be implemented to both reduce irregular migration into Europe as well as grant for better management of the Syrian refugee situation in Turkey.

The Plan was developed in two parts, with indication of mutual commitments. Part I is mostly related to the support to Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as to the hosting community with the EU in charge. Among other things, it aimed at mobilizing further financial assistance (outside the IPA⁶²) under the EU Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis in priority areas such as humanitarian assistance, legal, administrative and psychological support, social inclusion, education, infrastructure and services and in providing humanitarian assistance, in cooperation with the Turkish authorities, through the relevant humanitarian organizations in Turkey. In this regard, Ankara would have continued ensuring both registration and documents to the Syrian refugees in the country as well as adopting programs facilitating refugee access to education, health services and economy and to enhance effective implementation of the Law on Foreigners. Part II was, instead, related to the measure linked to the prevention of irregular migration, basically aiming at reinforcing through EU initiatives the Turkish coast guard for combating smuggling networks and enhancing Turkey's cooperation with Bulgarian and Greek authorities to prevent irregular crossing

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/11/greece-humanitarian-crisis-islands#>

⁵⁹ See UNHCR data per year <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>

⁶⁰ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>

⁶¹ The integral version of the document can be downloaded here

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_15_5860

⁶² Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance. For information in detail see par 2.2.1 *Overview of the EU's Main Financial Assistance Mechanisms for Turkey* in section 2.

in common land borders. Moreover, the 2015 Joint Action Plan renewed the EU commitment to increase financial assistance to Turkey enabling Ankara to meet the Visa Liberalization Dialogue requirements⁶³.

Between November 2015 and March 2016, EU leaders and Turkish counterparts met three times on the topics of enhancing bilateral cooperation and affording the migration crisis. The November meeting in Brussels aimed at re-energizing the negotiation process while discussing cooperation on the topics of counter terrorism, migration management, upgrade of the Custom Union and Visa liberalization⁶⁴. In that occasion, the Joint Action Plan was adopted and there were further commitments to organize high level meeting, to open chapter 17 of the accession process⁶⁵ on “further economic integration with Turkey”⁶⁶ and to “start the preparation work on further chapters without prejudice to the position of member states”⁶⁷ by the EU. The 7 March summit⁶⁸ included a series of proposals to address the migration crisis, which were then collected in the EU-Turkey statement adopted during the 18 March meeting. In that occasion, the two entities re-confirmed their commitment to implement the 2015 Joint Action Plan⁶⁹ and to undertake further measures for combating illegal migration, smuggling and avoiding further deaths at the sea.

Table 2. The nine points of the EU-Turkey Statement⁷⁰

1	Returning irregular migrants (people not applying for asylum or whose application has been found inadmissible in accordance with the Asylum Procedure Directive) from Greece to Turkey under EU financing
2	Considering vulnerability criteria and given priority to migrants who have never tried to enter the EU irregularly, for each Syrian returned to Turkey, another Syrian has been resettled to the EU, to a first commitment of 18,000 places up to a limit of additional 54,000 persons
3	Turkey takes all the measures to prevent the opening of new sea or land routes of illegal migration to the EU
4	Activating a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with the Voluntary contribution of the EU Member States, once irregular crossings have been reduced
5	Acceleration of the Visa liberalization roadmap for Turkish citizens (provided that all benchmarks have been met)
6	Speed up the disbursement of the initially allocated 3 billion euros under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and commitment to mobilize additional 3 billion once the resources are about to be used to the full
7	Joint welcoming of the ongoing work on the upgrading of the Customs Union
8	Re-energizing the accession process of Turkey to the EU with the commitment of opening further chapters in the negotiations
9	Joint commitment to improve humanitarian conditions in Syria, particularly in bordering areas with Turkey to allow both local population and refugees to live in safer places

⁶³ For the document see https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_15_5860

⁶⁴ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29/eu-turkey-meeting-statement/>

⁶⁵ For the press release of the November 2015 meeting see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29/eu-turkey-meeting-statement/>

⁶⁶ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/29/>

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

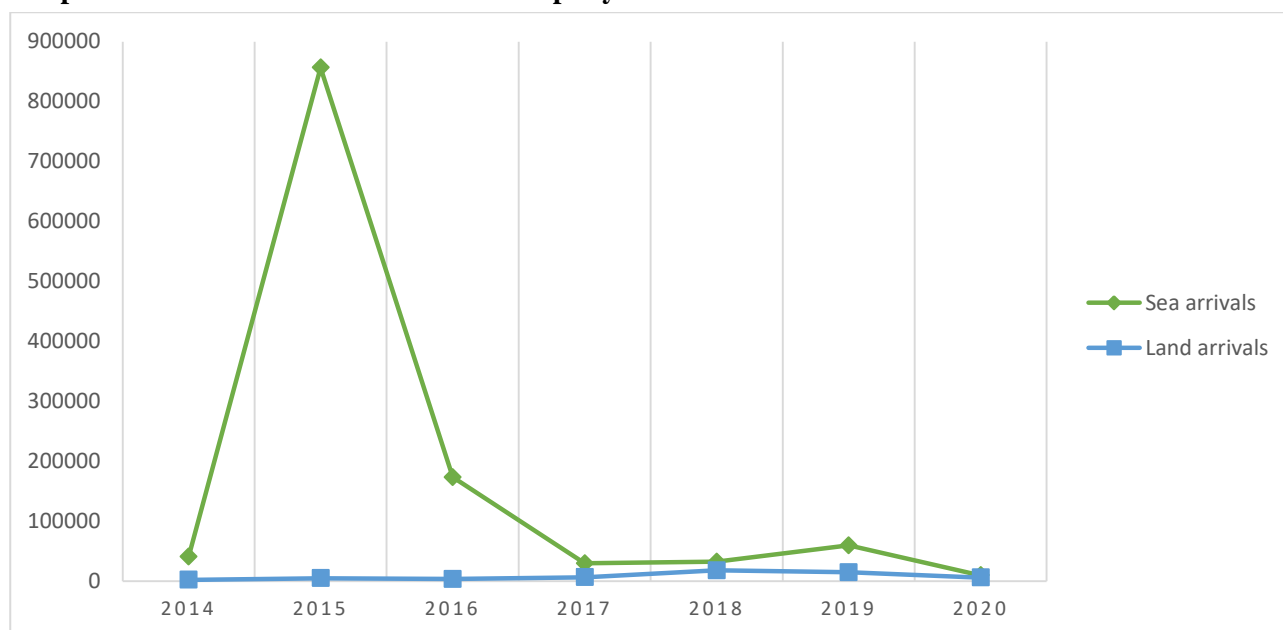
⁶⁸ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2016/03/07/>

⁶⁹ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

⁷⁰ These points are summarized from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

The deal is mutually acknowledged in terms of success in reducing irregular migration. Indeed, as of March 2020 EU estimates a decrease in irregular arrivals from Turkey of 94%⁷¹ since its implementation: from 10,000 people crossing in one day in October 2015 to an average of 105 people per day. In addition, since the agreement has been in place, the number of deaths in the Aegean have decreased from 1,175 to 439 and around 27.000 migrants have been resettled to the EU from Turkey. Still, however, returns from Greece to Turkey under the statement are very low (2.735)⁷².

Graphic 1. Sea and land arrivals to Greece per year



Source: Figure developed by the authors on UNHCR data⁷³

Furthermore, under the EU Facility⁷⁴ - the mechanism established for coordinating and streamlining actions financed from the EU's budget and from bilateral contributions by Member States⁷⁵ - 1,8 million refugees have been supported for basic daily lives needs. Among the others, over 90,000 children are benefitting from back-up and catch-up classes, 365 new schools in the process of being constructed and over 4 million vaccination doses have been provided to refugee infants and pregnant women as of March 2021⁷⁶. The total amount of 6 billion was established to be mobilized into two tranches: the first one to fund projects that run until mid-2021 and the second one to fund projects that run until mid-2025. According to figures provided by the EU⁷⁷, the full operational budget of €6 billion has been committed and contracted, with more than four million disbursed.

Many relevant actions and projects have been already funded and currently implemented under the Facility. Among the most relevant examples, there are the cash assistance program ESSN- Emergency Social and Safety Net, which assists more than 1.8 million people, and the Conditional

⁷¹ See <https://easo.europa.eu/asylum-report-2020/23-eu-turkey-statement>

⁷² See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20200318_managing-migration-eu-turkey-statement-4-years-on_en.pdf

⁷³ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

⁷⁴ For detailed information on the FRIT projects see par 2.6. *FRIT Projects: an overview*, in section 2.

⁷⁵ See https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/BP_TRF/BP_Turkey_Refugee_Facility_EN.pdf

⁷⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/frit_factsheet.pdf

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE), which assists over 668,900 children and it is expected to help more than 700,000 children to continue their education until early 2022⁷⁸.

Despite under the Facility several best practices in terms of cooperation between the Turkish authorities and the EU (as the abovementioned programs) are reported, criticism has been raised by Ankara towards the disbursement of funds, both in terms of timing and destination. According to some observers, Ankara complained that “the EU was too slow to release funds and too much of the money went to the overhead expenses of international organizations”⁷⁹. As of our findings, the main challenges in relation to the Facility mechanism are linked to the partial authority of Turkey in the project selection and implementation processes⁸⁰; to a mismatch between the need assessed in terms of funds and the money effectively allocated (particularly for the second tranche of the FRIT); to the limits of the need assessment reports at the basis of the programming of the FRIT in terms of availability of disaggregated data provided by the government⁸¹.

Beyond concerns on the Facility, Ankara has raised claims toward the management of the Agreement as a whole. As every deal is meant to be a *win-win* solution, Ankara “has been repeatedly requesting an accelerated implementation of the 2016 Statement, in particular of its non-migration elements”⁸². Among them, the re-launch of the accession process which, since the opening of chapter 33 on financial and budgetary provision in June 2016, has remained frozen. Until now, 16 out of 35 chapters of the accession negotiation are open⁸³ with only one of them closed.

Table 3. Turkey’s Accession negotiations to the EU: opened and closed chapters⁸⁴

1. Free Movement of Goods	
2. Freedom of Movement for Workers	
3. Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services	
4. Free Movement of Capital	Opened
5. Public Procurement	
6. Company Law	Opened
7. Intellectual Property Law	Opened
8. Competition Policy	
9. Financial Services	
10. Information Society & Media	Opened
11. Agriculture & Rural Development	
12. Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary policy	Opened
13. Fisheries	
14. Transport Policy	
15. Energy	
16. Taxation	Opened
17. Economic and Monetary Policy	Opened
18. Statistics	Opened

⁷⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/turkey_en (as of the 30 March 2021 update)

⁷⁹ See Berkay Mandiraci, *Sharing the Burden: Revisiting the EU-Turkey Migration Deal*, March 2020, cit. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/sharing-burden-revisiting-eu-turkey-migration-deal>

⁸⁰ For the Technical Aspects of the FRIT see par. 2.5. *The EU facility for refugees in Turkey (FRIT): Implementation modality*, in section 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/state_of_play_of_eu_turkey_relations_en.pdf

⁸³ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/world/20170426STO72401/i-rapporti-tra-ue-e-turchia-tra-cooperazione-e-tensioni>

⁸⁴ This table has been developed by the authors on data from the website of Turkey’s MFA (Directorate for EU Affairs). Source: https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/birimler/kpb/katilim_muzakerelerinde_mevcut_durum_karti-_08072019-en.pdf

19. Social Policy and Employment	
20. Enterprise & Industrial Policy	Opened
21. Trans-European Networks	Opened
22. Regional Policy & Coordination of Structural Instruments	Opened
23. Judiciary & Fundamental Rights	
24. Justice, Freedom & Security	
25. Science and Research	Provisionally closed
26. Education and Culture	
27. Environment	Opened
28. Consumer and Health Protection	Opened
29. Customs Union	
30. External Relations	
31. Foreign, Security, Defence Policy	
32. Financial Control	Opened
33. Financial & Budgetary Provisions	Opened
34. Institutions	
35. Other Issues	

In addition, both the visa liberalization⁸⁵ and the Customs Union modernization have remained pending issues in the following years for a variety of reasons⁸⁶. According to the EU⁸⁷, these elements remain subject to conditions still to be met by Turkey.

1.4. Irreconcilable differences?

Since 2016, along the stalemate in the accession process, the relations between Turkey and the European Union have experienced times of downs, rather than ups, even though the strategic importance of Turkey as a key partner of the EU has been always recalled.

Among the major concerns raised by the EU bodies over the years towards Turkey there are both the internal process of deterioration of the rule of law as well as the violation of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression. The European Parliament, more than once, advanced the request to the Commission to halt the negotiations with Turkey “until the political repression persist”⁸⁸. Suddenly after the 2016 failed military coup in Turkey and the subsequent declaration of the State

⁸⁵ According to the Joint Communication made by the European Commission to the European Council on the state of play of Turkey EU relations as of March 2021, six benchmarks of the Roadmap developed in 2013 for the Visa Liberalization Dialogue remain outstanding (Concluding an operational cooperation agreement with Europol; Aligning legislation on personal data protection to EU standards, Adopting measures to prevent corruption, Offering effective judicial cooperation in criminal matters to all EU Member States; Revising legislation and practices on terrorism in line with European standards; Implementing the EU-Turkey readmission agreement in all its provisions, including those related to the readmission of third country nationals) and those provisionally fulfilled needs constant monitoring. See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/state_of_play_of_eu_turkey_relations_en.pdf

⁸⁶ In December 2016, the European Commission submitted to the Council draft negotiating directives on ‘a new agreement to modernize the Customs Union (CU). See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/state_of_play_of_eu_turkey_relations_en.pdf. However, the chance was lost due to the progressive deterioration in Turkey EU Relations. As of the “recent more positive dynamics” between the parts, the EU Council of March 2021 stated its readiness to enhance economic cooperation with Turkey, also with regard to the modernisation of the Custom Union, provided that de-escalation in the East Mediterranean is sustained and “that Turkey engages constructively, and subject to the established conditionalities set out in previous European Council conclusions” See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>

⁸⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/state_of_play_of_eu_turkey_relations_en.pdf

⁸⁸ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/headlines/world/20170426STO72401/i-rapporti-tra-ue-e-turchia-tra-cooperazione-e-tensioni>

of Emergency, both the European Parliament and the European Commission noted an increasing in non-democratic methods, particularly toward the political opposition, which continued after the State of emergency was lifted in 2018.

Indeed, although the unanimous internal condemnation of the putschists and an initial climate of national solidarity aligning the main opposition parties to AKP, the polarization in Turkey has begun to deepen dramatically. The immediate declaration of a state of emergency on 21 July 2016, which lasted two years, combined with many decrees to facilitate the investigations and purges, led to the suspension of some fundamental rights. The application of the already existing law on terrorism contributed to increase the accusations and arrests. This identifies as "enemy of the nation" anyone who represents divided instances or opposed to the national vision of the government. Among the others, the arrest of some Kurdish parliamentarians, including the leader of the HDP, Selhattin Demirtaş, has to be read in this frame. Definitely, the 15 of July was the real turning point in the AKP's rhetoric, as well as in the collective sentiment of the country. In an increasingly self-referential climate, where "the unity of the nation" has become a leitmotif, the reference to nationalist themes worked for institutionalizing the political alliance with the ultra-nationalist party MHP and leading Turkey towards a full Presidential System in 2018.

However, during October 2017 European Council, the EU leaders stressed that migration strategy implemented to "restore control of external borders, reduce arrivals and the number of deaths at the sea", was bringing the expected results but it needed to be strengthened. To this purpose, it was recalled the "strong cooperation with countries of origin and transit, including Turkey and Western Balkans"⁸⁹. Later in March 2018, during a meeting held in Bulgaria, which gathered President Erdoğan and the EU leaders, the cooperation in the field of migration was reaffirmed, while many concerns were raised over the application of the rule of law and over the Turkish military operations in northern Syria. At that time, indeed, the Turkish army had already conducted some military operations in its southeastern border. Namely, Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. The first started in 2016 with the declared aim of "maintaining border security and confronting ISIS terrorism"⁹⁰. The latter was directed to Afrin in 2018, again with the aim of securing the canton and the Turkish border with a 30km security belt from the terrorist threats coming from that area, which was controlled by the Democratic Union Party and its militias, the People's Protection Units⁹¹.

Although these operations in northern Syria raised concerns at the European level without having major impact on Turkey-EU relations, the military actions of 2019, together with the illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the progressive degrading situation of the respect of human rights in the country, resulted in increasing the already existing frictions between the parts. Indeed, in both June 2018 and June 2019, although reaffirming its commitment *to maintaining an open and frank dialogue* with Turkey, the European Council assessed that Turkey's accession negotiations had come to a standstill and that no further work towards the modernization of the EU-Turkey Customs Union was foreseen as the country continued *to move further away from the European Union*⁹².

In early October 2019, the situation got worse. After the American disengagement in Syria, Ankara launched the "Peace Spring" operation. This time in order to remove and fight the Kurdish fighters, perceived by Ankara as the Syrian extension of the outlawed PKK. Ankara's ultimate objective was

⁸⁹ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/10/19-20/>

⁹⁰ See S. Ülgen, C. Kasapoglu, *Operation Euphrates Shield: Aims and Gains*, Carnegie Europe, January 2017 <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/01/19/operation-euphrates-shield-aims-and-gains-pub-67754>

⁹¹ For further information on the Olive Branch Operation see B. Aliriza, Z. Yekeler, *Understanding Turkey's Afrin Operation*, CSIS, January 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-turkeys-afrin-operation>

⁹² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf>; <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/18/council-conclusions-on-enlargement-and-stabilisation-and-association-process>

the establishment of a *safe zone* for the resettlement of the Syrian refugees living in Turkey⁹³. This operation has been presented as a need for Turkey, overwhelmed by the presence of Syrian refugees and unable to cope with both the numbers and the economic crisis that spread over the country. Pivoting on the national pride feeling and defense of Turkey's national interest, the military operation had a good response at the level of popular support, contributing to the growth of consensus towards Erdoğan.

Few days after the Operation Peace Spring was launched, during the 14 October meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, the European Union condemned Turkey military action for further undermining the stability of the region as well as increasing civilian displacements and called for the withdraw of its forces⁹⁴. In addition, it was recalled "the decision taken by some Member States to immediately halt arms exports licensing to Turkey". In the same occasion the EU, while underlining that the instable situation in Northeastern Syria needed to be solved through diplomacy, reiterated the importance of Turkey "as a key partner of the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region"⁹⁵.

At the end of October 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution stating that the military operation in northeastern Syria were "in breach of European values", and that "any forcible transfer of Syrian refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs)" to the Turkey-made *safe zone* would have constituted "a grave violation of conventional international refugee law". As a deterrent for the conduction of further military actions in Syria the EP also called on the Council, "as a last resort" to suspend the EU Custom Union⁹⁶.

Few months later, the killing of more than 36 Turkish soldiers was the turning point in the intricate regional dynamics, putting the agreements with Russia in distress as well as the relations with the West, namely Europe, for too long at the mercy of fluctuations dictated by diverging regional interests. The Operation "Spring Shield" (*Bahar Kalkanı Harekatı*) was launched on March 1st, 2020 as a retaliatory action against the massive bombing that the Turkish army suffered by Assad's forces on February 27. The escalation of the Syrian conflict and the threat of a new humanitarian crisis fed the already existing disappointment towards Europe for not having made progress on many elements included in the 18 March Statement and for not having provided support to Ankara's military operation in Syria. Contextually, the feeling of mutual frustration reached a pick when Erdoğan decided to allow thousands of refugees to cross the border with the EU. "The doors are now open. Now, you Europe will have to take your share of responsibility" said Erdoğan, supported by a large part of the population. The discontent towards the Syrians in Turkey was tangible and was mainly attributable to the internal economic data and the nationalist spirit of the Turks, more evident than in the past. Greek authorities reacted with the deployment of the police and the army at the border to repress the movement of people attempting to cross⁹⁷.

From the Turkish perspective, the EU was to blame particularly for having left Ankara alone to cope with the challenges of the Syrian crisis, especially in bordering areas. Ankara reiterated that migration is "mostly a problem of Europe"⁹⁸ and that Turkish operation in northern Syria were due and necessary to protect "the borders of Europe and the borders of NATO"⁹⁹.

⁹³ See U. Uras, *Turkey's Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria: One month on*, Al-Jazeera, November 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/8/turkeys-operation-peace-spring-in-northern-syria-one-month-on>

⁹⁴ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/10/14/council-conclusions-on-north-east-syria/>

⁹⁵ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/10/14/council-conclusions-on-north-east-syria/>

⁹⁶ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0049_EN.html

⁹⁷ See <https://www.amnesty.eu/news/greece-turkey-asylum-seekers-and-migrants-killed-and-abused-at-borders/>

⁹⁸ See declarations made by Faruk Kaymakci, Ambassador, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Director for EU Affairs during the online meeting *5th Year of the EU-Turkey Statement on Migration: Historical Perspective, Practical Experiences*, March 2021; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG1xpVpYork>

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

At the beginning of March 2020, Erdoğan visited Brussels and discussed with EU leaders over bilateral relations, particularly in terms of migration. The main aim was to clarify the mutual stance on the EU-Turkey statement on migration. The EU reiterated its financial and disbursement commitments under the facility. Furthermore, while showing concern about the humanitarian situation on the border between Turkey and Syria, the President of the European Council declared the EU's readiness to provide support in that area¹⁰⁰. Later in March, in an effort to avoid the spread of Covid19, "the Turkish authorities organized transport for migrants and refugees away from the border area with Greece and closed the borders with Greece and Bulgaria, with exception of commercial traffic"¹⁰¹. This move, however, did not mean that Turkey would not use the migration issue to put pressure on Europe for political purpose.

In 2020, the relations between Turkey and the EU were to some extent double-tracked. On the one hand, along the outbreak of Pandemic the attitude of Turkey towards its western partners was positive as Ankara provided many EU countries with health assistance and direct support in terms of face shields, masks and medical equipment¹⁰². The *leitmotiv* of this 'pandemic diplomacy' was the Turkish "humanitarian approach", not based on specific political aims and gains. However, it is unquestionably that was a move of National Branding, helping in improving or at least mitigating the bilateral relations with some EU member states, particular in the framework of NATO. As it was mentioned, Turkey's military operation in Syria and its threats on refugees have contributed to exacerbate the crisis over the mutual trust¹⁰³. In this frame, the EU declared to mobilize under the Facility for refugees, extra €63 million to respond to COVID-19 related needs of refugees and of the most vulnerable members of Turkish society¹⁰⁴ and €535 million have been earmarked as humanitarian support in Turkey, additional to the 6 billion of the Facility¹⁰⁵.

On the other hand, the gas exploration conducted by Turkey during summer 2020 into the Cyprus exclusive economic zone and the related escalating tensions with Greece, raised again barriers to the improvement of the relations between the parts. Some member states as France, Greece and Cyprus strongly condemned Turkey actions and President Macron declared that Ankara was not to be considerable as a reliable partner in the Mediterranean¹⁰⁶. Along the line of criticism, also the European Parliament condemned illegal drilling in the East Mediterranean and advanced "concern regarding the ongoing dispute and the related risk of further military escalation between EU member states and an EU candidate country"¹⁰⁷.

The European Council summit in December 2020¹⁰⁸, followed same dynamics of the year. Although the EU reiterated interest in developing a cooperative relation and keeping channels of communication open with Turkey together with the readiness to provide further assistance to the Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey, it condemned Turkey's "unilateral steps" in Varosha by recalling the European commitment to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. Moreover, it invited the Council to adopt additional listings to the legal framework

¹⁰⁰ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2020/03/09/>

¹⁰¹ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

¹⁰² See Valeria Giannotta, Aurora Ianni, *La Pademic Diplomacy turca: una questione politica o umanitaria?* Osservatorio Turchia, CeSPI, July 2020 <https://www.cespi.it/it/ricerche/la-pandemic-diplomacy-turca-una-questione-politica-o-umanitaria>

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ See https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/eu-response-to-the-coronavirus-pandemic_en (as of the 24 April 2021 update)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ See Valeria Giannotta, *Turchia-Unione Europea: l'inizio di una nuova era?*, Osservatorio Turchia, CeSPI, January 2021 https://www.cespi.it/sites/default/files/osservatori/allegati/brief_24_turchia-ue_giannotta.pdf

¹⁰⁷ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200910IPR86828/eastern-mediterranean-turkey-must-immediately-end-illegal-drilling-activities>

¹⁰⁸ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

developed in November 2019¹⁰⁹, aimed at imposing sanctions to Turkey in the light of its drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Although considering that the EU disposed for travel bans and assets freeze for persons and entities linked to illegal drilling in the area, it did not go further with bigger decisions as, for instance, an EU arms embargo. All of this, again, demonstrated that the EU attitude towards Ankara proceeds along the way of a ‘cosmetic criticism’ resulting from both the different positioning of EU Member states towards Ankara’s foreign policy and the importance that Turkey has for the EU particularly for economic and security reasons.

1.5. A dim light at the end of the tunnel

Year 2021 seems to have started with the aim of re-boosting bilateral cooperation from both sides. At the end of January Foreign Minister Çavusoğlu met in Brussels many EU representatives, including the President of European Commission, the President of the European Council, some members of the EP and the Secretary General of NATO, among the others. He reiterated the willingness of Turkey to update the 18 March Statement and the Customs Union with the EU adding that no results can be achieved with the language of sanctions¹¹⁰.

The need to strengthen cooperation on migration *notably in areas such as border protection, combating illegal migration, as well as the return of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers to Turkey in accordance with the EU-Turkey statement*¹¹¹ was also recalled during the last European Council held in March 2021. In the same occasion, although reiterating the call on Turkey to abstain *from unilateral actions in breach of international law*, the EU welcomed de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean, the resumption of bilateral talks between Turkey and Greece and the forthcoming talks on the Cyprus issue¹¹².

At the beginning of April, the visit of President Von der Leyen and President Michel to Ankara, seemed to follow the way of a re-engagement in relations with Turkey, even if the *sofagate* episod risk to worsen, again, the future political dialogue between the parts. According to the official statement of the President of the European Commission, the meeting with President Erdoğan was based on four areas of discussion: the strengthening of economic ties, high-level dialogues on topics as climate change and public health, mobility and cooperation on migration. As of the latter, she underlined that the EU-Turkey statement remains valid and that EU is committed in the continuity of funding on the area *as a sign of Europe solidarity to Turkey and an investment in shared stability*¹¹³.

What seems to be a step aimed at easing tensions through re-committed cooperation in key sectors of Turkey EU relation does not translate, however, into a re-engagement in the negotiation process. Unquestionably, as dialogue on the rule of law and fundamental freedoms *remains an integral part of the EU-Turkey relationship*¹¹⁴, the recent withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention represents the last controversial development of Ankara’s stance on human rights and it will do

¹⁰⁹ The sanctions consisted in travel bans to the EU and assets freeze for both persons and entities. For the November 2019 press release see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/11/11/turkey-s-illegal-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-council-adopts-framework-for-sanctions/>. For the Council decision in detail see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019D1894&from=GA>

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimiz-in-belcikayi-ziyaretii-21-1-2021.en.mfa>

¹¹¹ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>

¹¹² See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>

¹¹³ For President von der Leyen statement following the April 2021 meeting with Turkish President Erdoğan see https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_1603

¹¹⁴ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>

nothing but stain the '*future of Turkey in Europe*'¹¹⁵. After the April meeting in Ankara, indeed, while expressing deep concern about the fact that Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention and reiterating the aim of “an honest partnership”, the president of the European Commission recalled Ankara’s duties in terms “of respect of international human rights rules and standards”, addressing Turkey not just as a candidate member to access the European Union, but overall “as a founding member of the Council of Europe”¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁵ At the end of November 2020 President Erdogan declared to see Turkey’s future in Europe. See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/21/erdogan-calls-on-eu-for-dialogue-says-turkeys-future-in-europe>

¹¹⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_21_1603

SECOND SECTION. EU TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION

2.1. Introduction

This section of the report will examine the role of financial and technical assistance of the EU to Turkey in the field of migration and asylum and the future impact of such cooperation on the EU-Turkey relations. Accordingly, the report pursues a descriptive approach, guided by EU-Turkey relations based on the review of key documents and one interview and one written correspondence with two main actors of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT), namely European Delegation to Turkey and the office of Turkey's FRIT Chief Coordinator under Vice Presidency Office (VPO). This review is structured around two main periods under where corresponding humanitarian¹¹⁷ and non-humanitarian assistances (i.e IPA) were reflected. The first period covers Turkey's emerging migration management endeavors mainly supported by the EU's financial mechanism called Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). Eruption of Syrian Civil War in 2011 and mass influx of refugees to Turkey mark the second period in which the main financial assistance has been the EU's FRIT mechanism among other humanitarian and development assistances channeled to Turkey. During this period, Turkey's newly established migration management system's institutionalization process has also continued. The developments occurred under each period determined the scope and type of such assistances. Each period, thus, included milestones (e.g adoption of legislations including the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, Regulation on Temporary Protection, international treaties such as EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, agreements such as 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement), main events (2011 Syrian civil war, 2015 the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis, February 2020 Migrant Crisis) as well as position of EU-Turkey relations (e.g. positive agendas in mid-2000s, stalled Accession negotiations in 2016). This section will briefly describe key financial assistance schemes under each period. However, the relation between financial assistances and key developments on migration may require examining broader policies in relation to Turkey's economic, foreign policy developments that possibly impact to what extent such assistances are negotiated, managed by Turkey or considered relevant by donor countries. The first section of the report aims to shed light on such developments occurred between the EU and Turkey.

2.2. Emerging migration governance in Turkey and EU's financial and technical assistance

As detailed in the first section, Turkey has been accepted as a candidate country for the EU in 1999 and EU-Turkey relations in all aspects have grown accordingly during the last two decades. The financial cooperation has been one of the key areas of this relationship. This financial cooperation between Turkey and EU goes back to 1960s after the Ankara Agreement signed on 12 October 1963 establishing the framework for co-operation between Turkey and the European Community. Although EU has supported projects, donated and granted credits for Turkey since then, EU's financial and technical assistance to Turkey took a new turn after Turkey's candidacy status in 1999. Furthermore, with the start of full membership negotiations on 3 October 2005, EU's

¹¹⁷ Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis- affected population. Assistance may be divided into three categories - direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support - which have diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population. (Reliefweb Glossary of Humanitarian terms)

financial assistance has substantially increased to enhance Turkey's legal frameworks and institutional capacity to align Turkey's policies with of EU's *Acquis Communautaire*.

2.2.1. Overview of the EU's Main Financial Assistance Mechanisms for Turkey

Candidate and potential candidate countries including Turkey have benefited from various financial assistance mechanisms (e.g Phare, ISPA, SAPARD, the pre-accession instrument for Turkey, and the financial instrument for the Western Balkans, CARDS)¹¹⁸. By 2007, these instruments are consolidated into a single instrument, which is called Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) that are designed on multi-annual basis. IPA aims to support the countries to undertake necessary reforms to align with EU *Acquis*. For the period 2007-2013 IPA (IPA I) had a budget of €11.5 billion¹¹⁹; €4,8 billion were allocated to Turkey for the 2007-2013 period.¹²⁰ IPA's second period covering 2014-2020 was implemented with a sectorial approach and instead of the components-based structure of the first period of IPA €11.7 billion for the IPA II was allocated.¹²¹ The total allocation for Turkey under IPA II amounted to about €4.5 billion. Turkey thus used €9,3 billion in total under IPA I and II.¹²² It is worth noting that IPA projects require the co-financing of candidate countries around 10%. The EU Commission allocated €14,5 billion to all seven candidate countries, including Turkey for the IPA III period the years of 2021–2027. The new programming will be competitive and based on performance, therefore there will be no country-specific allocations¹²³.

2.2.2. EU's Financial and Technical Support for Turkey around Main Developments on Migration and Asylum

Migration and asylum have been one of the key policy areas for EU-Turkey relations since the beginning of 2000s. Accordingly, EU has provided financial and technical assistance to Turkey on migration and asylum for related programs and projects focused on aligning Turkish legislation and standards with that of the EU Chapter on justice, freedom and security (previously referred as Justice and Home affairs). The first important development in this field was the adoption of Turkey's National Action Plan in 2005. In line with the priorities set out by the 2003 Turkish National Program on the Adoption of EU *Acquis Communautaire*, Turkey started a twinning project¹²⁴ in 2004 under the EU Financial Cooperation programming of 2002 to identify gaps and needs in the field of migration and asylum. With the support of the findings/recommendations of this project, the Governmental Task Force for Asylum-Migration Action Plan has developed the Turkish National

¹¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/funding/ipa/

¹¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/overview_en

It was designed to provide financial assistance through five components: transition assistance and institution building, cross-border cooperation, regional development, human resource development and rural development.

¹²⁰ https://www.ab.gov.tr/5_en.html

¹²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/overview_en

The main document of this new period indicating the financing priorities of assistance under IPA is the Indicative Strategy Paper for Turkey (2014-2020). These sectors were as follows: Democracy and governance; Rule of law and fundamental rights; Environment and climate action and energy; Transport; Competitiveness and innovation, agriculture and rural development; Education, employment and social policies; Territorial and regional cooperation.

¹²² https://www.ab.gov.tr/5_en.html It is worth noting that IPA projects require the candidate countries' contribution to the IPA projects around 10%.

¹²³ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/instrument-pre-accession-ipa-iii>

¹²⁴ Twinning projects bring together public sector expertise from EU Member States and beneficiary countries with the aim of achieving concrete mandatory operational results through peer-to-peer activities.

Action Plan for the Adoption of the EU *Acquis* in the Field of Asylum and Migration that was adopted in March 2005.¹²⁵ It listed down several measures including legal reforms on asylum and migration, institutional capacity development and training of specialized staff. Based on this Action Plan and Accession Partnership Document, EU's financial and technical assistance has been extended during the years of 2000s. The General Directorate of Security (GDS), national police, of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) who was the main responsible governmental institution for migration and asylum issues was the beneficiary of the EU funded projects implemented through twinning, supply and direct grant modalities. Before IPA I, several EU funded projects supported the GDS and MoI's External Relations departments on development of an action plan to implement Turkey's asylum and migration strategy; strengthening institutions in the fight against trafficking in human beings; establishing a country-of-origin system; visa policies and their implementation; strengthening law enforcement capacities to prevent irregular migration. Under the IPA I (2007-2013) both GDS and Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) were beneficiaries of the projects. Some of the projects initiated during the GDS term were handed over to the DGMM after its establishment in 2013¹²⁶. The main projects under the IPA 1 were the establishment of Reception and Removal Centers for refugees and migrants respectively, establishment of nationality determination systems, strengthening national asylum decision making procedures, development of protection strategies in need of international protection in the urban context, assisted voluntary return and reintegration of irregular migrants, assessment study on mapping of sources and key trends of international migration in Turkey and the like.¹²⁷ Under the IPA I, the biggest portion of the funds was allocated to improve hosting capacities and conditions for irregular migrants awaiting forced return to their home country. The project under IPA I with a budget of €56,9 million served to construct six removal and one reception centers, each with a capacity of 750 persons¹²⁸. All of them went into operation in 2016. Under IPA I, further funds were allocated for refurbishment of these centers. In the following years, the EU continued to support Turkey's hosting capacity for irregular migrants through the renovation of already existing removal centers as well as through the construction of additional removal centers. The current number of removal centers in Turkey is 26 with a capacity of 16.108.¹²⁹ IPA I also included, for the first time, large-scale policy and technical assistances projects covering all migration and asylum issues to support newly established DGMM's capacity with grants contracted with the UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD amounting almost €10 million in total. These projects have started only in 2017.

However, this financial and technical cooperation between EU and Turkey has not been only shaped by Turkey's EU candidacy that required Turkey to reform its institutions, policies and legislations. EU's rising concern for the increasing number of irregular transit migrants passing to Europe through Turkey since mid-1990s also played a key role in this cooperation, as indicated in Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MPID)¹³⁰ for the programming period of 2011-2013

¹²⁵ In parallel to this process, an Action Plan on Border Management was also developed. National Action Plan towards the Implementation of Turkey's Integrated Border Management Strategy was adopted on 27 March 2006. This process was also supported by a twinning project named "Support for the development of an Action Plan to implement Turkey's integrated border management strategy".

¹²⁶ The implementation of the projects programmed under IPA program cycles (2007-2013- 2014-2020) often goes beyond the duration of program cycles.

¹²⁷ <https://www.goc.gov.tr/goc-projeleri56>

¹²⁸ <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/tr/proje/yasadisi-gocmen-geri-gonderme-merkezi-insaati-vankurubas-7866> The planned reception center was turned into removal center project.

¹²⁹ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/removal-centres>

¹³⁰ The Multi-annual Indicative and Planning Documents (MIPDs) used until 2013 were replaced by the Country Strategy Papers as the overarching strategic planning documents that set the priorities and objectives for the 7-year period replaced. The priorities outlined in the Strategy Papers are translated into detailed actions, which are included in annual or multi-annual Action Programmes. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/how-does-it-work_en

under the IPA I (2007-2013),¹³¹ EU's priorities for assistance to Turkey focused on “effective integrated border management and prevention of illegal migration through effective systems to manage asylum, illegal migration and borders; establishment and effective functioning of the integrated border management system and reduction of cross-border crimes, in particular focusing on trafficking and smuggling in human beings”. EU’s increasing focus on prevention of irregular migration and border protection has become the determining feature of EU-Turkey relations especially when Turkey’s EU membership seemed difficult to attain in near future¹³². Readmission Agreement introduced by the EU in 2000s has been one of the main cooperation mechanisms with third countries to control irregular migrants’ flows as well as to readmit their citizens or third country nationals who have passed through their territory. Based on the negotiations between EU and Turkey dating back to 2004, the EU and Turkey agreed on signing the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement (RA) on 16 December 2013. Turkey has been reluctant to sign a RA not to be regarded as a mere “third country” party since Turkey as a candidate country aimed for an EU membership¹³³. However, by 2009 RA negotiations were resumed when Turkey’s EU accession negotiations stalled. The EU has linked the RAs to certain offers to create incentives to the third parties such as increased development aid development, technical assistances, special trade concessions and possible visa facilitation or visa exemption. Turkey asked for visa free travel for Turkish citizens in return of this Agreement. The Visa Liberalization Dialogue based a Road Map towards a visa-free regime with Turkey was also initiated in parallel to signing of the RA. The Roadmap outlined 72 benchmarks under five thematic groups, namely document security; migration management; public order and security; fundamental rights; and readmission of irregular migrants. Turkey has so far met 66 benchmarks, while six have yet to be fulfilled¹³⁴. Despite of such progress, a benchmark related to definition of terrorism in line with EU standards under fundamental pillar has been problematic to be fulfilled due to the sensitivities of the issue in domestic politics. The agreement included provisions related both to the readmission of the nationals of the EU Member States and Turkey, and to the readmission of any other persons (including the third country nationals and the stateless persons) that entered into or stayed on the territory of either sides directly arriving from the territory of the other side. However, the Agreement included 3 years of transitional period for third country nationals, yet this provision was never applied due to lack of progress on the Visa Liberalization process and new agreement between EU-Turkey in 2016.

This agreement can be regarded as a milestone in Turkey-EU relations on migration for mainly two reasons. First, as Icduygu and Aksel (2014)¹³⁵ discuss that debates and negotiations around the RA clearly showed the strategic use of ‘migration diplomacy’ as a bargaining tool over and during the membership negotiation process between the EU and Turkey. Second, they point out that this negotiation process regressed the greater candidacy debate. Although it was perceived that the negotiations between EU-Turkey gained pace over the EU-Turkey Readmission against the backdrop of deteriorating relations between Turkey and the EU, this did not last long and the Accession Negotiations came to halt in 2016. This Agreement has become the most visible instrument in EU-Turkey relations to shift the EU’s migration management responsibilities including refugee protection beyond its borders, or as commonly known externalization of its

¹³¹ https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/2_turkiye_ab_iliskileri/2_2_adaylik_sureci/2_2_7_turkiye_ab_mali_isbirligi/2_2_7_1_ipa/2_2_7_1_11_diger_belgeler/mipd_2011_2013.pdf

¹³² Üstübcü, A. and İçduygu, A., 2018, "Border closures and the externalization of immigration controls in the Mediterranean: a comparative analysis of Morocco and Turkey" *New Perspectives on Turkey: a comparative analysis of Morocco and Turkey*

¹³³ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Policy Brief: An EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement-Undermining the Rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers? <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/EU-Turkey-Readmission-Agreement1.pdf>

¹³⁴ See <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/visa-liberalisation-dialogue-6896>

¹³⁵ İçduygu A. and Aksel D., 2014, “Two-to-Tango in Migration Diplomacy: Negotiating Readmission Agreement between the EU and Turkey,” *European Journal of Migration and Law* 16, no. 3 (2014): 337–363.

policies. To this end, the EU applies the concept of safe third country to ensure legality of sending migrants seeking international protection within EU without taking their asylum claims to the third countries. There is vast literature questioning whether Turkey can be regarded as safe third country or the safe third country concept by itself is originally tied to international refugee regime or is a unilateral decision of Western states to restrict the arrival of asylum seekers to their territories.

Regarding its financial aspect, adoption of the RA between Turkey and EU has led to development of several projects primarily supporting the capacity of Turkey to accommodate irregular migrants to be readmitted by Turkey through IPA funds as well as to build a technical management capacity bilaterally through EU member country supports.¹³⁶

Another milestone for Turkey and EU-Turkey relations on migration¹³⁷ was the adoption of Turkey's first comprehensive law on asylum and migration, which is the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), on 11 April 2013. It provided a basis for the rights, obligations and statuses to be granted for all foreign nationals arriving and staying in Turkey for different reasons. It has become Turkey's first asylum law and it has introduced critical legal safeguards such as safeguards against expulsion and non-refoulement principle. The Law also led to establish a new civilian migration management institution, Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) that took over the mandate for all policy and execution in the area of migration and asylum from the GDS, National Police. The LFIP was praised by the international community as it introduced several procedural and legal safeguards to protect rights of migrants. However, the LFIP kept geographical limitation of the 1951 Geneva Convention. This resulted in differentiation of statuses among asylum seekers according to their countries of origin. Only those who come from European countries (the Council of European member countries) are recognized as refugees, for others a new category called conditional refugees is created under the LFIP. Accordingly, they can only stay in the country until resettlement or voluntary repatriation as durable solutions are provided. Thus, local integration, another form of durable solution, is not foreseen for these groups who make the most of the refugee population in Turkey. Maintaining geographical limitation creates major uncertainties for these populations as the LFIP does not provide any secure and permanent statuses and local integration.

The planning and establishment of DGMM as an institution coincided with the period when Turkey has faced a massive influx situation with civil war in Syria in 2011. The LFIP has included the category of temporary protection under international protection chapter to be applied to mass influx situations. Based on this primary Law, in 2014 upon a call from diverse stakeholders, Turkey has given temporary protection status collectively to Syrian refugees as with time they needed a legal status to grant rights and services on more systematic manner. They are granted to access to basic rights such as health, education, social protection. However, during this period the government has strictly pursued an approach that return of Syrians is the main goal and until then they are guests and brothers who need compassion and good hospitality. The main governmental agency who was responsible for Syrians was Turkey's Disaster Management Agency (AFAD) until 2018 when they handed over their duties to the DGMM. Besides their coordination duties, AFAD has overseeing the management of temporary accommodation centers (camps) that accommodated most of the refugees in the first years of the crisis.

¹³⁶ The project funded by the UK and Norway and implemented by IOM delivered technical assistance to the DGMM drafting of the Turkey's Strategy Document and National Action Plan on Irregular Migration (2015-2018) that was adopted in 2015 and planned be updated for 2019-2023 included a section related to return and readmission. "Supporting Turkey in Establishing a Human Rights based and Effective System for Implementation of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement" project that was funded by Netherlands and DGMM and IOM is another example of such projects.

¹³⁷ In line with the drive of Turkey EU accession process, in 2008 Turkey has taken a crucial step to institutionalize management of international migration. In 2008, Asylum and Migration Bureau under the Ministry of Interior has been established to identify the needs and gaps in the field of migration and asylum. The Bureau was the steering force of this reform process in which the LFIP has been prepared with about 5 years of intense work.

The literature widely discussed whether this reform process is a natural result of EU enlargement process or a part of bargaining strategy of reinforcement by reward. While the reform process has been mainly motivated by the necessity of alignment to EU *Acquis*, some argue that this reform led by the EU Accession process was beneficial for Turkey to adapt to the new realities of becoming a country of immigration from mainly being a country of emigration.¹³⁸ However, others argue¹³⁹ that migration governance adopted by the LFIP and its differentiated legal status among migrants and refugee groups have been the outcome of externalization measures in Turkey. Ustübici argues that technocratic nature of migration governance has been aligned very much to EU's policies and a more rigid structure than before among statuses of international protection, irregular migration and legal migration were introduced. This managerial, technocratic approach has been criticized by other scholars as noted by Tantardini and Tolay¹⁴⁰. Gieger and Pecoud see "managerial approach to migration as a way to de-politicize it and although management actors attempt to escape politics, they actually engage in a political process of de-politicization. For example, while in time refuge issue has been politicized and higher-level political actors from Turkey and EU intervened in dealing with the issue, the DGMM and their partner agencies in implementing migration management projects (e.g. UN agencies) maintained their pure technocratic approach to build a technical capacity limited to certain areas. This discussion brings up the question if the financial assistance extended by the EU to Turkey on migration corresponds to the actual needs of migrants or refugees or steered by EU's technocratic approach to migration management. It can be argued that DGMM has been a new institution to deal with a massive issue at that time, but this experience has affected the current positioning of the DGMM in terms of policy making leverage.

The adoption of the LFIP has been reflected in the evolving scope of IPA programming in Turkey in the migration and asylum sector. Following the adoption of the LFIP and the establishment of DGMM in 2014, financial support by the EU has expanded in this particular area. Under IPA II covering financial assistance for 2014-2020, projects have similarly aimed at strengthening Turkish institutions, being focused in particular on improving the DGMM's capacity to implement "a rights-based and comprehensive migration management agenda", support Turkey's efforts to implement the provisions of the LFIP and strengthen the institutional capacity of DGMM in this regard. Moreover, new themes for projects such as public awareness raising, civil society cooperation also emerged and funded under the IPA II. Nonetheless, the focus of the projects programmed during IPA II as has been still on establishment of additional removal centers, assisted voluntary return and reintegration. As shown under the graphic 2, the number of irregular migrants who are apprehended in Turkey mostly while exiting Turkey to reach to the EU indicates the importance of this topic for the EU. Graphic 3 shows the continuous rise in the number of migrants holding residence permits especially after the establishment of the DGMM. This reflects Turkey's changing position as a country of migration, however, there are relatively few projects implemented under regular migration theme so far although aforementioned IPA policy projects included relevant activities.

Regarding the migration reform process in Turkey, another major development was the adoption of the Law on International Labor Force on 27 July 2016. It led to establishment of the Directorate General on International Labor Force (DGILF) under the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. Previously, labor migration was dealt at a departmental level. The Directorate implements several projects through EU Member states bilateral funds, and they recently started their first IPA II funded project entitled "Increasing the Policy Making Capacity of Directorate General of International Labor Force in the Field of Labor Migration". Also, the labor migration has mostly

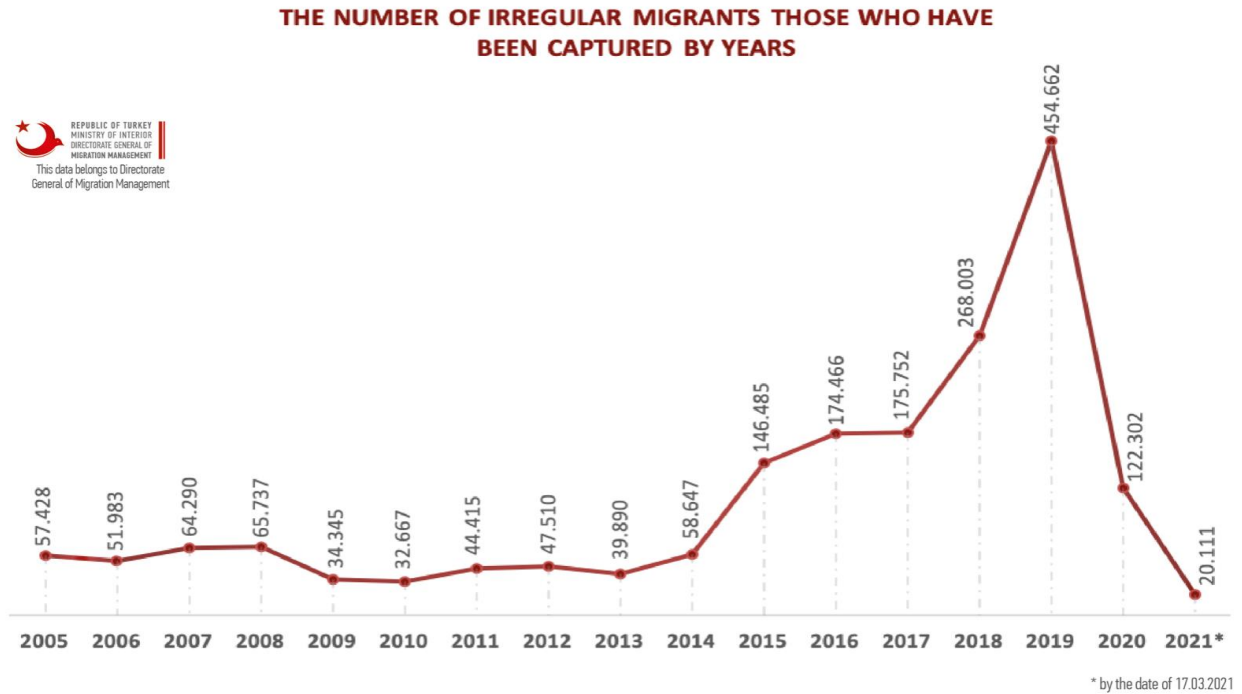
¹³⁸ Dimitriadi A. et al., 2018, EU-Turkey Relations and Irregular Migration: Transactional Cooperation in Making, Feuture Online Paper No. 16

¹³⁹ Üstübici, A. 2019 The impact of externalized migration governance on Turkey: technocratic migration governance and the production of differentiated legal status. *CMS* 7, 46 (2019)

¹⁴⁰ Michele Tantardini & Juliette Tolay (2019): Does Performance Matter in Migration Governance? The Case of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, *International Journal of Public Administration*

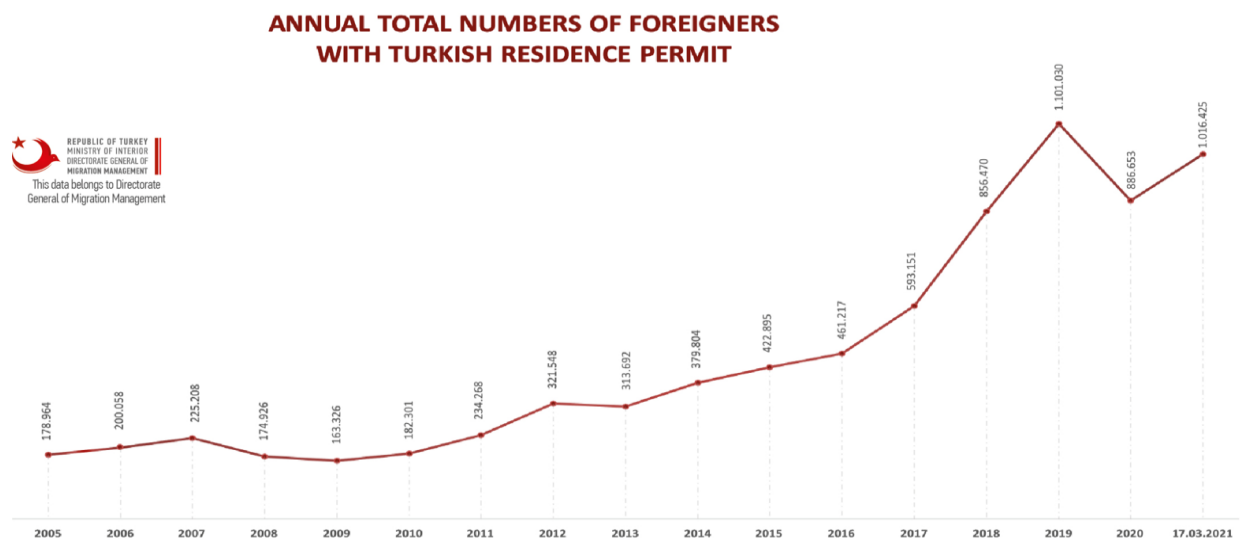
been dealt with the FRIT funds through projects such as aiming at increasing employability and job placements of Syrians.

Graphic 2: Number of irregular migrants who are apprehended by years



Source: Directorate General for Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration>

Graphic 3: Number of foreigners holding residence permits in Turkey as per the years



Source: Directorate General for Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/residence-permits>

With regard to EU's financial assistance to Turkey on migration management through IPA¹⁴¹, under IPA I period, over €110 million was provided for funding of 22 projects. IPA requires co-funding of the candidate countries around 10% and Turkish government's contribution stood at almost €24 million. Under IPA II period, over €92,5 million was provided by EU for funding of 14 projects with Turkish government's contribution amounted €6,796,286. The beneficiary of these projects has been solely the DGMM. In addition, the amount indicated under IPA II, only includes projects programmed on migration management until 2016 and does not cover the projects contracted under IPA 2018 and 2019 special measures for FRIT's second tranche that will be detailed in the second chapter as well as projects funded by IPA II of other institutions such as the Directorate General of International Labor Force. IPA has also funded other sectors, for example, municipal infrastructure projects that also aim to respond to the the need of refugees concentrated especially in border cities.

Apart from the EU's financial assistance, with the establishment of DGMM, the donor portfolio diversified and DGMM and other relevant governmental institutions (e.g law enforcement authorities such as Gendarmerie Command, Coast Guard Command, DGILF) started to implement projects funded bilaterally by the EU member states (e.g Norway, Sweden, Netherlands) or non-EU member states (UK, Switzerland, US) directly or through implementing partners that are mainly UN agencies, ICMPD or NGOs such as ASAM. DGMM's completed and ongoing bilateral projects are found in their website but this does not include funding information¹⁴². The DGMM reports 58 completed projects including IPA funded ones and 25 ongoing projects.

To conclude, Turkey's newly established emerging migration governance system received financial support mainly through the EU's IPA mechanism and EU member states' bilateral funds. While migration management reform process much needed such technical and financial assistance, primarily building accommodation and management capacity through IPA I and II funds, it can be said that this support has mainly focused on issues that are mostly relevant to EU's technocratic migration management and externalization approach, despite programming of the projects jointly undertaken by the EU and Turkish counterparts. Priority for the institutionalization process, lack of integration related approach that otherwise may target interventions to provide direct assistance to migrants and refugees to ease their lives in Turkey may also have resulted in the IPA programs' technocratic focus on migration (e.g. prevention of irregular migration and institutional capacity building.) In addition, FRIT has taken over the role of supporting access to rights and services despite its role limited to Syrian refugees. Duzgit et al. (2019)¹⁴³ notes that only after Syrian refugee crisis EU's funding has expanded into all fields including education, health, livelihood and social protection and cohesion.

¹⁴¹ The number of projects and total allocated budget for migration and asylum sector indicated here is based on a list provided by the EUD for a gap assesment report that was co-developed by the author. The information should be considered indicative as the list can not be up to date and complete in particular for the IPA II period. Annual Action Programmes for Turkey provides more up to date information regarding the allocated budget for Turkey on yearly basis as per different sectors including Home Affairs. However, these Programme Documents include the actions related to customs, document security, border management etc. apart from asylum and migration sector. Please see the IPA Annual Program Document of Turkey for 2020 as an example. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/annexes/annex_aap_2020_tr.pdf

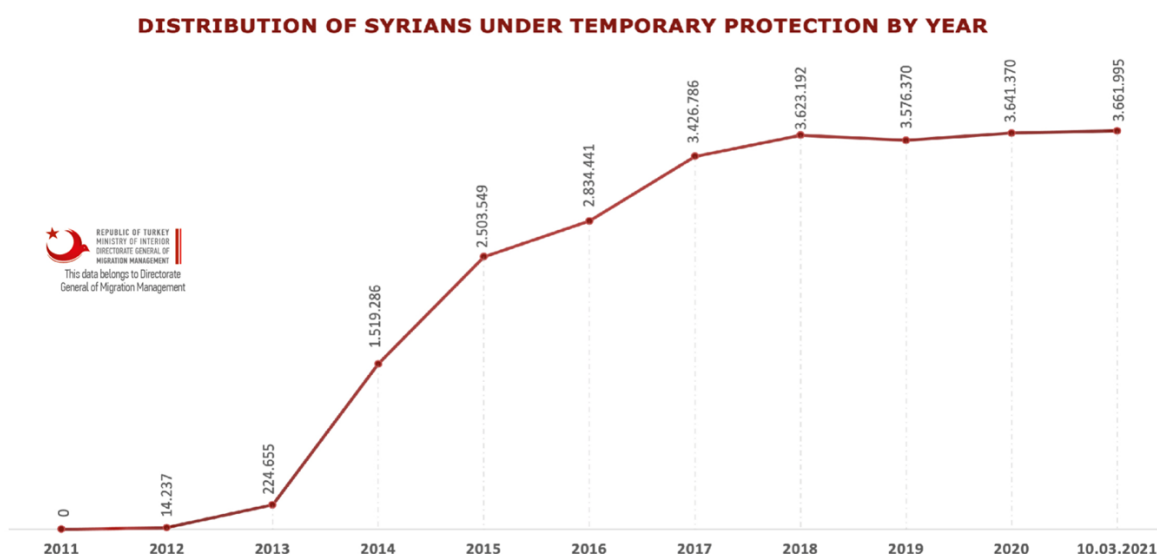
¹⁴² <https://www.goc.gov.tr/goc-projeleri56> .

¹⁴³ Düzgüt-Aydın S., Keyman F., Biehl K. (2019), Changing Parameters of Migration Cooperation: Beyond the EU-Turkey Deal?, Istanbul Policy Centers, Sabancı University

2.3. Syrian Refugee influx in Turkey¹⁴⁴ and humanitarian and development assistance to Turkey by the EU and other donors

Following the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011, Turkey has become home to the world's largest refugee population. Turkey currently hosts over 3,6million registered Syrian refugees, of only around 2 % reside in 7 Temporary Accommodation Centers (TACs) established and operated by Turkey¹⁴⁵. Over 98 percent of Syrians under temporary protection live in urban and rural areas across Turkey among members of the host community. Turkey also hosts around 330.000 non-Syrian refugees¹⁴⁶ who are officially named as international protection applicants or status holders. They are mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia

Graphic 4: Number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey as per the years



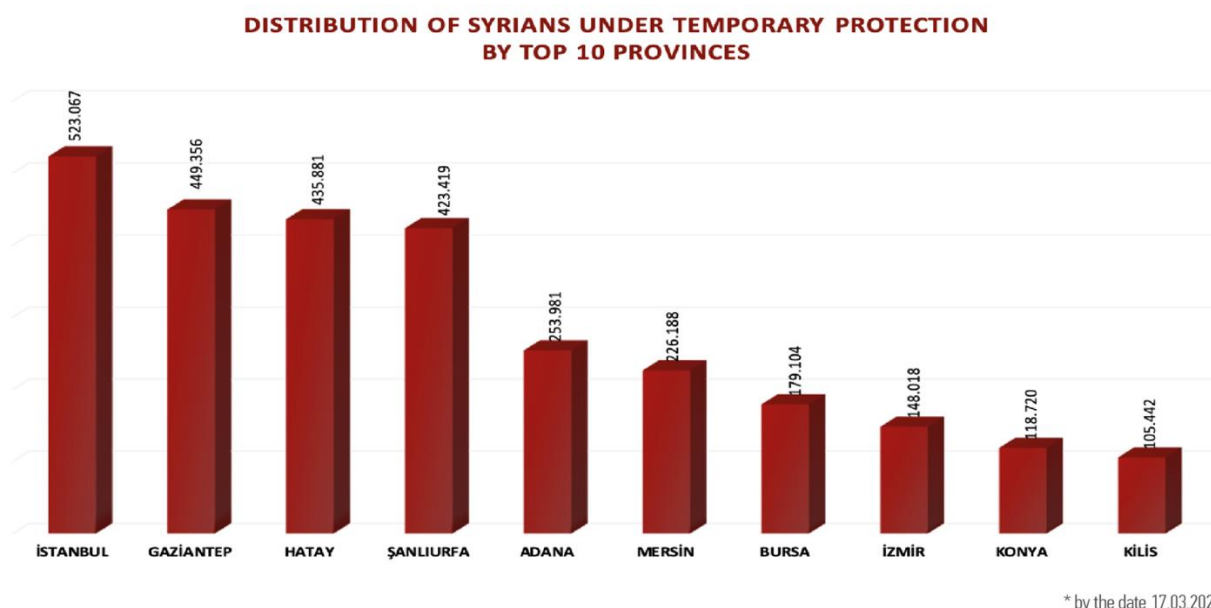
Source: Directorate General for Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

¹⁴⁴ In accordance with Turkish legislation, Syrians are granted temporary protection status and they are not officially recognized refugees but in line with the international refugee law, this paper will use the term refugees unless a reference to their legal status in Turkey is indicated.

¹⁴⁵ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> The number of TACs in 2016 were around 26 and they were accommodating around 270.000 Syrians. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/309406>

¹⁴⁶ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/turkey>

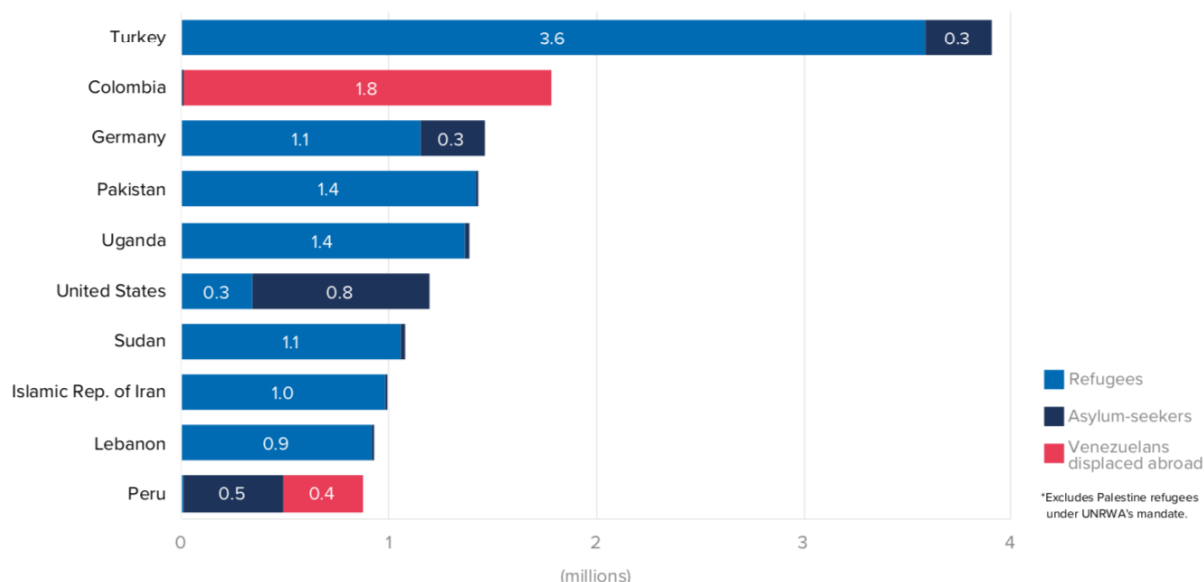
Graphic 5: Top 10 Provinces where Syrians under temporary protection live



Source: Directorate General for Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

As per the UNHCR data by the end of 2019, Turkey hosted the highest number of people displaced across borders, 3.9 million, most of whom were Syrian refugees (92%). Colombia followed, hosting nearly 1.8 million displaced Venezuelans. Germany hosted the third largest number, almost 1.5 million, with Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers constituting the largest groups (42%). Pakistan and Uganda hosted the 4th and 5th largest number, with about 1.4 million each.

Graphic 6: International Displacement Situations by host country

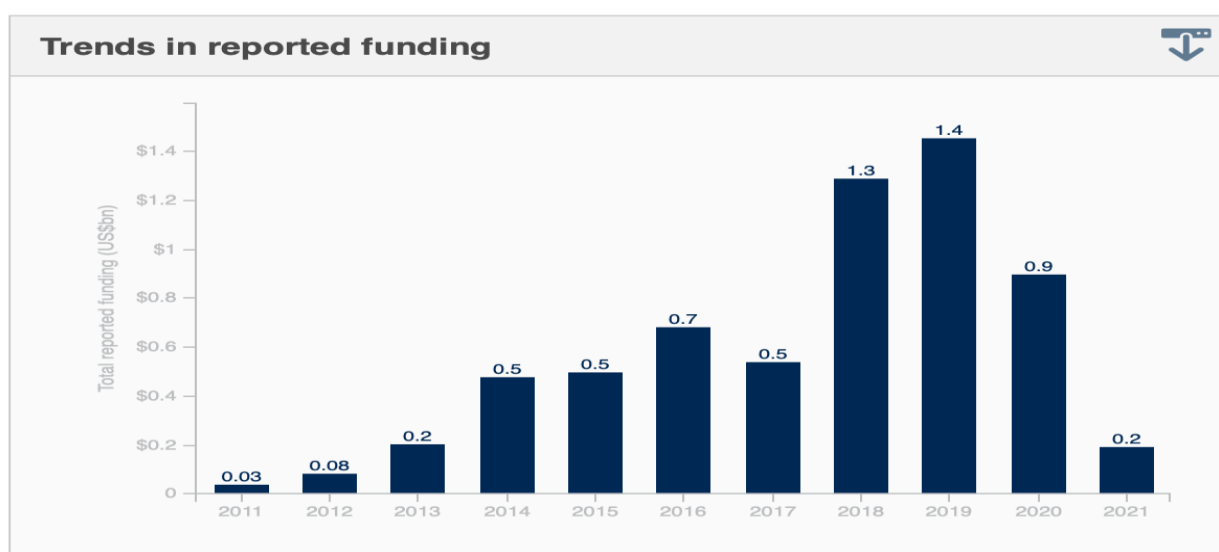


Source: UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html>

Turkey has been proactive to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees since the mass influx into Turkey but increasing scale of this displacement and its protracted nature over the years required international community to enhance their support. Provision of financial assistance (international

humanitarian aid) including most notably from the EU, in response to the Syria conflict within Syria and neighboring countries started since early 2012. Turkey was one of the main countries received such assistance. As it can be seen from the graphic 6 below, allocation of funds to Turkey has increased rapidly since 2017 mainly due to another major breakthrough in Turkish migration history when the unprecedented number of migrants and refugees irregularly crossed from Turkey to Greece in 2015. As the Financial Tracking Service of OCHA database search by years indicates,¹⁴⁷ to date the main donors financing various interventions for Syrian refugees in Turkey are the EU Commission the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT), the US, Germany, UK, Japan and Kuwait.¹⁴⁸

Graphic 7: Trends in reported funding for Turkey as of March 2021¹⁴⁹



Source: UNOCHA, Financial Tracking Service, <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/229/summary/2021>

Given this background, UN organizations as well as international and national civil society organizations to whom these funds are channeled have become key actors in Turkey's migration and asylum sector much before 18 March 2016 EU and Turkey Agreement. UN's Response to Syrian Refugee Crisis through Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP) and Donor Coordination mechanism, in particular, played a significant role in external funding management to the crisis. Regional Refugee Response Plan was initiated by the UNHCR and UNDP in 2014 recognizing that humanitarian response alone was not adequate for the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis. It comprises one regional plan and five separate country chapters covering Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Over US\$ 15.5 billion was channeled through the 3RP since 2015. In Turkey, 3RP has been coordinating humanitarian assistances provided by the main donor countries and various international and local organizations involved in implementing programs, projects. The 3RP has two components. The refugee component addresses the protection and humanitarian assistance needs of refugees while the resilience component addresses the resilience, stabilization and development needs of impacted individuals, communities and institutions, aiming at strengthening the capacities of national actors. In Turkey, the first 3RP Country Plan was prepared for the years of 2015-2016 and 2020 3RP Country report set outs the needs and planned responses under 6 sectors. These are basic services, education, health, livelihoods, protection, food security

¹⁴⁷ It is not possible to extract data showing cumulative amount of funding per country and since FTS compiles only reported data, it may not give a full picture.

¹⁴⁸ <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/229/summary/2021>

¹⁴⁹ The graph may not reflect the total amount of FRIT's disbursed funds as of March 2021.

and agriculture. After the establishment of the FRIT, the EU has become the main donor for the appeals included in Turkey Country Chapters. As per the 3RP funding update as of January 2021¹⁵⁰, in 2020, based on the appeal of US \$ 1.30 billion, US \$ 695 million received and US \$ 605 million remained as a gap. Since its introduction in Turkey in 2015, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) has contributed to the mobilization of approximately USD 4.5 billion to date.¹⁵¹

2.4. EU's Response to 2015 Migration Crisis: Establishment of FRIT and 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement

2015 migration crisis or so-called EU's migration or refugee crisis¹⁵² has dramatically changed the scope and modality of financial assistance extended for Syrians in Turkey. In the second half of 2015, millions of migrants and refugees left or transited through Turkey to reach the EU by sea and many lost their lives on the way. In 2015, the number of refugees and migrants arrived in Greece by sea was 856,723¹⁵³ and people reaching the EU was over 1 million¹⁵⁴. The half of the people who crossed the Eastern Mediterranean Sea was originated from Syria, but Afghans and Iraqi nationals also accounted a significant share of these flows. 805 migrants and refugee lost their lives or reported missing in the Eastern Mediterranean during these crossings and estimated migrant and refugee deaths in 2015 along the Mediterranean route was recorded as 3,770 in total¹⁵⁵.

EU's initial response to the crisis in 2015 and early 2016 is a key to better understand the main motive behind the EU-Turkey Statement agreed on 18 March 2016 as well as the financial assistance mechanism among other measures introduced by this Statement. To respond to this crisis, as Saatçioğlu (2019)¹⁵⁶ states, between spring 2015 and fall 2015 the EU first attempted to develop a European approach based on the norms of 'solidarity' and 'responsibility sharing'. As Dimitri et al (2019)¹⁵⁷ discuss, this attempt was not new and a similar narrative on migration and asylum had been actually earlier put forward by the EU and some EU member states in 2013-2014, especially when the principal route to the EU by sea has long been from North Africa across the central Mediterranean and death tolls and tragedies near Italy increased in the Central Mediterranean route (e.g Lampedusa shipwreck in 2013). Hence, the response of the EU to 2015 events drew largely on the events and work undertaken in 2013-2014. For example, in 2013, the EU Commission called for Members states to increase their resettlement quotas, finalize Mobility partnership with third countries and increase in search and rescue patrols by Frontex. However, events and responses to the unprecedented influx to EU in 2015 has showed gradually evolving and deepening division among and within member states and the EU institutions. (Saatçioğlu (2019), Dimitriadi et al.

¹⁵⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/turkey-2020-3rp-funding-update-q4-january-december-2020>

¹⁵¹ 3RP Turkey Country Report 2020-2021, http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/3RP-Turkey-Country-Chapter-2021-2022_EN-opt.pdf

¹⁵² The term refugee or migration crisis is approached cautiously by some scholars and practitioners who claim that this can be regarded as a crisis occurred due to failures in managing the arrivals and insufficient responses by governments and institutions rather than a crisis of refugees who have been already fleeing from crisis situations.

¹⁵³ European Stability Initiative (2019), The EU-Turkey Statement three years on <https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/ESI%20core%20facts%20-%20EU-Turkey%20Statement%20three%20years%20on%20-%2015%20April%202019.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/over-3770-migrants-have-died-trying-cross-mediterranean-europe-2015>

¹⁵⁶ Saatçioğlu B.(2020): The EU's response to the Syrian refugee crisis: a battleground among many Europes, European Politics and Society

¹⁵⁷ Dimitri et al (2019) Talking of Values: Understanding the Normative Discourse of EU Migration Policy: on (Value-Based) EU Policies on Migration, NovaMigra Norms and Values in the European Migration and Refugee Crisis Horizon 2020 Project Deliverable 2.1

(2019). As Dimitriadi et al (2019) state, “this division have resulted in bringing to the surface a fact that has been persistent ‘since the early days of the EU: migration is neither experienced nor understood the same by all Member States. Not all are affected similarly or equally and do not appear to share the same understanding of the core principles of the Union, particularly in this case solidarity’. In other words, this crisis brought the surface the “already existing yet largely overlooked structural shortcomings of European migration and asylum policy” (Okyay, 2019)¹⁵⁸

The following selected events and corresponding responses of the EU and EU member countries during the fall and spring 2015¹⁵⁹ can shed light into the aforementioned structural weaknesses that made the EU to turn their focus to Turkey to end the crisis. Following an accident resulted in 800 deaths, the highest recorded death from any boat accident, near the Italian island of Lampedusa in April 2015, the EU has put forward a ten-point action Plan¹⁶⁰, which was unanimously accepted as it included measures to alleviate the pressure from the frontline states such as Italy and Greece through voluntary resettlement of refugees to support the countries hosting the high number of refugees and controlling migrant flows across Mediterranean. In April and May 2015, additional funding of naval operations (Operation Triton, EU Navfor Med) as continuation of operations held in Mediterranean in 2013-2014 (Operation Mare Nostrum) involved search and rescue was approved, although the search and rescue component of the operations were criticized by some members states that they would create pull factors. Building on this plan, in May 2015, the European Commission launched the European Agenda on Migration¹⁶¹ aimed at responding to this crisis in a comprehensive manner. The Agenda included the following measures:

- Relieving the burden on the frontline states through mobilizing EU financial and operational support. First, a hotspot approach was adopted to prevent secondary movement through full compliance with processing, reception and return responsibilities in line with first country of arrival principle. Hotspots were situated at the entry points (e.g in Greece for example they are the five islands of northern Aegean) and different EU actors such as Frontex, European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Europol, experts from other countries’ national asylum services and national police/coastguard to ensure duly registration of all newly arrived migrants and refugees. Second, the relocation mechanism sought to transfer 40.000 people in need of international protection from Italy and Greece to the Member states. This policy could not be operationalized mainly due to conditionality regarding systematic registering of newly arrived migrants and refugees at the hotspots.
- Deterring irregular crossings to minimize secondary movement in the EU and keeping the integrity of external borders through combatting smuggling and strengthening border management system with support to Frontex that would assist frontline Member states facing disproportionate migratory pressure.
- Establishing partnerships with third countries through resettlement of 20.000 people from refugee hosting countries.
- Reducing the intention of irregular migration by addressing the root causes of migration
- Reforming the Common European Asylum System to address "inherent weaknesses" in the Common European Asylum System and Dublin Regulation that leads to concentration of the responsibility on frontline states receiving a large influx of asylum seekers and thus creates unequal burden sharing mechanism.
- Developing a legal migration policy to constitute potential alternatives to irregular entry.

¹⁵⁸ Okyay A.S (2019) EU-Turkey Migration Cooperation: From Saving the Day to Sustainable Mixed Migration Governance, Global Turkey in Europe Working Paper 21

¹⁵⁹ Please see more a short timeline of key events/meetings in Dimitri et al (2019) Talking of Values: Understanding the Normative Discourse of EU Migration Policy: on (Value -Based) EU Policies on Migration, NovaMigra Norms and Values in the European Migration and Refugee Crisis Horizon 2020 Project Deliverable 2.1

¹⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_4813

However, by the end of summer 2015, the worsening of reception conditions in the Greek islands along the introduction of temporary borders controls between Schengen countries (e.g Austria, Germany, Hungary) and fencing the borders with razor wires with non- Schengen countries (e.g Hungary with Serbia) unilateral decisions of the Member states (e.g decisions of the Germany to suspend the Dublin regulation) alarmed the EU. Furthermore, the tragic death of three-year-old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi whose body found on Turkey's Aegean shores in September 2015 and the death of 71 people inside a truck in Austria recalled EU's values and moral responsibilities. The EU's Justice and Home affair Council agreed in principle to relocate 120.0000 persons in addition to previously agreed 40.000 from any member states exposed to massive migratory flows. Central and Eastern European countries opposed to such policy and refused to accept any refugees and introduce strict controls or closures of their borders. Other countries who led a more welcoming approach such as Germany, France and Sweden, Norway started to introduce temporary border controls. Thus, a securitized approach prevailed also on these states' earlier stance of fully implementing a common European asylum and migration policy with framing refugee inflows as a serious threat to public policy or internal security especially after terrorist attacks in France in November 2015.

Against this backdrop, EU decided to start a dialogue with Turkey mainly to reduce the number of irregular arrivals to the EU and thus to take control of external borders as the future of common asylum system and Schengen were thought to be at stake. This process was mainly led by Germany together with Netherlands, which held the EU presidency during the first half of 2016 in collaboration with the Commission. Turkey and EU first agreed upon a Joint Action Plan on 15 October 2015 activated at the EU-Turkey Summit of 29 November 2015. The Action Plan¹⁶² tried to address the crisis situation in three ways: "(a) by addressing the root causes leading to the massive influx of Syrians, (b) by supporting Syrians under temporary protection and their host communities in Turkey (Part I) and (c) by strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU (Part II).)" More concretely, the Plan agreed that the EU 1) will support Turkey in hosting Syrian refugees through mobilizing a three-billion-euro aid package "in the most flexible and rapid way possible; 2) support Turkey to prevent irregular migration flows through strengthening its operational capacity to combat migrant smuggling, interception capacity at sea and return operations towards countries of origin of irregular migrants; 3) undertake necessary actions for the progress of Visa Liberalization Dialogue that would allow free visa regime for Turkish citizens by October 2016; 4) to regularly hold EU-Turkey summits (twice a year) geared towards a 'structured and more frequent high-level dialogue' serving as a 'platform to assess the development of Turkey-EU relations' that was not progressing since 2013¹⁶³.

However, the number of irregular arrivals has not stopped at an expected level and the daily sea crossings continued to be in thousands even during the winter. On 18 March 2016, members of the European Council and Turkey agreed on the EU-Turkey Statement (commonly known as the Turkey-EU Deal). The cooperation foresaw enhancing cooperation between EU and Turkey. First, it aimed at stopping the flow of migrations via Turkey to Europe. According to this Statement, all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 and whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible should be returned to Turkey and for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the EU. While the statement has been widely critiqued by human rights organizations for its impact on protection of asylum seekers in Greece, it had a positive impact in curbing irregular migration flows. As reported by the European Commission's March 2020 report the irregular migration flow has drastically decreased by 94% since the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement. Second, the Statement aimed at improving reception conditions for refugees and social

¹⁶² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_15_5860

¹⁶³ Saatçioğlu B. (2020): The EU's response to the Syrian refugee crisis: a battleground among many Europes, European Politics and Society

cohesion in Turkey mainly through the EU's commitment to providing a large-scale funding. Specifically, the EU committed to fastening the disbursement of three billion euros under the November Statement besides offering an additional three-billion-euro package (under the Facility for Refugees) until the end of 2018. Third, the Statement included measures providing safe and legal routes to the EU for those in need through Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme. Additionally, the Statement included the prospect of accelerated visa liberalization 'with a view to lifting the Schengen visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016 (contingent on Turkey's fulfillment of all relevant benchmarks, including, particularly, Turkey's revision of its Anti-Terror Law).

As Bekencioğlu (2019) argues, "the EU-Turkey Joint Plan and EU-Turkey Statement resulted a strategic bargaining between the EU – as well as member states leading the negotiations, principally, Germany and Ankara, reflecting interdependence and convergence around mutual interests." Smeets&Beach (2019)¹⁶⁴ argue that the EU has adopted "an informal institutional approach that might be evolving from an ad hoc framework into the new modus operandi for dealing with major EU reforms rather than formal, hierarchal, intra- and inter institutional action channels". In addition, Dimitriadi et al. (2019) state that "these agreements were concessions in the expense of EU's normative values such as solidarity, responsibility sharing, human rights and EU's freedom of movement with Schengen in return of managing the crisis."

Since the EU-Turkey statement was signed, a vast literature has emerged focusing on its impacts and implications¹⁶⁵ regarding irregular crossings from Turkey to the EU (e.g push backs, insufficient receptions conditions in Greece; change in cross-border movements out of Turkey (e.g shift from sea to land borders); Turkey's capacity and policies to host refugees and migrants; EU's commitment to responsibility sharing mechanisms (e.g the number of Syrians resettled from Turkey to EU member states through 1:1 mechanism and voluntary humanitarian admission scheme stood at 28.447 as of April 2021¹⁶⁶ smaller than the planned number of 72.000); derogation of EU's common values and principles regarding international protection; rule of law etc. through intensifying externalization measures, as well as on EU-Turkey relations (e.g derailment from EU membership process but EU's reliance on Turkey and "EU's inability to address the worsening situation in the country regarding the rule of law, fundamental rights and individual freedoms" that impact EU's international standing and credibility¹⁶⁷). Most importantly, the Association for Migration Research (GAR)'s latest report on 5th Year Anniversary of 18 March EU-Turkey Statement¹⁶⁸ states the Statement has substantially changed the nature and dynamics of EU-Turkey relations through instrumentalization of migration by both sides and led informalization on international refugee law via agreeing on a political declaration that is not legally binding and thus lack formal inspection and monitoring mechanisms.

Overall, EU states that the Statement met its purpose since number of migrants arriving in Greek islands dropped following the Statement. The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen affirms this and, in her statement, dated 6 April 2020¹⁶⁹ following her meeting with President Erdoğan explains that the deal "remains valid and has brought positive results" both in terms of

¹⁶⁴ Smeets S. and Beach D. (2019): When success is orphan: informal institutional governance and the EU-Turkey deal, Western European Politics

¹⁶⁵ The Association for Migration Research organized several seminars with leading academics and policy makers to discuss current standing, impact and future of the EU-Turkey Statement for the 5th Anniversary of the EU-Turkey Statement. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBFnCVOjpaaDUIGupB97tXQ>

¹⁶⁶ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

For other resettlement figures, the number of Syrians resettled from Turkey to EU member states between 2014-2021 is 5073. Canada and US have resettled 11,845 Syrians refugees during the same period.

¹⁶⁷ Yilmaz Elmas F. (2020) "EU's Global Actorness in Question: A Debate over the EU-Turkey Migration Deal", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 17, No. 68, 2020, pp. 161-177

¹⁶⁸ GAR (2021), 5. Yılında Avrupa Birliği - Türkiye Mutabakatı, GAR - Rapor No. 5.

¹⁶⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_1603

Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey as well as combatting human trafficking and smuggling. She adds that Turkey is expected to stand by its commitments including preventing irregular departures. However, Turkey has been more critical about the results of the Statement as no progress in lifting visa requirements, upgrading the Customs Union and the opening of new accession chapters has occurred to date. Moreover, as it will be discussed in the following chapter, Turkey has also been discontented about the pace and program-based implementation modality of 6-billion-euro assistance package. Turkey's discontents and an air strike on Idlib in neighboring Syria killed 36 Turkish soldiers, Turkey announced in February that it would stop hosting refugees in its territory and allowing them to cross into Europe in February 2020. So called 2020 Migration Crisis ended on 13 March because of COVID-19. This Crisis showed instability in EU-Turkey relations and transactional nature of the Statement.

Driven by the EU-Turkey crisis and growing criticism, the EU announced a New Pact on Migration and Asylum¹⁷⁰ in November 2020. The pact covers the issues related to increasing cooperation with countries of origin and transit, strengthening the EU's border and a more balanced sharing of responsibilities among EU member states and solidarity with countries with high burden through and reforming asylum system. However, it is widely acknowledged that the Pact does not differ much from the EU's policy axis, which is focused on the current migration situation and transferring responsibility to third countries. Therefore, it is possible that Turkey will remain to be a key country for preventing onward migration to Europe.

2.5. The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT): Implementation Modality

The EU established the EU Facility for Refugee in Turkey (FRIT) at the end of 2015. The Facility provides a coordination and cooperation mechanism for the EU's financial assistance committed in line with the aforementioned Joint Action Plan and EU-Turkey Statement. The Facility coordinates financing from different EU funding instruments namely humanitarian aid¹⁷¹ operated by the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Department (ECHO), the European Neighborhood Instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument (EDI), the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and EU Regional Trust Fund for Syrian Refugees (EUTF)¹⁷². This nature of the Facility to coordinate the mobilization of EU budget and Member States resources and to operate existing instruments in parallel makes it a complex financing mechanism and operation. For example, the special report of the European Court of Auditors (the ECA) (2018)¹⁷³ stated that "the Facility supported the same type of activities in the health and education sectors through different instruments. This made coordination more complex and resulted in the parallel use of different management structures to fund similar projects. Furthermore, EU funds spent in Turkey outside the Facility also supported some of the same priority areas as the Facility." However, the Commission in its response to the aforementioned report challenged this observation as follows: "the support of similar type of activities through parallel instruments allowed for complementarity and did not lead

¹⁷⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601287338054&uri=COM:2020:609:FIN#document2>

¹⁷¹ The EU's humanitarian aid is coordinated by the annual country specific Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs).

¹⁷² As noted in the Fourth Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, The European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) contributions were respectively transferred to and implemented under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the EU Trust Fund. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/fourth_annual_report_on_the_facility_for_refugees_in_turkey.pdf

¹⁷³ European Court of Auditors (2018), Special Report: The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: helpful support, but improvements needed to deliver more value for money https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_27/SR_TRF_EN.pdf

to any duplication or overlap, and allowed the Commission to speed up its responses, as different instruments were mobilized at different times, which is of critical importance for interventions in emergency situations. In addition, the use of different instruments with different implementing partners to do similar activities in the same sectors with the same objective emanates from the very nature of the Facility, which is a mechanism coordinating multiple EU instruments.” The office of Turkey’s FRIT Chief Coordinator under Vice Presidency Office (VPO) stated for this research that there is overlapping between certain projects in terms of project activities and target groups. VPO recommends that the VPO and relevant public institutions in the project approval phase should be consulted to prevent such overlapping. However, the projects funded bilaterally by the EU member states or other donors are in general planned outside the FRIT directly with the beneficiary institutions. The Regional Response Plan (3RP) structure facilitates coordination and cooperation in the field to some extent and consults the Presidency Office in the phase of drafting Turkey Country chapters, but there is no central mechanism that can or does such supervision function.

The Facility has a Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Commission and it includes representatives from all EU Member States. Turkish representatives participate to the Committee meetings in an advisory capacity and take part in the discussions related to the implementation of the support. The Committee is also in charge of monitoring and assessing the implementation of the actions. The VPO reported for this research that since the EU has the ultimate authority for managing the funds and actions as per the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, Turkey is not sufficiently involved in decision-making mechanisms. The VPO mainly supports the EU institutions in the implementation process in particular finding solutions for implementation problems. However, VPO believes that Turkey does not have enough authority in the project selection and implementation processes. The VPO indicated that at the 14th Steering Committee Turkey proposed to establish local steering committees with the EU Delegation to Turkey on project level and every three months. It was proposed to conduct these meetings in Ankara with the participation of Vice Presidency, EUD and relevant EU Embassies.

The EU Facility for Refugee in Turkey coordinates the mobilization of the total budget of €6 billion. The amount was mobilized in two tranches amounting to a total of €3 billion (first tranche) for 2016-17 period and a further €3 billion (second tranche) for 2018-19 period. These amounts are mobilized both from the EU budget and the EU Member states.¹⁷⁴ The EU member states also provide bilateral financial assistance for refugees in Turkey outside their FRIT contributions. As per the 2018 EU Need Assessment report, over €400 million were provided in the form of bilateral support from EU Member countries.¹⁷⁵ According to this report, other donors, various UN agencies, international, national and local civil society organizations, as well as International Financial Institutions (IFI’s), implement different projects and programs accounting for over €200 million. However, this data needs to be updated, by the Turkish government or the EU as it was not possible to compile such data through open data sources (e.g UN OCHA Financial Tracking system, member state websites) with a systematic analysis¹⁷⁶. It was noted in the 2018 EU Need Assessment that they retrieved the data from different sources through for example sending out questionnaires to both EU and non-EU countries, but the response rate was low. Although the share of the FRIT is quite big in the total external assistance, a comprehensive donor mapping can be helpful for a

¹⁷⁴ The first tranche amounted to €3 billion, from which €1 billion was mobilized from the EU budget and €2 billion from the Member States. Likewise, the second tranche amounted to € 3 billion, from which the EU budget provided €2 billion and the Member States €1 billion.

¹⁷⁵ European Commission (2018), Technical Assistance to the EU Facility for Refugees, Need Assessment Report https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/updated_needs_assessment.pdf

¹⁷⁶ For example, the differences in financial systems of donors and reporting (yearly, cumulative, multi-annual etc.) and unearmarked funds allocated to the UN that can be spent over the years makes disaggregation of funds as per donor and recipients challenging. UN agencies or IOs reports received funds differently although the lead agencies produce common reports. This may cause double counting. UN OCHA financial tracking system is based on the donors’ submission, so it may not be up-to date and complete. It is not possible to retrieve data per donor on a cumulative basis.

comparative analysis about the total share of the external assistance provided by each donor within the total international community support. It is also important for better measuring each interventions' impacts on common outcomes. In the same vein, this issue was raised by the ECA special report stating that "the FRIT results framework does not provide a complete overview of the performance of EU assistance for refugees in Turkey, because it does not include EU assistance provided outside the Facility".¹⁷⁷

As per the Fourth Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey states that "the projects under the first tranche run until mid-2021 at the latest and under the second tranche until mid-2025 at the latest (most projects will finish earlier).¹⁷⁸ All operational funds have been committed and contracted under both tranches and more than €4 billion disbursed by December 2020.¹⁷⁹ It was also announced in December 2020 that the EU has allocated €485 million additional humanitarian funding for Turkey to ensure that two flagship programs of the FRIT on social assistance and education (Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN and the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE) continue until early 2022.¹⁸⁰ The total additional humanitarian funding allocated was indicated as €531,7 million.¹⁸¹ Regarding this budget managed by the FRIT, the VPO informs that the total fund does not match with the needed amount that was determined by the 2018 Need Assessment Report. The VPO states that the Need Assessment report had indicated the amount to be needed to cover the needs of refugees as €5.1 billion from 2018 onward. In addition, the VPO states that there is an additional €1 billion need emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic as per the VPO's need assessment study conducted in cooperation with relevant ministries. Given this background, according to the VPO, approximately €3 billion fall short of the financial assistance amount determined within the scope of the aforementioned two needs analysis since the second tranche (FRIT 2) had only a €3 billion contract amount.

The Facility was implemented with a programme-based approach. As Smeets and Beach (2019) indicate, Turkey initially expected a cash transfer and wanted some degree of autonomy in using the funding, however the Commission opted for a programme-based approach, by setting up the FRIT.¹⁸² The Facility programming is mainly based on two Needs Assessments that were commissioned by the EU in 2016 and in 2018 and on an Updated Strategic Concept Note¹⁸³. Although the programming of the FRIT for both tranches have already been completed, it is worth to mention a few limitations of the Need Assessment reports that are considered main reference documents for the EU and Turkish government for the FRIT. These documents highlight that the priority areas in the Needs Assessment were determined on the basis of consultations with Turkey and the EU Member States. However, although both reports were comprehensive in a view of analyzing current situation, gaps and needs, they had some limitations. First, as indicated ECA's 2018 special report, Turkish authorities were involved in the consultations of the need assessment, yet they did not officially endorse the reports despite the requirement of the Turkey Joint Action Plan to undertake a joint need assessment by the EU institutions and Turkey before disbursing the

¹⁷⁷ European Court of Auditors (2018), Special Report: The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: helpful support, but improvements needed to deliver more value for money

https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_27/SR_TRF_EN.pdf

¹⁷⁸ European Commission (2020), The Fourth Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/fourth_annual_report_on_the_facility_for_refugees_in_turkey.pdf

¹⁷⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf

¹⁸⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/turkey_en

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Smeets S. and Beach D. (2019) When success is orphan: informal institutional governance and the EU-Turkey deal, West European Politics

¹⁸³ European Commission (2018), Technical Assistance to the EU Facility for Refugees, Need Assessment Report

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/updated_needs_assessment.pdf

European Commission (2018), Facility for Refugees in Turkey Updated Strategic Concept Note

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/updated_facility_strategic_concept_note.pdf

first tranche. Second, the 2018 Need Assessment report notes that due to time limitation of the exercise (20 working days for the experts), the study was mainly based on secondary data both through literature review and consultation meetings. The ECA's 2018 Special report highlights that "the consultants who carried out the needs assessment (2016) were not able to access primary data as most of the numerical data (e.g. sector statistics) in the needs assessment was provided by the Turkish authorities, therefore they could not validate the estimated cost of the measures needed to address the needs of refugees and host communities". In addition, the scope of needs assessments was not limited to Syrians since the FRIT's stated aim is to address the needs of all refugees in Turkey. However, the reports mainly presented the needs of Syrians and did not address the needs of the non-Syrian refugee population (mainly Afghans and Iraqis). This has been reported as mainly because of lack of available rigorous data and information non-Syrian population and focus of the consulted authorities and stakeholders providing data for these assessment on Syrians. Third, the third parties implementing the FRIT programs do not have a direct access to up-to-date demographic data including locations as well as information on vulnerabilities (female-headed households, children, elderly people, etc.) and they need permission from the government to collect and process data in the field. Lastly, as the VPO pointed out for this research, 2 years have passed since the need analysis dated 2018, therefore a new analysis should be conducted to determine and plan additional needs.

2.6. FRIT Projects: an overview

FRIT pursues a project-based approach that is implemented via two strands: humanitarian assistance and development assistance. Humanitarian assistance refers to the assistances aiming at addressing basic needs, protection, education and health for vulnerable refugees in Turkey. Development assistances focus on longer-term needs in health, education and socio-economic development of refugees. This entails facilitation of their access to public services and income generating opportunities and municipal infrastructure.

The Commission publishes a table¹⁸⁴ including a list of the projects committed, contracted and disbursed both under first and second tranches of €6 billion. The list also informs about the funding instruments, implementing partners and priority areas corresponding to each project. A summary of this table updated as of 31 December 2020 is shown below. A total of 112 projects¹⁸⁵ have been implemented through 38 different partners under both tranches of the FRIT (FRIT 1 and FRIT 2). Approximately 60% and 40% of the total funds are respectively allocated for the development and humanitarian strands.

¹⁸⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf

¹⁸⁵ The projects extended under different phases are counted separately as well.

Table 4.

FRIT First Tranche (FRIT 1)	# of Projects	# of Implementing Partners (IPs)		Contracted Amount (Eur) *roughly
Humanitarian Strand	45	19 in total ¹⁸⁶	6 UN agencies (WFP, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM), 13 INGOs including International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC),	1,4 billion
Development Strand	26	19 in total	4 state institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Directorate General for Migration Management, The Union of Chambers and the Commodity Exchanges of Turkey), 7 UN Agencies (WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women, ILO, IOM), 1 NGO (ASAM), 3 development and funding institutions (GIZ, French Development Agency and DAAD), 3 International Financial Institutions (IFIs) (World Bank, KfW and Council of Europe Development Bank)	1,6 billion
FRIT Second Tranche (FRIT 2)				
Humanitarian Strand	24	16	4 UN agencies (WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA), 11 INGOs, International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), 1 development agency (GIZ)	1 billion
Development Strand	17	9	3 state institutions (Ministry of Family, Social Services and Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education) 1 inter-governmental agency (ICMPD), 3 IFIs (World Bank, KfW, Council of Europe Development Bank) 1 development agency (French Development Agency) 1 technical cooperation agency (Expertise France)	2 billion
Total	112	38		€6 billion (including the EU's administrative, M&E costs)

¹⁸⁶ One IP can implement more than one project under each strands of first and second tranches.

As seen in the table, based on the project -based modality, the FRIT funds are in general disbursed through various UN agencies, international civil society organizations, International Financial Institutions (IFI's) as well as directly with governmental agencies mainly in health, education and protection sectors. For FRIT 2, two major differences compared to FRIT 1 can be observed. First, a progressive shift from humanitarian to development assistance under the FRIT 2 was agreed to ensure self-reliance of refugees, to strengthen local communities' capacity to host refugees for social cohesion and to prepare national systems to take over the responsibilities following the phasing out of Facility support to ensuring the sustainability. To this end, development strand of FRIT 2 focused mostly on socio-economic development and increased the amount and number of direct grants to state institutions. For example, a direct grant to the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Services for the first time under socio-economic sector support was provided. Second, the administrative cost of the UN agencies in particular the management cost of the ESSN has become a concern by the government and the EU. Thus, FRIT 2 socio-economic sector projects call brought a criteria of limiting indirect cost (overhead) to maximum 4 %. Therefore, UN agencies whose overhead stand around 7% were not found eligible for the calls. To this end, the implementing partner of the ESSN has changed from WFP to IFRC, which is considered more cost effective.

Regarding the implementation of the projects, the VPO noted for this research that they find the project implementation processes slow and they believe that the main reason of delays is related to the fact that EU is applying FRIT projects with a similar logic of the IPA projects, which are implemented through lengthy and bureaucratically cumbersome processes. The EU official interviewed for this report highlighted that the assistance provided under the framework of the Facility is project-based and the pace of the disbursements depends on progress in contracting and implementation of the projects. Furthermore, the ECA's 2018 Special report concludes that the Facility achieved its objective of contracting three billion euros in two years as it was laid down in in the Commission's decision establishing the Facility, although it finds limitation with regard to coordination and effectiveness issues. Interestingly, the report states that "the IPA funds channeled under the Facility were contracted up to five times faster than traditional IPA assistance in Turkey." The report also observes that large amount of direct grants channeled to the state institutions amounting €660 million as well as contracting the UN organizations and international financial institutions (70% of the €3 billion), who have an absorption capacity and the means to implement large projects, made the contracting and implementation faster. This kind of assessment can be renewed based on the recent completion of contracting of FRIT 2 and planned dates of disbursement of €6 billion to provide a comprehensive picture.

2.6.1. Main Projects and Achievements

The EU's relevant reports related to the FRIT such as Factsheets, the Results Framework Monitoring Reports and the Annual Reports on the FRIT are mainly highlighting the results of the biggest projects in terms of allocated funding mostly at the output level. To this end, this report also focuses on these projects, which are also known as flagship projects of the FRIT.

➤ FRIT Humanitarian assistance

Under the humanitarian strands of the FRIT, there are two flagship programs namely the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE).

The ESSN is the biggest program of the FRIT as well as the single largest humanitarian programme in the history of the EU. It is a social assistance scheme that provides monthly cash assistance through debit cards to the most vulnerable refugee population. Refugee families currently receive

120 Turkish Lira (about €13) monthly per family member. It assists more than 1.8 million people and the total allocated fund under the FRIT is over €1,8 billion. The first and second phases were contracted with the World Food Programme (WFP), who implemented the program with the Turkish Red Crescent Society and Turkish government institutions (Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services). The additional funding to the program by the European budget (€400 million) will have the program run until early 2022. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) was contracted under FRIT 2 to implement ESSN III again with the Turkish Red Crescent Society (Kızılay) and Turkish governmental counterparts.

The other flagship program under the humanitarian strand of the FRIT is the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE), which provide support to families whose children attend school regularly through bi-monthly cash transfers. The number of Syrian children is over 1.6 million. Of these, over one million children are of school age, and more than 650,000 at the age between 5 and 17 years are enrolled in education as per 2019-2020 academic year.¹⁸⁷ The CCTE program by being implemented since 2017 is expected to help more than 700,000 children to continue their education until early 2022¹⁸⁸; €154 million from the FRIT and an additional funding for the third phase by the EU (85 million) brings the program funding to a total of €239 million. The main contractor of the program is the UNICEF partnering with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish Red Crescent Society. The other donors such as the Governments of Norway and the United States also contribute to these programs reported by UNICEF.

With support from FRIT, Turkey's Directorate General of Migration Management has implemented a data project with UNHCR to verify the data of over 3.6 million refugees and 330,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia.

➤ *FRIT Development Assistance*

Within the scope of development strands of the FRIT, **education** was the biggest funded sectors. Turkey, by the end of 2015, has adopted a policy for Syrian children full integration to public schools and gradually closing temporary education centers that allowed Syrian children to pursue Syrian curricula. Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into Turkish Education System (PIKTES) is the main education program of the FRIT. Ministry of National Education was directly contracted for the program aiming to increase integration and access to education for Syrian children. The total funding for the PIKTES I and II under FRIT amounted to 700 million Euro. Through PIKTES program, employment of Turkish language trainers, trainings for educational personnel, catch-up and back-up trainings for children, early childhood education programs, non-formal education for refugee children and youth and education scholarships are provided. In addition, the IFIs (KfW and the World Bank) are contracted for the education infrastructure projects with a total budget of €905 million. Most of the education infrastructure projects with a total budget of €805 million were contracted under the first tranche. These investment projects upgraded 3902 schools including provision of refurbishment and/or equipment to 2,120 pre-schools) and 40 out of targeted 360 new schools were constructed.

Under the development strand, another important program is being implemented under **health** sector. By improving the health status of the Syrian population under temporary protection and related services provided by Turkish Authorities (SIHHAT), the project was the main program directly implemented by the Ministry of Health. The budget of this project is in total €510 million covered both under FRIT 1 and 2. Health infrastructure projects contracted with Council of Europe Development Bank, Agence française de développement (AFD) to construct two hospitals in Hatay

¹⁸⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/201022_fmr.pdf

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/en/press-releases/unicef-and-eu-announce-third-phase-conditional-cash-transfer-education-ccte>

and Kilis provinces have a budget of €90 million under FRIT 2. Council of Europe Development Bank has another contract with an amount of €90 million to supply health equipment to the public hospitals (113 hospitals) located in provinces having high refugee population. Within the scope of this project, 174 Migrant Health Centres located in 29 high refugee concentration provinces, 10 Public Mental Health Centers were established. The Ministry aims to establish and operate 785 Migrant Health Units (MHU) in 174 Migrant Health Centers where services besides primary health care services are planned to be delivered. 3,400 Syrian health workers are employed. Mobile primary health services, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) support, mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) as well as physiotherapy (post-operative care) and rehabilitation (PTR) are provided.

Given the protracted nature of the Syria crisis, FRIT 2 focuses on **socio-economic support** activities and on the creation of livelihood opportunities. Under both FRIT 1, activities including job and vocational counselling, on-the-job training programs and simplification of work permit process, small grants to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship trainings including female-led social entrepreneurship are provided to both Syrian refugees' and host communities.¹⁸⁹ While all these activities aimed at increasing their employability and facilitating their formal access to the labor market, the number of work permits issued for Syrian refugees remain only around 80,000. Syrians under temporary protection are entitled to apply for a work permit six months after the completion of temporary protection registration. However, the most of Syrians are still employed at the informal market. Under the FRIT 2, based on a call, multiple projects with mainly IFIs are contracted for a total amount of €465 million. These projects aim at increasing employability and skills development of refugees and host communities, market supply and demand matching, and creating a conducive environment for business growth, formal employment. These interventions are also planned to ensure a smooth transition from dependency on social assistance schemes (ESSN) to increased independence and livelihood opportunities for those who have the necessary capacity and skills.

FRIT 2 development strand included municipal infrastructure projects to improve access to, and the quality of, municipal services in the areas of water supply, wastewater and solid waste management in areas most affected by the refugee influx, as well as a smaller component for recreational infrastructure in support of social cohesion.

To conclude, as shown there is a recognition by the Commission FRIT reports and, as indicated by the EU official interviewed for this report, that the Facility's support has improved access to services such as education, health and social assistance. As the ECA 2018 report ¹⁹⁰ indicated, the FRIT provided a swift response to the refugee crisis and provided helpful support to refugees and most of the FRIT projects have achieved their outputs. As the EU official mentioned, the EU is currently planning to undertake an outcome level assessment that can better point out the actual impact of the FRIT and other institutions, funds and Turkish government's responses serving to the same objectives. The reports on the effects of Covid-19¹⁹¹ suggest that the barriers that migrants face in terms of participating in the formal labor market and especially the difficulties experienced by refugees in accessing services such as protection, housing, health and education have deepened the inequalities. For all these reasons, the challenges combating migrant poverty, protecting

¹⁸⁹ Under the FRIT1 development assistance, in the last few years, the programs included a host community pillar due to increasing backlash from the society due to a perception that Syrian refugees are financially supported while vulnerable host communities or communities in need for employment, skill development or social assistances are left behind.

¹⁹⁰ European Court of Auditors (2018), Special Report: The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: helpful support, but improvements needed to deliver more value for money https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_27/SR_TRF_EN.pdf

¹⁹¹ Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği (SGDD-ASAM), 2020; Türk Kızılay Toplum Temelli Göç Programları Koordinatörlüğü, 2020; CARE International, 2020; Turkey Inter-Agency Coordination, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020; International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, 2020.

vulnerable migrants and refugee groups and ensuring long-term socio-economic development and reflecting these issues in policy processes require may require more attention. For example, there are still more than 460,000 school-aged children were still out-of-school and did not have any access to education opportunities, 1,8 million refugees depend on social assistance schemes (ESSN) and most of the work force is informally employed. Lastly, there are discussions how to ensure the sustainability for FRIT and to ensure solid transition strategies. For example, to what extent a change of the IPs from UN agencies to IFIs under the development strand of FRIT 2 will have an impact on the sustainability of the socio-economic activities implemented under FRIT 2.

2.7. Turkish Government's Refugee Response

Since the onset of the conflict in Syria in 2011 the Government of Turkey (GoT) has taken a highly proactive stance in responding to refugee needs, including provision of free medical care and education possibilities, as well allowing legal access to the labor market. Different state actors, ministerial or at the provincial and local levels, have been involved in the refugee response to different degrees from the beginning, while in recent years, the level of state actors' involvement has expanded even further. However, the data related to financial expenses of Turkey is not available except the lump sum amount indicated by the Ministers or the President in the speeches or press conferences. For example, according to Minister of Health statement in 2017, since the beginning of the Syrian crisis and until the end of 2017, the Government of Turkey had spent an estimated €31 billion to meet needs of refugees and hosting communities. As per the President Erdogan's speech in March 2020, the amount spent for Syrian has reached to €40 billion. He also criticizes the EU's plans for top up of the Facility with €350+350 million. In general, the estimations are based on the general budgets allocated for the institutions directly related to migration management such as DGMM, running cost of temporary accommodation centers, medicines covered by the refugees as well as municipal infrastructures and social assistances. However, the indirect costs such as personnel, technical assistance, infrastructure investments serving both host communities and refugees etc. cannot be easily disaggregated given also Turkey's budgetary mechanism.

CONCLUSIONS

So much time has passed since Ecevit's declaration and belief that Turkey's accession process to the EU would have been completed in "short period of time" and so many things have changed since AKP's program considered the "full membership of the European Union as a priority to ensure economic and democratic development, in full compliance with the standards and institutional regulations set by the EU"¹⁹².

Since the Accession process was opened in 2005, the negotiation for enlarging the EU membership to Turkey has made little progress. A variety of reasons, starting from the Cyprus issue and the subsequent and more recent drilling activities pursued by Ankara into the Eastern Mediterranean, the Turkish military operation in Syria and its positioning in neighboring conflicts, together with the concern on the progressive decline in human rights standards within the country, have made Turkey to move, progressively, away from the EU. On the other hand, the lack of progress on the visa liberalization, the modernization of the Customs Union and the accession process, the claims raised around the management of the Facility, as well as the lack of coordination for the situation in northern Syria, have made the EU progressively been perceived distant from Turkey. Indeed, while success is mutually acknowledged in terms of reducing irregular migration to the EU and improving conditions of Syrians living in Turkey, particularly the "non-migration" elements of the 2016 Statement have seen no substantial developments.

Also, with regard to the Facility, while considering the best practices of many programs in the sectors of education, health, humanitarian assistance, socio-economic support for Syrian refugees which show success in terms of cooperation between Turkish authorities and the EU, Ankara has raised claims about the partial authority of Turkey in the project selection and implementation processes as well as on the mismatch between the need assessed in terms of funds and the money effectively allocated (particularly for the second tranche of the FRIT), among others.

In the last 16 years, the negotiation has remained on paper. After the "golden age" of the pre-accession phase, where Turkey progressively engaged in a reform process to align to EU standards, the relationship between the parts has been an obstacle course, between moments of cooperation and of extreme tensions. To date, after the opening of the last chapter in June 2016, the negotiation is frozen.

An interesting aspect in this sense, beyond Ankara's human rights respect and positioning in neighboring conflicts, seems to have been the ambivalent status of Turkey at the eyes of the EU, which embarks on parallel between a "third country" and a "candidate country". Whether the enlargement was, at least when the accession process started, a top priority for the EU, the fact that the negotiation began (and has continued) with the Cyprus issue unsolved and that, since the Readmission Agreement was signed in 2013, Turkey seems to be considered as a "third party" with whom collaborate for managing migration beyond EU's borders, suggest that the "other than me" perception is not linked to recent developments or involution in the relations.

That being said, despite a lot of downs in recent years, not only between the EU and Turkey but also between Ankara and some EU member states, the strategic importance of Turkey has been always recalled. Cooperation remains crucial in sectors of mutual interest as economy, security and migration due to both a shared membership in the Council of Europe and NATO, but also to the strategic geographical position of Turkey whether considering it as the "Door of the East" or the "Southeastern border of Europe".

What seems to be the main problem between the parts is a lack of constructive communication and mutual frustration, which lead too fast to reciprocal recriminations rather than to a commitment in

¹⁹² AKP's government program of 2002, see V. Giannotta, *Erdogan e il suo partito*, Castelveccchi 2018. p.113

reciprocal understanding. Every step forward seems to be matched by a step backwards. The last months are emblematic in this sense. After a year of geopolitical tensions and frictions on migration, Çavuşoğlu's visit to Brussels, the European Council of March and the visit of EU Commission and EU council representatives to Ankara in April, seemed to suggest a recommitment in cooperation. However, meanwhile, the withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, the 'sofagate' episode and its media trail, risk in some way to fade what could have been considered a new beginning. It is quite evident that at least for now, differences cannot be overcome with a view to revitalize the accession process. Nevertheless, cooperation at the economic and security level seems to be on going. Relations are likely to be continuing in the terms of a sectorial partnership in which the migration issue will be at the core of the Agenda.

It is worth mentioning that cooperation on the topic of migration has never stopped. Indeed, the EU has provided financial and technical assistance to Turkey on migration and asylum since the phase of pre-accession and this cooperation has been of benefit for both the sides. On the one hand, Turkey has strengthened, progressively, law enforcement capacities to prevent irregular migration, protection strategies, assisted voluntary return and reintegration of irregular migrants, national asylum system and related decision-making procedures, among others. On the other, the EU has prevented irregular migration and "protected its borders" avoiding a disproportionate influx of migrants to its territories.

It is then evident that the European Union will continue to be an important partner for Turkey on issues concerning migration and EU-Turkey relations will affect the migration agenda. On the fifth anniversary of 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement and after the 6 billion euros aid package's full commitment announced in December 2021, both sides showed their interest to renew the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. The leaders of the EU and Turkey restated their commitments to the Statement and disclosed their positive stances about possible additional funds for Syrian refugees in Turkey during high-level meetings held between Turkey and EU in the last two months¹⁹³. Although there are discontents, criticisms and challenges about the Statement, some argues¹⁹⁴ that this agreement becomes "a blueprint for Europe's strategy of externalizing migration management to its neighbors" and "a strategic partnership based on mutual interest and interdependence resulting in normative and material concessions as opposed to Turkey's progress in meeting membership criteria." It is therefore unlikely that key parameters of this Deal will remain unchanged in near future¹⁹⁵ and many pillars of the Statement including the FRIT mechanism can continue in near future.

Against the backdrop of the issues related to the FRIT as explained in this paper, it is not certain if the FRIT's program-based modality through IOs or INGOs will remain the same or to what extent Turkey's demand in transferring funds to government accounts will be addressed. EU is interested in controlling funds' allocation and disbursement to ensure their accountability criteria and not to seem lose control of their bargaining power. However, it is decided, there are several issues that can be taken into consideration. First, Turkey as a middle-income country with an established public service delivery system allows refugees' access to public services and thus Turkey requires support to maintain such access especially in the face of economic shrinkage with Covid-19. Mainstreaming these services to refugees and migrants as supported by various FRIT programs will

¹⁹³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_1603
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/06/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-after-his-meeting-in-ankara-with-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>
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¹⁹⁴ Saatçioğlu B. (2019) The European Unions's refugee crisis and rising functionalism in EU-Turkey relations, Turkish Studies; Terry K. (2021), The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On: A Frayed and Controversial but Enduring Blueprint, Migration Policy Institute <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on>

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remain priority in near future. As indicated above, FRIT's flagship projects involved mainly direct grants to the governmental authorities with a potential to produce larger impact on the lives of refugees as in the case health and education services. Second, FRIT 2 and future funds will need to focus more on refugees' employment in formal market and their access to other livelihood activities to become independent from social assistances. The income of refugees still mainly depends on social assistances through the ESSN program as well as precarious informal employment. Covid-19 showed the urgency of this need as most of the refugees have lost their jobs and are now again in need of food and basic needs similar to the beginning of the crisis.¹⁹⁶ As a report prepared by FRIT Office of the Presidency of Turkey and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy regarding ESSN exit strategy¹⁹⁷ highlights that there is a huge need for job creation activities supporting demand side of the Turkish labor market more than supply side activities like vocational trainings or language trainings etc. organized under FRIT 1. Given this background, larger involvement of Turkish authorities overseeing macro-economic realities and better cooperation among the potential partners in managing future funds is key to produce more sustainable solutions to improve the lives of refugees while continuing to benefit from specialized UN or other agencies' expertise to further build capacity and service standards of governmental agencies. Third, the success and impact of the funds also largely depends on future of Turkey's migration and asylum system. Turkey still needs to develop inclusive medium and long-term policies for all migrant groups concerning migrant integration and social cohesion and to prepare Turkish society for this reality. For example, the status of Syrians is still temporary, it allows their access to rights and services but prevent them to be entitled for more secure and long-term statuses. Lack of legal integration paths makes Syrian and other refugees' lives dependent on conjunctural and populist moves rather than foreseeable and transparent policies. This issue is also valid for non-Syrian refugees (international protection applicants or status holders) mainly due to Turkey's geographical limitation to Geneva Convention. Furthermore, with increasing focus of funds and programs for Syrians, needs of non-Syrian refugees in terms of improving their living conditions and their access to rights and services have been mostly overlooked despite of FRIT's and other external assistance programs' planned focus on both groups. Therefore, the policies being developed for refugees in Turkey needs to be more inclusive. It is also important to note that how long Turkey being as a middle-income country (and a donor itself) can be qualified as recipient of humanitarian and/or development assistances particularly that of non- EU countries under migration and asylum sector. Lastly, management of the FRIT and other funds need better monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment mechanisms in coordination with the government agencies to prevent duplications, ensure evidence-based programming and usage of the funds more effectively. Until now, except FRIT and other big program's own M&E reports mainly at output level and project repositories, there is limited data or research analyzing the funds channeled to Turkey since the beginning of the refugee crisis and their relations with each other, impacts etc.

¹⁹⁶ Ayşen Üstübici and Sibel Karadağ (2020), *Refugee Protection in Turkey during the First Phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Turkey Interim Report, Istanbul: Koç University
http://admigov.eu/upload/Ustubici_Karadag_2020_Turkey_Interim_Report.pdf

¹⁹⁷ FRIT Office of the Presidency of Turkey and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy (2018), Exit Strategy from the ESSN Program
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