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A SUGGESTION FOR TURKEY: Treat your immigrants like your emigrants abroad

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Turkey's migrant integration policies have recently been evaluated, and the results are not so bright. To improve policies on migrant integration, policy makers need to look back to the country's emigration history and its diaspora engagement policies. Most certainly, such a reflection can inspire more inclusive and cohesive policies to create a much more welcoming and righteous environment for Turkey's immigrants.

In the eyes of many, Turkey is an emigration country. After the Second World War, Turkey was a key source country for labour migration to Europe, supplying countries such as Germany and the Netherlands with a wealth of low skilled labour. As a consequence of major outflows that continued for several decades first as labour migration, but later on as family migration and asylum migration, today there is a considerable permanent Turkish community living abroad. Turkey currently has 4,5 million citizens abroad, mainly in Germany.

In the beginning, Turkish policies regarding *its* citizens living abroad were dominated by 'homeland policies' defined as an approach aimed at orienting migrants towards return by creating institutions and taking measures facilitating migrants' strong economic linkages with their origin country. In other words, Turkey introduced various measures to channel remittances in such a way that migrant earnings could positively affect the country's economic development. Today, conversely, we observe that economic matters are not of high importance. Turkey more and more defines itself as an economically developed country and is not especially interested in migrant remittances. But, this does not mean that there is a decrease in Turkey's involvement with its migrants living abroad.

Looking at recent institutional arrangements and policies that are implemented, it is not difficult to see that the Turkish government is strongly attached to its citizens living abroad and pays significant attention to their sociocultural and economic well-being in the destination countries. That is to say, Turkey finds it of great importance that Turks living abroad are successfully integrated. *Yurtdisi Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı* – *Turks Abroad and Relative Communities Department*, for instance, works with Turkish citizens living abroad and is supposed to help them overcome their problems. The organisation has the objective of managing new social, cultural and economic activities with Turkish citizens and their descendants living abroad, according to their needs and demands. The activities of the organisation are directed at not only Turkish citizens and descendants

abroad, but also migrant organisations, non-governmental organisations abroad and professional organisations.

Looking at this specific policy approach in Turkey regarding the well-being of its migrants living abroad, one would expect it to pay the same attention to its immigrants. It is clear that the country recognises the importance of institutional support that immigrants need once they are settled in a destination country, as it seeks to provide this support even as an 'emigration country'. However, unfortunately, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) that was published just recently in spring 2014 shows that the integration policies for immigrants in Turkey are far from being ideal.

MIPEX measures integration policies in Turkey in order to provide a view of integration policies across a broad range of differing environments. The policy areas covered by MIPEX include labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination.

The report suggests that "Turkey's legal framework is slightly unfavourable for integration and ranks below the other MIPEX countries, scoring only 24-out-of-100 points". When looking at the report in detail, it is not difficult to see that migrants receive almost no governmental support and their rights are restricted too.

In the labour market, migrants are "tied to their employers, without equal rights as workers and without any general or targeted support to improve their job or skills". *Dis İlişkiler ve Yurtdışı İsci Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü - Foreign Relations and Abroad Worker Services General Directorate* the first governmental organisation (established in 1967) to deal with Turkish migrant workers abroad, for a very long time, has done a lot of work to protect the rights of Turkish labour migrants abroad. Perhaps it is time to benefit from the experiences of this directorate and provide similar rights and services to the immigrants in Turkey too.

The legal framework for family reunion is also below the European average and remains to be discretionary. When family emigration has been such a big part of modern Turkish migration history and is acknowledged as a fundamental right, there is definitely need for improvement in this dimension as well.

Turkey also obtained the lowest score on education policies compared to other MIPEX countries, and is not doing much better in political participation as migrants cannot vote or stand in any election, unlike in the majority of OSCE participating States covered in MIPEX. Last but not least, while it is positive that Turkey recognises dual-nationality, right to long term residence and path to becoming Turkish remain discretionary and do not directly help integration in the country. These are certainly dimensions that need more attention as immigration to Turkey will most probably only increase in the near future, and there is large evidence in the literature showing that the presence of favourable policies is one of the best ways to deal with irregular migration.

In short, the **MIPEX Turkey** provides a sad but good mirror to current Turkish policies on migrant integration. On a positive note, one could say that there is at least a lot of room for improvement. To conclude, considering the gravity of the current policy context, the best policy suggestion on integration can be: treat your immigrants like your emigrants abroad.