



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



EUMAGINE
*Imagining Europe
from the Outside*

Perceptions from Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

New knowledge, European added value

The EUMAGINE project provides unique and invaluable data in analysing how Europe is perceived from outside the EU in countries like Turkey, and how these perceptions affect migrants' aspirations and decisions.

One of the fundamental areas of focus in EUMAGINE is to show how people in Turkey perceive democracy and human rights in relation to the regions they inhabit, which are selected based on their different migratory status (areas for research are Emirdağ –characterized by high emigration rates, Dinar –characterized by low emigration rates, Fatih –characterized by a strong immigration history and Central Van –characterized by a specific human rights situation).

The aim is to understand how these perceptions interact with other determinants of migrants' aspirations, to what extent migration is perceived as a valuable life project, and how potential migrants compare Europe to other migratory destinations.

Key messages for policy-makers

The most important issue highlighted by the research is that migration to Europe is not an aspired life project in Turkey. Contrary to the established perception in Europe, the majority of the respondents state their preference to staying in Turkey over going abroad. Given the current state of affairs between Turkey and the EU on the issue of freedom of movement of Turkish citizens within the borders of Europe, the lower rate of aspirations to migrate becomes an important finding that refutes the conventional wisdom held by European policy circles.

While people's perception of Europe in terms of human rights (both negative and positive rights) and democracy is positive, treatment of Turkish citizens in Europe is perceived negatively due to an image of xenophobia and discrimination in Europe. The effects of the financial crisis in Europe (in contrast to Turkey's improving economic

performance) are also frequently cited as reasons for the decline of aspirations to go to Europe.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Lower migration aspirations in Turkey

EUMAGINE survey results display lower aspirations to migrate in each and every one of the research areas: Dinar, Emirdağ, Fatih and Central Van (See Figure 1).

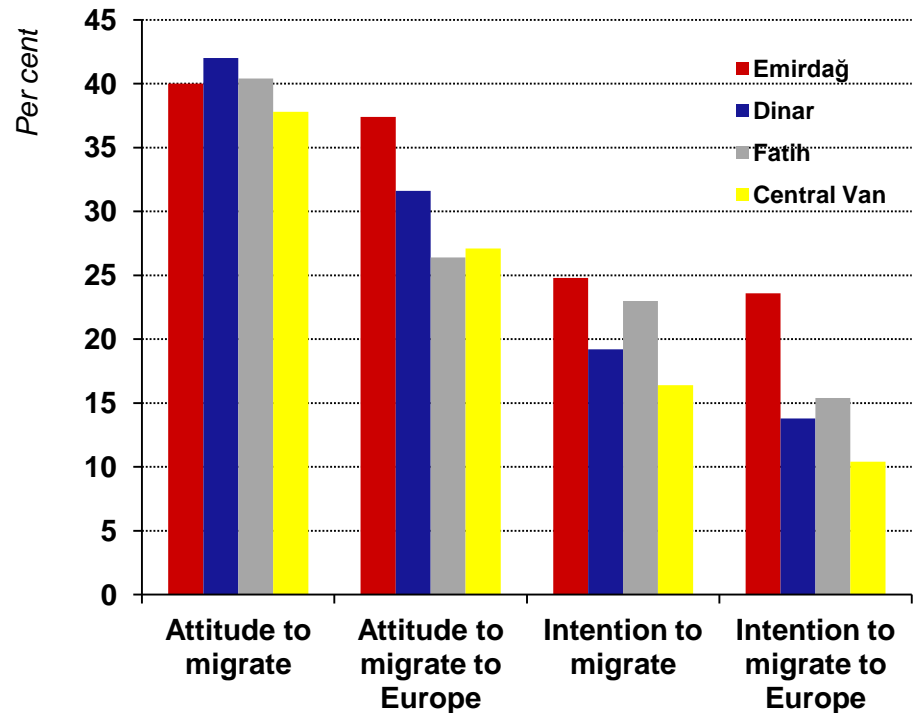


Figure 1. Attitude and intention to migrate abroad and to Europe in different research areas (Per cent)

Source: EUMAGINE Survey data.

Several key observations stand out regarding the relationship between demographic indicators and migrants' aspiration in Turkey that mostly confirm the well-established arguments in migration literature. There is a negative correlation between migrants' aspiration and age, as those who would like to remain in Turkey are generally older than those who aspire to migrate. The gender dimension of the findings highlight that in each research area, the majority of those who aspire to migrate are males. Also, married couples have less aspiration to migrate compared to single people.

Qualitative interviews show that higher welfare benefits in Europe seem to be a fundamental reason for aspiring to migrate among Turkish citizens. Still, the majority feel attached to their homeland and some even consider internal migration as a future alternative. Moreover, the existence of family members in the place of residence, along with components like tradition, lifestyle and religion associated with the homeland are essential factors that result in a lack of aspiration to migrate abroad. The majority dream of travelling to Europe for a short-term touristic vacation rather than migrating to Europe for the long-term, that is to live and work.

For the majority, migrants in Europe perceived as treated badly

A majority of the people in the research areas believe that people from Turkey who live in Europe are treated badly there, highlighting the fact that increasing xenophobia in Europe is not only experienced by migrants in Europe, but is also perceived negatively in countries outside the EU, damaging the image of the EU abroad.

Wide differences on perceptions of human rights in Europe and Turkey

There are wide differences between respondents' perceptions of human rights in Europe and Turkey. These differences are even wider in the perception of negative rights such as freedom of expression and the use of different languages.

Regarding the perceptions on freedom of expression in Europe, approximately three quarter of the respondents agree that in Europe, people can say whatever they want in public. In general, male respondents tend to have more positive perceptions on freedom of expression in Europe than female respondents.

Regarding the perceptions on freedom of expression or the use of different languages in Turkey, there are significant differences among research areas. Both female and male respondents in Central Van, where the majority of the population are ethnic Kurds, are more likely to express discontent regarding human rights in Turkey than their counterparts in other research areas.

Discrimination against women perceived differently by men and women in Turkey

It is widely agreed across all research areas that there is greater equality of opportunity between men and women in Europe than is the case in Turkey. As expected, women are more likely to express their experience in being discriminated against. The negative perceptions on women's human rights in the country were particularly visible in their statements.

Women emphasized families' differing treatment towards sons and daughters, the difficulties they confronted in terms of access to employment and domestic oppression. In general, male respondents do not perceive the situation of women as severe as do female respondents. The argument that the situation of women in Turkey has improved is widespread among male respondents.

Improvements in corruption, but sustained clientelism

Regarding the perceptions on corruption in Turkey, a considerable majority agree that corruption remains a point of concern in Turkey without any major differences among the areas of research. While few people think that there is corruption in Europe, a considerable portion of respondents did not have an opinion on the politicians or the levels of corruption in Europe.

It is widely accepted that the situation in Turkey is better than the past. However, most of the informants were frustrated with clientelism and nepotism that cause unequal access to resources. Individual anecdotes referred to the unfair distribution of public housing and to the difficulty of finding employment without access to nepotistic networks.

Employment opportunities in Turkey and Europe

There are variances between individual perceptions on the comparison of access to employment in Turkey and in Europe.

perceived differently by different groups

Internally displaced men from rural areas (from Central Van in particular) who face constant ethnic discrimination in their search for employment elsewhere in Turkey, view employment in Turkey extremely cynically, while simultaneously perceive job opportunities in Europe with optimism.

When asked about the availability of jobs in Turkey, women outside the metropolitan areas point at the constraints created by the conservative attitude of society concerning women with employment rather than the question of job availability. Qualitative interviews reveal that women would prefer to work if jobs appropriate for women were to be created.

The economic crisis in Europe frequently cited

In-depth interviews demonstrate the negative impact of the European financial crisis on individual perceptions of market opportunities in Europe. Many conceive the European economy to be weaker and less hopeful compared to the state of Europe in the past.

Majority's life satisfaction in Turkey measured as high with the exception of the population in Central Van

The majority of the population in Turkey is satisfied with their lives in general. The only area indicating an opposite trend is the region characterized by a human rights problem (Central Van). Dissatisfaction in this region is in sharp contrast with the general life satisfaction in others, highlighting a possible linkage between human rights problems and dissatisfaction.

Men and women who are satisfied with their lives in Turkey mostly have no aspirations to migrate abroad. In depth interviews reveal that many recent improvements to everyday life have increased their satisfaction, such as infrastructural developments and improvements in health services.

However, there is no direct negative correlation between life satisfaction and the aspiration to migrate. In depth interviews demonstrate that those who are dissatisfied with their lives in Turkey who cite financial reasons and a weak public educational system as reasons for their dissatisfaction may still not aspire to migrate even if they already have established networks with Turkish migrants abroad.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Freedom of movement or visa facilitation for Turkish citizens can be reconsidered

Aspirations to migrate in Turkey are low, which is a valuable and constructive finding in relation to the discussion of Turkey's accession to the EU, as freedom of movement is a pressing agenda item in the context of EU-Turkish relations. The asserted common opinion is that the majority of Turkey's population would migrate to Europe if they were to be granted freedom of movement within EU borders. EUMAGINE findings on low migrant aspiration in Turkey prove otherwise and bring this common opinion into question. Thus, freedom of movement or visa facilitation for Turkish citizens can be reconsidered.

Fight against increasing xenophobia in Europe

The deteriorating image of Europe as a geography where immigrants are treated badly is incompatible with the values and principles that the EU was founded upon. In order to tackle the issue, along with changes in legislature, other mechanisms to overcome this public image have to be created. Moreover, policy makers should campaign against Europe's xenophobic image in order to attract necessary migrants, particularly those who possess higher workforce skills.

Human rights record of Turkey for national legislators

While the differences between respondents' perceptions of human rights in Europe and Turkey are striking, the distinction is even more pronounced in Central Van, populated by the Kurdish speaking population. Thus, national legislators should reconsider legislation on human rights. The positive measures for education in the mother tongue should continue, and the access to services in the mother tongue should be broadened. Freedom of expression in the country in general should be enhanced. Within the frame of on-going negotiation processes between the EU and Turkey, support and momentum provided by the EU on the issues of human rights in Turkey are very much welcome.

Gender issues for national legislators

Gender based inequalities is a major problem experienced and negatively perceived by respondents in Turkey. Despite growing economic development and the overall improvements of conditions in accessibility to services, inequalities still prevail in cases of economic participation and schooling for women. Measures must be taken by national legislators to increase opportunities for women's equal participation to social life. Also, the implementation of widespread training programs that aim to increase awareness of men and women towards gender-based inequalities is recommended. The EU should provide encouragement and impetus for the advancement of women's rights in Turkey, particularly through supporting NGO's in the said field.

Measures on corruption for national legislators

Measures should be taken to make public policy processes more transparent and responsive to public needs. National legislators can develop further sanctions to prevent corruption and to ensure fair distribution of resources. The EU should encourage both Turkish government authorities and the Turkish civil society to combat against corruption and to campaign for transparency.

Furthering student exchange

Interviews with university students underline the importance of exchange programs such as Erasmus in creating a mutual domain of positive images of Europe in Turkey, and of Turkey in Europe. Accordingly, policymakers from both sides should pursue policies to improve and extend such programs to wider beneficiaries.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS**EUMAGINE seeks to understand why people want to migrate to Europe or not**

Imagining Europe from the Outside (EUMAGINE) set out to understand why people in Europe's neighbouring regions may or may not want to migrate to Europe. The project paid particular attention to people's perceptions of human rights and democracy—both in Europe and in their home country.

Data collection was carried out in Senegal, Morocco, Turkey and Ukraine. Within each country, the project team selected four research areas to represent diverse socio-economic and migratory contexts.

A detailed survey was conducted with 8000 people

Quantitative data collection consisted of a survey that was carried out with 500 respondents in each Research Area, yielding a project-wide total of 8000 responders. Plans for random sampling were elaborated for each research area, depending on local conditions.

A detailed questionnaire was developed over a ten-month period, including extensive pilot testing in each research area. Questions covered household migratory histories, individuals' aspirations to migrate, perceptions of human rights and democracy, and a range of other issues.

Qualitative interviews provided deeper insights

Qualitative data collection entailed in-depth interview and observations. In each research area, the team conducted twenty interviews. The qualitative material provided an opportunity to contextualize the quantitative results and understand more of the social processes underlying the statistical patterns. The qualitative interviews also allowed addressing the effects of the financial crisis in Europe, which had unfolded while data collection was under way.

The interview transcripts and observation reports were analysed with a specialized software (*NVivo*) to explore and systematically analyse the rich data provided by in-depth interviews.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Coordinator	Prof. Christiane Timmerman (University of Antwerp, BE)
Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of Antwerp, BE• University of Oxford, UK• Peace Research Institute Oslo, NO• Koç University, TR• Université Mohamed V – Agdal, MA• Centre of Sociological Research, UA• Université Cheikh Anta Diop, SN
Duration	February 2010–January 2013
Funding scheme	Collaborative Project Small or medium-scale focused research project
Budget	€ 2,415.000 (of which EU contribution: € 1,852,000)
Website	www.eumagine.org
Further reading on the topic of this policy brief	Üstübici, A. E., Korfalı, D. K, Sert, D. S., De Clerk, H. M. L. (2012): Within country analysis: Turkey. EUMAGINE Project paper 9, Istanbul and Antwerp, www.eumagine.org .
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