

MiReKoc Working Paper Series

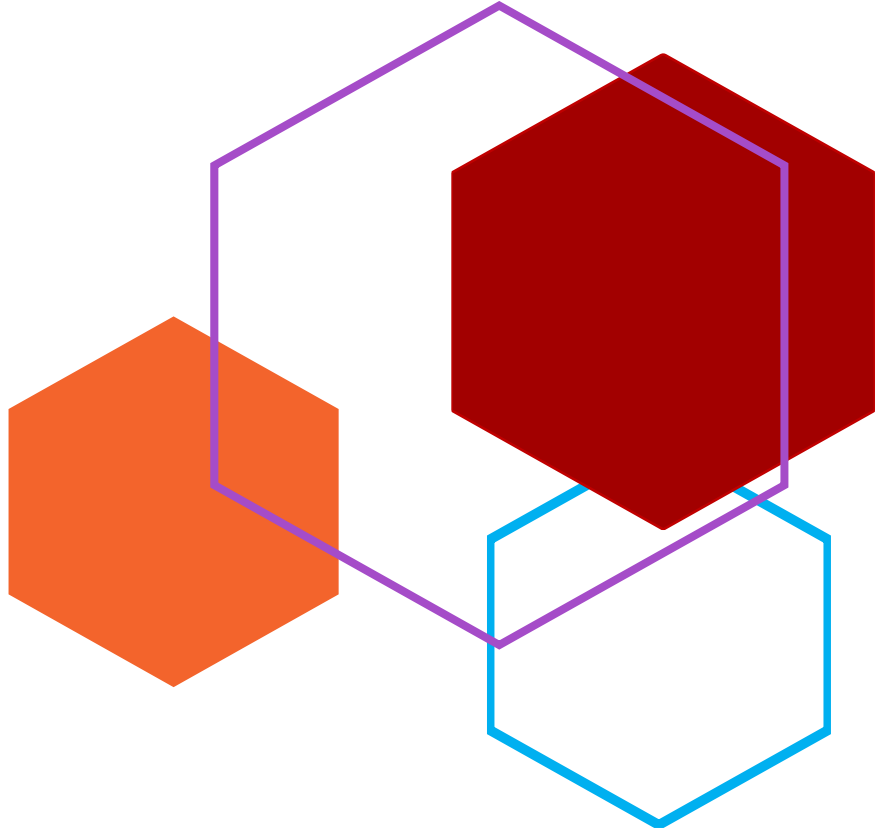
A Historical Overview of Transnational Migration Patterns from Turkey to Poland

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MiReKoc



ABOUT MIGRATION RESEARCH CENTER AT KOC UNIVERSITY

Migration Research Center at Koç University (MiReKoc) aims to advance the state of the art in migration research through original and innovative scholarship, academic collaboration, and dialogue between researchers, policy-makers, international organizations and civil society actors since 2004. Based in Istanbul, MiReKoc provides a unique, institutionalized hub for migration research with a focus on Turkey and its close environment, aiming at increasing the research capacity of all state and non-state actors working on the topic of migration.

<http://mirekoc.ku.edu.tr>

Welcome to the Migration Research Center at Koc University's (MiReKoc) Working Paper Series, a dynamic platform dedicated to advancing knowledge and fostering collaboration in the field of migration studies. At MiReKoc, we are committed to promoting academic excellence, facilitating ongoing research endeavors, and providing a valuable space for early career researchers to engage with their peers and receive constructive feedback.

Our Working Paper Series serves as a vital outlet for scholars and researchers who are actively contributing to the discourse on migration. Emphasizing the importance of ongoing academic works, MiReKoc seeks to showcase the latest developments in migration research, offering a platform for scholars to share their findings, insights, and methodologies. By doing so, we aim to create a dynamic and inclusive space that encourages scholarly exchange and collaboration within the global migration research community.

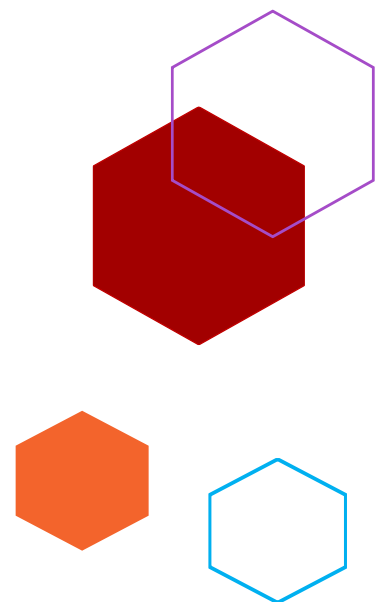
The Working Paper Series at MiReKoc is designed to be a stepping stone for emerging scholars, fostering a culture of mentorship and collaboration. Furthermore, our series places a strong emphasis on exploring new areas of research within the broader field of migration studies. As migration continues to be a complex and evolving phenomenon, we recognize the importance of staying at the forefront of emerging themes and issues. The papers featured in our series reflect a commitment to addressing contemporary challenges and shedding light on novel aspects of migration, contributing to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of this multifaceted field.

With a particular focus on thematic topics, the MiReKoc Working Paper Series serves as a resource for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike who seek to comprehend the nature and dynamics of current studies in migration. By facilitating dialogue and disseminating cutting-edge research, we aspire to contribute to a more informed and evidence-based approach to addressing the complexities of migration in our rapidly changing global landscape.

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A Brief Summary of Turkish Migration to Poland

Immigration from Turkey to Poland is increasingly gaining attention in the academic realm. The influx of Turkish immigrants to Poland in the 1970s marked a relatively new phenomenon compared to migration processes from Turkey to other European countries. The mobility of Turkish immigrants to Poland primarily stems from economic reasons, a phenomenon that can be thoroughly elucidated through the lenses of "micro theories of neoclassical economics," "migration systems theory," and "network theory" (Karaköse, 2022, 2-22).

The initial chapter of Turkish immigration to Poland unfolds against the backdrop of trade relations between Polish and Turkish entrepreneurs (Koryś & Żuchaj, 2000). During the Soviet Union era, frequent meetings in Istanbul's Laleli district became a common occurrence due to the growing interest in goods. These interactions laid the foundation for a network, providing Turkish traders with new market opportunities to establish businesses in Poland. This trend further intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In this period, we observed a notable increase in immigration numbers from Turkey, a phenomenon that attracted scholarly attention, as evidenced by Koryś and Żuchaj's study in 2000. However, the study primarily focused on the statistical aspects of Turkish immigration, constrained by limited community access and the prevailing trust issues among Turkish immigrants. Subsequently, Poland's accession to the European Union opened up new opportunities for Turkish entrepreneurs and students, particularly those specializing in engineering, Polish

language, and literature departments. The first six years of EU membership, spanning until the 2010s, witnessed a surge of Turkish entrepreneurs entering the Polish market. This influx, notably concentrated in Łódź and Warsaw, particularly fueled the growth of businesses in the textile sector.

The demographic chart depicting the Turkish population from the 1970s to 2000 indicates that immigration to Poland initially stemmed from individual decisions motivated by economic reasons (Koryś & Żuchaj, 2000). As immigrant businesses gained importance, the demand for hiring emerged, primarily from the inner circles of business owners and later from acquaintances of other workers. This trend shaped the Turkish immigrant profile in Poland, portraying them as economic elites within well-educated groups, leading businesses that now dominate certain sectors of the Polish market.

During the 1970s to 2010s era, we can distinguish two phases of immigration. The first phase, extending from the 1970s to the 2010s, marked the initial immigration wave, with subsequent waves occurring through connections established by the first immigrants who settled in Poland. Following Poland's six years of EU membership and a change in the political regime, the job market demanded more investments. After 2010, Poland became an increasingly attractive destination, not only due to economic development but also because of the growing need for a workforce, driven by emigration rates from Poland, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and agriculture. Turkish

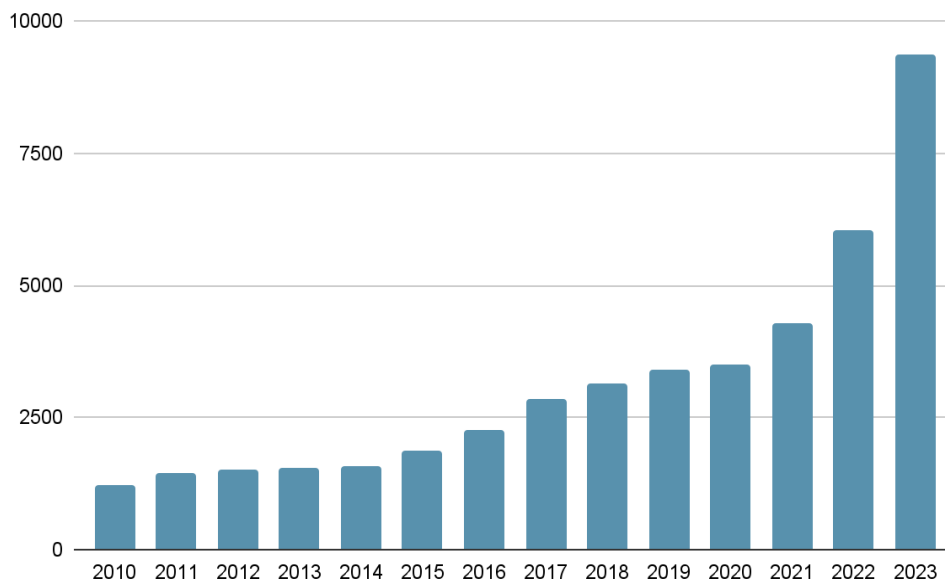
immigration to Poland experienced a surge during these years, notably influenced by exchange programs.

In 2015, Poland experienced a political shift as the leading party transitioned from a liberal to a more conservative stance regarding opinions on migration and immigrants. Despite this change, the close relationship between the ruling party in Poland and Turkey, coupled with the support of Turkish immigrants in Poland, resulted in distinct advantages for Turkish immigrants. This, in turn, heightened interest in immigration from Turkey, particularly in the realms of investment and education. One notable advantage, established in 2017, was the agreement on social security between Poland and Turkey, allowing immigrants to avail benefits from both countries in cases of mobility across various areas (Varşova Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2022).

The graphic representing Turkish immigration to Poland rates was generated using statistical data obtained from (MIGRACJE.GOV.PL, 2023)

Turkish immigration to Poland is on the rise each year, evident in Graph 3. This trend is particularly notable due to economic changes in Turkey and increased emigration to post-Soviet Union countries. Poland, with its European Union membership, strategic location, and economic growth, stands out as a prominent destination. Currently, Poland ranks among the most popular choices for emigration from Turkey, especially within Central and Eastern European countries. This underscores the significant impact of Turkish immigrants on shaping new trends and communal living conditions in Poland. The immigration pattern appears to be driven by individual decisions, educational pursuits, and network support, leading to the formation of a distinctive community, especially in cities like Warsaw, Kraków, and Gdańsk.

Graph 3: The Turkish immigration to Poland from 2010-2023



Demography of Turkish Immigrants in Poland

The demographic profile of Turkish immigrants in Poland has undergone significant changes over the years, particularly in terms of age and gender. These transformations became evident around 2010 as the Turkish immigrant population started to rise. Unfortunately, data for the period between the 1970s and 2000 is not well-documented. However, Koryś & Żuchaj's study in 2000 provides some insights, indicating that in that year, there were approximately 1500 Turkish individuals confirmed by the Turkish embassy in Poland.

Due to the absence of an immigrant population census in Poland during this timeframe, information about Turkish immigrants is limited. Between 1994 and 1999, the number of visas with work permits and other resident visas issued to Turkish citizens varied, with figures such as 646 in 1994, 689 in 1995, 655 in 1996, 580 in 1997, 612 in 1998, and 268 in 1999. Permanent residence permits held by Turkish citizens in Poland were relatively small, ranging from 21 in 1993 to 10 in 1999. In comparison, temporary residence permits showed higher numbers, with 38 positive decisions in 1998 and 186 positives, 14 negative decisions, and 1 discontinued case in 1999. These statistics suggest that this era, representing the first wave of Turkish immigrants in Poland, was relatively modest and driven by specific immigration reasons.

The demographic profile of the initial wave of immigrants to Poland remains somewhat unclear; however, Koryś & Żuchaj's (2000) study provides foundational information about this group. During the 1970s and 2000, Turkish

immigrants were predominantly male, with few women who migrated alongside their families. The age range varied from 20 to 50 years. In terms of marital status, most of the first-comers were either married to Polish spouses or single, with only a few having married individuals from Turkey.

The demographic profile of Turkish immigrants in Poland between the 2000s and 2020s is beginning to diverge from the characteristics of the first wave of immigrants. Poland's European Union membership has played a pivotal role in shaping these changes, along with ongoing agreements between Poland and Turkey. According to Andrejuk's (2019) study, economic collaboration agreements and increasing educational opportunities have contributed to shifts in Turkish immigration to Poland. The number of immigrants in Poland surged from 2000 to the 2020s, with reports suggesting that almost 25,000 Turkish citizens are living in Poland in 2022, according to the former Minister of Foreign Relations (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2022). However, the Turkish Embassy in Poland reported that 16,000 Turkish citizens registered in 2022 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

In 2017, Yentür's study revealed that the number of female immigrants increased to 20.42%, with the majority of immigrants falling within the 20-39 age range. This indicates a rejuvenation in the Turkish immigrant population over the last two decades, particularly influenced by student immigration from Turkey. However, the numbers reported by the Polish foreign office are smaller than those provided by Turkish officials, primarily due to differences in the classification of "immigrant" status in

Poland. The Foreign Office of Poland only includes individuals who have residence permits, permanent residence permits, and EU membership permits, excluding those who have become Polish citizens or those in the process of obtaining residence cards.

In this context, the Turkish immigrant population is expected to increase in the next few years, forming a new diasporic community in homogeneous Poland. Karakose's (2022) study shows that Polish immigrants are well-integrated both socially and systematically. However, the increasing numbers always remain a question mark for future developments, as the image of secular and well-educated elite Turks is expanding into middle-class and conservative Turkish communities in a few cities. Although the post-immigration process is still individualistic, groupings based on ethnicity and socioeconomic status have started to emerge in various cities, especially in Warsaw. Further research is essential to delve into these dynamics.

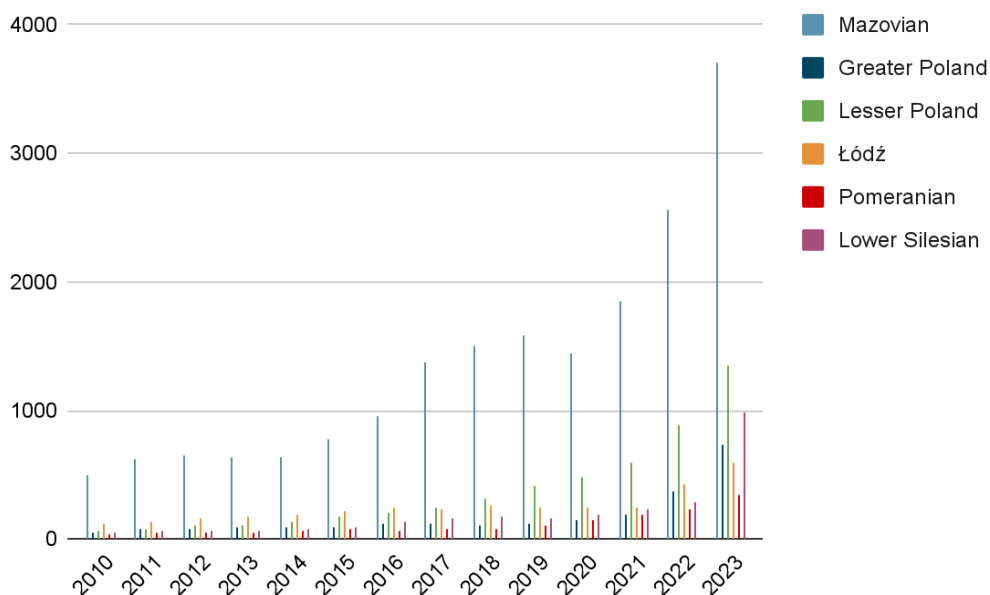
Cities and Businesses

Warsaw, as the capital city, holds the largest immigrant population in Poland, followed by other major cities such as Kraków and Gdańsk. Turkish immigrants are predominantly concentrated in these urban centers. Networking plays a crucial role in the migration of newcomers to these cities, driven by better economic opportunities, marriage, and education prospects.

The initial wave of Turkish immigrants primarily settled in Warsaw, Łódź, and Poznań, attracted by the business and entrepreneurial opportunities available, especially in the textile industry. This historical migration pattern has significantly influenced the current Turkish immigrant communities. The largest Turkish immigrant community is situated in Warsaw, characterized by diverse businesses and factories, along with the presence of Turkish foundations such as POTIAD.

However, other cities such as Łódź, Poznań, and Wrocław also boast a significant number of Turkish immigrants, driven by job opportunities and specific market sectors like textiles, engineering (computer), and gastronomy. The Turkish immigrant population in other cities is largely influenced by individual decisions or the presence of favorable opportunities. A graphical representation of the Turkish immigrant population across selected voivodeships over the years is provided below. The Mazovian, Lower Silesian, and Lesser Silesian voivodeships have consistently hosted the majority of the Turkish population over the last 13 years, aligning with the preferences of the initial immigrants.

Graph 4: The place of settlement in chosen voivodeships



The graphic representing Turkish immigration to Poland rates was generated using statistical data obtained from (MIGRACJE.GOV.PL, 2023).

In conclusion, Turkish immigration to Poland commenced in the 1970s and continues today, with anticipated annual increases. Poland serves as an attractive destination for Turkish immigrants, particularly the younger generation seeking affordable education in a European Union country with access to other European countries.

The current Turkish immigrant population in Poland is characterized by high levels of education and socio-economic status, akin to an elite group. The rising numbers contribute to diversity within the immigrant population, reflecting the varied beliefs, ethnicities, lifestyles, religions, and education levels found in Turkey. This diversity is influenced by interactions with Polish society and a secular identity. Looking ahead, the division of Turkish immigrants in Poland offers opportunities for further research to delve into the identity and integration of Turkish immigrants in European countries.

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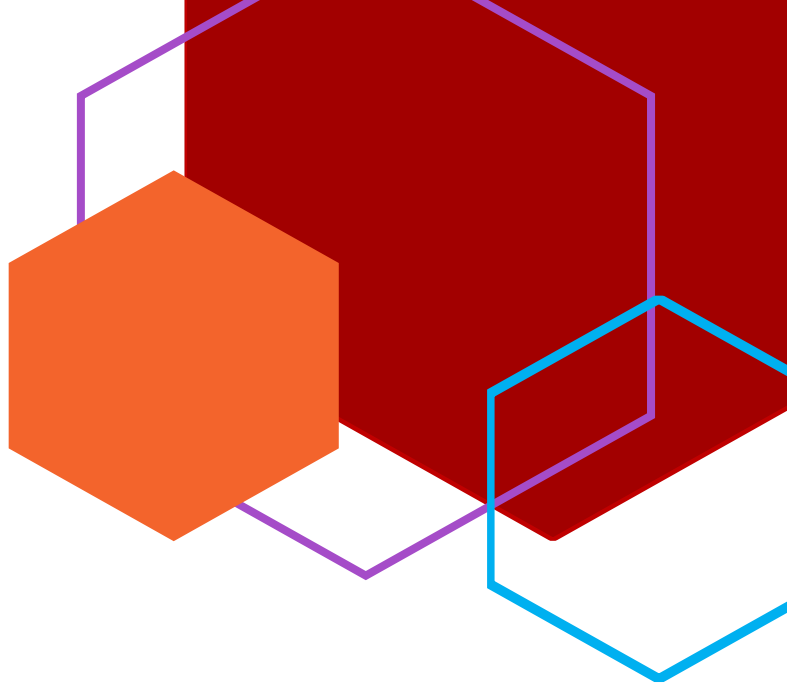
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