Integrating Turkish Immigrants into the German Labor Force

Stefanie Neumeier

Abstract
Germany has a long tradition of relying on foreign labor, particularly recruiting guest workers from Turkey in order to meet national and international economic demands. The Turkish community represents the largest and yet socio-economically least integrated minority group in Germany. As the government has failed to establish an efficient integration plan, it now faces unsustainable pressure on the welfare system, decelerated economic growth, and concerning xenophobic attitudes due to the unfavorable labor market position of Turkish immigrants. By introducing a new immigration law and revising the National Action Plan (NAP), Germany has initiated first efforts towards addressing this problem. Large numbers of governmental and non-governmental actors are involved in expediting the process of labor market integration of all Turkish immigrant generations. Additionally, this paper explores other vital approaches, and prioritizes a combination of intensifying the NAP and anti-discrimination strategies, as well as cooperation and transparency amongst all government levels.
Germany, as one of the strongest global economic powers, attracts many migrants every year. Turkish immigrants represent the largest ethnic minority group within the country and account for roughly three percent of the population. ¹ Though a number of strategies have been attempted to both integrate Turkish immigrants, as well as limit numbers of immigrants entering the country, the government has only recently increased efforts towards establishing a sophisticated immigration and integration plan. People with Turkish background are less effectively integrated on average than other immigrant groups; hence they are more likely to be unemployed or underpaid (see Appendix A and B).² This situation is not only true for first generation, but also for second and third generation immigrants. The lack of integration is particularly concerning in the labor market. Turkish immigrants with the ability to work might choose not to work and instead rely on unemployment assistance.³ Others desire employment, however are unable to find a well-suited jobs.

The economic boom following the years after World War II resulted in Germany’s reliance on foreign labor. The “Recruitment Agreement of Labor” 1961 between West-Germany and Turkey established close relations and supplied Germany with the much needed labor. Until 1973, the country recruited mainly unskilled or semiskilled workers from Turkey termed Gastarbeiter, (guest workers).⁴ As the German government did not plan for Turkish immigrants to settle permanently, integration efforts were not actively pursued, but discouraged. In order to promote the desire to return home, Germany even offered monetary bonuses, however such proved to be unsuccessful. Nevertheless, facing political and economic insecurity in Turkey,

¹ Naika Foroutan, "Identity and (Muslim) Integration in Germany." Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute (2013).
many of these workers decided to remain in the country. The Turkish government supported Turkish emigrants to remain in Germany as it diminished unemployment rates within Turkey and ensured a stable flow of remittances.\textsuperscript{5}

The labor market integration of the Turkish population reflects a problematic issue which needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. Marginalization from society on cultural and religious differences fuels the creation of a Turkish “parallel society,” leading to restricted economic opportunities, discrimination, and low socio-economic status. This situation is unfavorable, not only on the local and national level, but also on the dyadic level putting restraints on the German-Turkish relationship. While increased global economic competition intensifies the need for a stable and efficient workforce, immigration and especially integration is an economic necessity. Both the alarmingly low German birth rates and the drastic aging will put an unsustainable pressure on the country’s social security system. In contrast, the high birth rates of Turkish communities and a substantial younger population will help stabilize the economic system, and therefore represents an essential part of Germany’s active labor market policies.

Having laid out the background and issue at hand, this paper will proceed in providing possible solutions, their advantages and disadvantages, before concluding with a recommended course of action.

**Possible Solutions**

**Approach 1: Improvement of the National Action Plan on Integration (NAP) by Defining and Centralizing integration**

Germany has made first substantial progress towards labor market integration by establishing the *Immigration Act of 2005 (Zuwanderungsgesetz)*. This law defines integration as

\textsuperscript{5} Claus Mueller, "Integrating Turkish communities: a German dilemma." *Population research and policy review* 25, no. 5-6 (2006): 419.
a federal goal and aims at integrating Turkish immigrants by involving and improving cooperation between federal, state, and local government levels. In order to address the complex dimensions of labor integration, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have helped to develop the National Action Plan on Integration (NAP). Eleven forums have been established to address topics on integration such as education, training, labor market entry, and advancement. As the first important step towards an effective integration plan has been put in place, it is now essential to improve and strengthen these efforts. Even though the first attempts of cross-cutting initiatives were successful, the German government needs to focus on creating a centralized integration policy. A universal and agreed upon definition of integration and its policies will ensure that state and local governments are able to address issues and take actions uniformly. The National Action Plan on Integration concentrates on the areas of employment services, education and vocational training, and language training discussed below.

**NAP: Improving Employment Services**

The Federal Employment Agency (BA) is responsible for most employment services, which includes vocational guidance, job placement, and career counseling. It is also the entity that administers unemployment insurance and services for long term unemployed. Unfortunately, employment services do not always focus on the specific needs of immigrants, and therefore are not as effective as they could be. Job center employees often do not recognize foreign qualifications, fail to recognize language deficiencies, and impose sanctions on immigrants who refuse a job that collides with family circumstances and traditions. In order to address these shortcomings, the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2005 launched the...

---

7 Ibid. 9.
qualification program (IQ).\(^8\) The IQ is a network that develops and tests recommendations to make counseling and job placement more effective. Sixteen networks work closely with local actors, such as job centers and train employment center professionals to enhance their intercultural understanding and competence. In addition to the IQ, the Recognition Act of 2012 prevents immigrants with foreign qualifications having to work low skilled jobs.\(^9\) Immigrants are referred to the responsible authorities which evaluate their qualifications and determine whether or not additional training is required.

**NAP: Accessible Language and Culture Training for Turkish Immigrants**

Basic knowledge of German, as well as the country’s culture and norms, is ranked one of the most important aspects of labor integration. Whereas some jobs might not require sophisticated verbal and/or writing skills, employers still expect general communication skills from their employees. Additionally, more and more businesses work with complex technologies that mandate professional German skills. The basic understanding of the German culture in general, as well as knowledge about specific work related norms such as punctuality and loyalty, is crucial for improving job opportunities. Integration courses are the initial step to overcoming the German language and culture barrier. These courses are fulltime and consist of language instruction as well as culture, history, and legal system education (see Appendix C).

Unfortunately, immigrants are required to pay for these integration courses which can cost up to 800 Euros. This fact often discourages Turkish immigrants with limited financial resources. In order to avoid economic discrimination, it is essential to offer such courses without charge for all immigrants. In addition to integration courses, Turkish immigrants should be able to access work-focused language instruction. The initiative “German in the Workplace”

\(^9\) Ibid. 11.
encourages companies and labor unions to support migrants interested in improving reading and writing skills, digital competence, and information and communication technology skills. Furthermore, free Deutsch fuer den Beruf (German for Professional Purposes) courses, which combine workplace-related vocabulary with vocational qualifications, are available for immigrants.10

NAP: Education and Vocational Training in Germany

Both general and professional education is a key factor for employability as such often determines the degree of profession. There is a positive correlation between the level of education and the chance of finding a higher paid job.11 However, compared to natives and other foreigners, Turkish first and second generation immigrants still rank below average and hold mainly unqualified positions (see Appendix D). Consequently, the German government recognized the importance of education and increased efforts of addressing gaps between natives and Turkish immigrants. The Initiative Spaetstarter (“late starter”) is designed to help young adults find apprenticeships and jobs by providing counseling and financial support.12 To increase the numbers as well as the diversity of vocational training opportunities for immigrants graduating high school in Germany, schools also must increase their efforts. Cooperation between local schools and employers improves apprenticeship chances for Turkish immigrants. Mandatory internships, projects in cooperation with businesses, job fairs, as well as career assistance workshops should be on every school’s agenda and could increase the integration of second and third generation Turkish immigrants.

Approach 2: Turkish-German Bilateral Job Placement: Placement before Entering Germany

Many new immigrants enter Germany without or with few qualifications, which delays economic participation. In order to address this problem, Germany and Turkey should initiate a bilateral placement program that enables future immigrants to receive a job before they even enter Germany. This means intensifying cooperation and information exchange between the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs/BA and the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). The two government bodies could establish a database listing potential Turkish “would be immigrants,” who would then be assigned to jobs and apprenticeships in Germany according their skills. The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs/BA launched the current Job of My Life program (2013-2016) (MobiPro), which aims at the placement of young individuals from EU countries within Germany, however fails to include Turkish immigrants.\footnote{Burkert and Haas, “Investigating,”18.} A similar bilateral program with shared responsibilities between Turkey and Germany would not only help Turkey to mitigate its unemployment rate but also ensures a steady and controlled inflow of skilled labor into Germany. Though this solution seems to be a feasible approach, it only partially benefits labor market integration of Turks as it focuses on incoming individuals but does not offer a solution on how to integrate first and second generation Turks already residing in Germany.

Approach 3: Easier Access to Citizenship and Promotion of Dual Nationality

Though Germany partially introduced \textit{jus soli} (right of soil) in 2000, dual citizenship was only available for EU citizens, which forced young Turks to choose between either German or Turkish citizenship by the age of 23.\footnote{Nationality Act, § 4 (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2014). 2. Print.} To become self-employed as a dentist, physician, psychotherapist, or psychologist, immigrants in Germany also must either be citizens or EU members, unless they are married to a German/EU citizen or have graduated German high
As being German on paper improves employment chances, mobility, and earnings, these limitations are counterproductive to successful workforce integration, as well as to further the country’s economic growth. Consequently, Germany has recognized the importance of dual citizenship and established a new law in 2014 which enables young Turks born 1990 or after to have dual citizenship. It is a drawback that this law excludes individuals born before 1990, and thus first and second generation, as well as many third generation immigrants. Germany should consider expanding the current law in order to eliminate existing restrictions and to create equal opportunity for all Turkish immigrant generations to obtain dual citizenship. Another way to address this problem is to establish citizenship laws as in France, which use both principles *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* (principle of descent). With the French approach, immigrants benefit from having multiple ways to achieve dual nationality regardless of their residence status.

Approach 4: A Unified Anti-Discrimination Act and Cross-Cultural Education for German Employers

Discrimination against Turkish immigrants is one of the biggest limitations for successful workforce participation. Even though Germany prohibits discrimination under various sections of national legislation and international legislation (treaties with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations (UN) and the European Community (EC)), it has yet to unify a policy under a specific anti-discrimination act to effectively deal with migrant workers.

---

who experience discrimination. A uniform anti-discrimination act could lower direct and indirect discrimination, which would lay out legal consequences for employers and clarify compensation for victimized migrants. Discrimination acts are already in place in other European countries such as the United Kingdom (since 1965) and the Netherlands (since 1994), which have shown success in limiting workplace discrimination. In addition to the legal side, cross-cultural training for German employers and employees could change negative attitudes towards Turkish applicants. Trade unions and Turkish NGO’s should not only advocate for rights, but strengthen a welcoming environment by creating educational initiatives for employers and co-workers to better understand Turkish traditions and to close the culture gap.

Approach 5: Increasing Cooperation between Turkish NGO’s and the German Government: The Dutch Example

Turks in the Netherlands are on average socially and economically better integrated than in Germany. One reason for such integration is the cooperation between the Dutch governing bodies and Turkish organizations. Contrary to their Dutch counterparts, these close ties between Turkish organizations and the government do not exist in Germany. Whereas Dutch-Turkish organizations aim at integrating Turkish immigrants fully into the Dutch society, the German-Turkish ones create a bigger gap by isolating Turks from the rest of the society leading to further economic exclusion. As immigrant organizations have crucial influence on the behavior of immigrants in Germany, Turkish groups need to be willing to work with local governments in

---

19 Albert Karcher, "Integrating Turks in Germany: The Separation of Turks from German Society, Discrimination against Turks in the German Labor Market and Policy Recommendations to Integrate Turks into German Society," Public Policy Studies, 2010: 49.
order to establish trust and better economic opportunities for Turks. NGOs would function as bridge-like institutions connecting Turkish immigrants and the German government by assisting Turks with finding jobs and sharing information with the German government about economic needs and opportunities. The German government should award greater influence and voice to organizations and promote the NGOs missions to actively integrate Turkish immigrants. This approach is promising and addresses future immigrants as well as first and second generations. As the Turkish civil society is large in Germany and mainly based on a local level, job placement and economic inclusion of Turks is feasible and especially effective.

Approach 6: Encouraging Turkish Immigrants to Return Home: The Spanish and Czech Example

Instead of trying to integrate Turks into the German labor force, the government could create incentives for unemployed immigrants to voluntarily return home. In 2008, Spain adopted a new regulation that encourages the return of jobless third country nationals by paying them two lump sums, the first if they returned home, and the second if they refrain from their right to come back to Spain for a minimum of three years. The Czech Republic introduced a similar policy in 2009, providing 500 Euros and airfare home to immigrant workers who lose their jobs. The German government has seen an increase in remigration intention rates. Many Turkish immigrants confirm that they have considered or even prefer to return home. If Germany offered monetary benefits to unemployed Turkish immigrants willing to leave the country, the unemployment rate would decrease and pressure from the welfare system would be released.

__________

22 Ibid. 3.
This would also benefit Turkey, as Turkish migrants return back home introducing new
technologies, experiences, and ideas to the country’s own workforce. Though this approach is
enforceable, its success and efficiency is questionable. As Germany’s attempts to incentivize
guest workers to return back home to Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s failed, the chances of
another remigration policy to work are fairly slim. As Germany’s attempts to incentivize
guest workers to return back home to Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s failed, the chances of
another remigration policy to work are fairly slim. Additionally, the proportion of Turkish
immigrants willing and wanting to voluntarily return home is relatively small, and therefore will
not contribute substantially to the immigration and integration process.

Approach 7: Refusal of Employment Services for Turkish Immigrants with No Intention to Work

As a welfare state, Germany not only attracts Turkish immigrants who wish to work, but
also such who misuse the system. Turks represent roughly three percent of the German
population but account for more than six percent of welfare recipients. Hence, decreasing
access to welfare and unemployment assistance could increase Turkish willingness to actively
participate in the workforce. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2014 decided that Germany
is able to refuse Hartz IV (see Appendix E) to migrants from EU states, who have never worked
and show little to no incentive to do so in the future. Additionally, the Federal Council of
Germany has decided to change the Freedom of Movement Act/EU to limit the abuse of welfare
services by the establishment of deportations after six months and re-entry restrictions. Even
though this act does not directly apply to Turkish immigrants (non EU members) as their rights
are regulated under the residence law and protected by the Association Agreement, national

courts and the ECJ have increasingly applied EU laws to Turks. To refuse welfare benefits or even deport a migrant, the courts must prove social service abuse, which is fairly difficult. Additionally, such a rather harsh approach on dealing with Turkish immigrants negatively affects the Turkish-German relations. However, these new restrictions could be both a deterrent and motivation for Turkish immigrants to be fully engaged in the workforce participation.

Approach 8: Increasing and Promoting Opportunities for Migrant Self-Employment

Self-employment is a cure against unemployment, not only for the self-employed themselves, but also for future employees of a new business. Germany with its economic prosperity has therefore attracted a large number of Turkish businessmen and women. About 70 percent of all Turkish entrepreneurs in the European Union reside in Germany. However, the process of becoming self-employed as a Turkish migrant is rather complicated and discourages many from even trying. Even if Turks overcome the burden of German paperwork and bureaucracy, they still need to wait and hope for the approval and issuance of a special permission to start their own business. Another obstacle is the lack of access to micro-credits for migrants. There are government programs that help start-ups to overcome financial insecurities, but the proportion of Turkish entrepreneurs in these programs is still below average. The government should not only provide help and simplify the application process for starting a business, but also actively promote information about such programs and how to access micro-loans. This approach combats unemployment and furthers Turkish labor integration, however it

32 Ibid. 9-10.
is not applicable for all migrant workers. Nevertheless, the German government should continue encouraging Turkish entrepreneurship as it improves socio-economic status and is a dynamic driver for the economy.

Approach 9: Establishing a Job Quota for Migrants

Rather than simply encouraging businesses to hire Turkish immigrants and hope that they will do so, it would be more effective if the government introduced a job quota for migrants. The umbrella organization Turkish Community Almanya Turk Toplumu (TGD) proposed this idea back in 2008, however it was not further considered.\(^3\)\(^3\) The proposal aimed at expanding rights of Turkish immigrants so they can enjoy higher participation in the public sector by setting a 10 percent migrant quota for public jobs.\(^3\)\(^4\) A new migrant quota should address both private and public sector in order to include the full economic spectrum of Germany. This way, Turkish immigrants are able to choose between jobs on all levels of profession, which increases the chances of finding an occupation that matches their skillset. A job quota further ensures and increases an immediate integration of Turkish immigrants into the labor force while other approaches are slower and more inefficient. The downside of this approach is, just with any other job quota, that it burdens businesses to fulfill the quota and might result in unfair hiring processes. In order to reach 10 percent quota of migrant workers, employers might have to hire less qualified immigrants over better qualified natives. This is unfavorable in the long run as it slows down the overall economic performance.

---


Recommended Course of Action

The integration of Turkish immigrants into the German labor market is a complex and multi-level process which requires a combination of approaches in order to be successful in the long run. The basic foundation of stabilizing Turkish participation in the workforce represents the National Integration Plan (NAP) by addressing the areas of improving employment services, increasing school and vocational education, as well as providing language and culture training. If the German government directs more support in the form of human and financial capital towards such policies and programs, it will be able to effectively improve labor market access and integration of the Turkish population. Secondly, cooperation between Turkish organizations and the German federal government, as well as local governments, is a fundamental and feasible solution. As Turkish organizations and groups are the first and most important contact point for new incoming Turkish immigrants, as well as first and second generation migrants, they remain one of the key actors in the integration process. As of now, Germany has not given enough attention to such organizations and has failed to recognize their importance; hence a need to address this point. Thirdly, a unified discrimination act in combination with cross-cultural workplace education will further improve job opportunities for Turkish migrant workers, as it deters marginalization and provides justice. The act would define discrimination, lay out legal consequences, and balance the burden of proof between the discriminated migrant and the employer. By discouraging discrimination and improving cultural understanding amongst employers and co-workers, the chances of employment mobility of Turkish migrants increase and workplace xenophobia decreases. Lastly, simplifying access to dual citizenship for all Turkish generations will not only release the pressure of having to choose between two identities but also limit socio-economic discrimination. It will further the sense of belonging, the desire to
contribute economically, and improve access to jobs which require EU or German citizenship. Germany needs to eliminate the prevailing restrictions that currently limit the majority of Turkish immigrants to obtain dual citizenship. Rather than only granting dual nationality to young Turks born in 1990 or after, an expansion of the 2014 law could introduce citizenship options for first and second generation immigrants.

These four well-rounded approaches complement and strengthen one another in the labor market integration process and are therefore more effective than the other discussed options. The recommended solutions will improve cooperation and transparency between all government levels, as well as encourage non-governmental and local actors to actively participate and reach out to Turkish communities. Germany is well on its way to improve the situation of Turkish immigrants in the German labor market. However, there is a need to continue strengthening the effect of current programs and policies, and combine such with other vital approaches that have not been fully considered.
Appendixes

Appendix A: Integration Level

On a Scale of 1.0 (failed integration) to 8.0 (successful integration)

Gainful Employment

**INDICATORS:** Statistics for unemployment, youth unemployment and self-employment, proportion of housewives, number of people working in public service and professional jobs

| Other EU-25 member countries | 6.0 |
| Southern Europe | 5.1 |
| Ethnic German immigrants* | 4.9 |
| Far East | 3.6 |
| Former Yug. | 3.4 |
| Middle East | 3.1 |
| Africa | 2.6 |
| Turkey | 1.7 |

This table summarizes the overall employment integration of Turkish people compared to other migrants in Germany

Appendix B: Employment ratios men/women

Men:

Source: European Community Labour Force Survey.
These two tables show that the ratio of employment for Turkish men and women within Germany is the lowest compared to other groups.

**Appendix C: language training programs in 2002 and 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Situation in 2002</th>
<th>Situation since 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language courses for foreign workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>“Guestworkers” and their families</td>
<td>All new permanent immigrants with limited German up to two years after permanent immigration, earlier immigrants may participate depending on availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry in charge</td>
<td>Labour Ministry</td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of training per week</td>
<td>4-20</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Up to 640 hours</td>
<td>900 hours (6 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, unless the immigrant has already been resident for a number of years or in the case of no apparent integration need (e.g. due to prior German knowledge). For certain groups, the course may even be compulsory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Language courses for targeted unemployed immigrants</strong></th>
<th><strong>Language courses for targeted young immigrants</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certain groups of the unemployed: ethnic Germans, recognised asylum seekers and families</td>
<td>Certain groups of people under 27 if not entitled to the courses for the unemployed: ethnic Germans, recognised asylum seekers and families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Community Labour Force Survey.

Women:
The table summarizes former language training programs for immigrants in Germany.

**Appendix D: Integration Level**

On a Scale of 1.0 (failed integration) to 8.0 (successful integration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>INDICATORS: Percentage of uncompleted degrees, level of educational achievement, number of high school seniors, number of academicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other EU-25 member countries</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far East</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic German imm.*</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Yug.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table compares different levels of education amongst immigrants and shows that Turkey is the lowest.

**Appendix E: Hartz reforms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Passed</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Effective as of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First law for modern services on the labour market (&quot;Hartz I&quot;)</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>Setting up Personnel Service Agencies</td>
<td>1 January 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second law for modern services on the labour market (&quot;Hartz II&quot;)</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>Introduction of one-person companies (&quot;Me Inc.&quot;); Reform of low-paid jobs (&quot;mini&quot; and &quot;midi jobs&quot;)</td>
<td>1 January 2003 and 1 April 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third law for modern services on the labour market (&quot;Hartz III&quot;)</td>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>Restructuring of the Federal Labour Office</td>
<td>1 January 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth law for modern services on the labour market (&quot;Hartz IV&quot;)</td>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>Unemployment assistance and social assistance combined to form unemployment benefit II; new definition of acceptable jobs, sanctions; increased earnings disregards; community service</td>
<td>1 January 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law to reform the labour market</td>
<td>September 2003</td>
<td>Duration of unemployment benefit I shortened</td>
<td>1 February 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table gives overview about the various unemployment assistance programs and their alternations over time.
Bibliography


