

The Turkish Community in the Czech Republic: A Diaspora in the Making?¹

LUCIE TUNGUL



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Abstract: *Migration is a relatively new phenomenon in the Czech Republic, which has gradually become a destination country. The securitisation and politicisation of migration in the Czech domestic discourse has created a great deal of public anxiety, especially towards Muslims. This paper focuses on the position of Turkish migrants, the single largest Muslim community in the Czech Republic, in the specific context of the Czech Republic. The objective is to define the nature of Turkish migration to the Czech Republic as part of broader migration patterns. Using data from the Czech Statistical Office and from a questionnaire survey, it investigates the Turkish community's assessment of adaptation to the Czech environment and their position within the wider Turkish diaspora policy. I argue that the non-transparent Czech immigration policy and Czech Islamophobia are potential factors influencing the adaptation process of the Turkish community, which might affect their decision to remain in the country. Furthermore, the small size of the Turkish community can hamper the migrants' social life, who might wish to maintain strong ties with the homeland and the diaspora community in Europe.*

Keywords: *Turkey, diaspora, migration, the Czech Republic*

Introduction

Migration is regulated on a wide range of levels from the local and national to the global and transnational, and affects many areas of human activity includ-

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ing economic, social, national and foreign policies. These various areas affect each other in a multi-layered web of relationships in and across nation states. In the case of Europe, the single market and the Schengen agreement together with the institution of European citizenship and with asylum policy cooperation have had crucial importance for the movement of people on the continent. Immigrants are often seen as culturally “other”, as a potential economic and social threat to the sovereign nation because they are seen as belonging elsewhere. The perception of the kin countries, that the emigrants are “theirs”, goes hand in hand. According to Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), immigrants receive attention because they 1) are not part of the shared loyalty to the state, 2) remind the nation that it emerged by assimilation and integration in the past, 3) contribute to the social system but are excluded from full enjoyment of the services, and 4) their move runs counter to the notion of territory in the nationalist imaginary.

Much migration to Europe comes from predominantly Muslim countries, thus, the attitudes to migrations are closely linked with the perceptions of Islamic and/or Middle Eastern cultures. The most negative attitudes can be found in countries with a limited knowledge and/or experience of immigration and/or Muslims (e.g. Burns – Gimpel 2000; Lahav 2004; Hjerm 2009). The debate about migration often focuses on refugees claiming that while some are escaping political persecution and war, others are using the situation to claim material benefits. The distinction between economic migrants and political refugees is not clear, however, because people seek political freedom, physical safety and material well-being. The lack of political freedom is highly subjective and can range from (possible) threats of imprisonment and material suffering to the perception that the individual’s lifestyle is under threat. Given the nature, limitations and conditions of the asylum process, many people with sufficient material and non-material resources choose to use alternative ways to reach Europe such as job applications, education and family reunification. Dedeoğlu and Genç (2017) found that factors that influence the inflow of migrants include economic prosperity and per capita income, distance from the country of origin (including travel costs), level of urbanization (greater variety of jobs available), density of migrant social networks providing assistance and information to new migrants and political stability.

Migration is a relatively new phenomenon in the Czech Republic, which has gradually become a destination country due to its positive economic performance but also political stability and security. The economic necessity of immigration notwithstanding, securitisation and politicisation of migration in the Czech domestic discourse has created a great deal of public anxiety. We have witnessed what Lahav (2004: 1162) identified as the majority’s fear that migrants would destabilise “national and cultural identity”. The fear has been particularly strong in the case of Muslims combining post-2001 Islamophobia with the 2015

and 2016 EU migration crisis. Like the other Eastern European EU member states, the Czech Republic has a complicated history of national sovereignty and feels threatened by transnationalism related to the postmodern migration flows. Its public discourse on migration has been controlled by methodological nationalism, which considers the nation-state a natural unit and equates society with it (cf. Wimmer – Glick Schiller 2002). Furthermore, the violation of state sovereignty by the process of EU integration has pushed the nation states to “prove their status” in areas like migration (Nachmani 2016: 343).

The attitude of the receiving state is complemented with the reality of diaspora life. While former studies focused on archetypal diasporas and the “return to the imagined homeland”, the more recent ones discuss “linkages across borders” (Faist 2010: 12) and “multiplicity of spaces” (Aksel 2013) as actual borders have declined in importance. The post-WW2 emphasis on everyone having to belong somewhere and everyone having to belong to only one nation (seen as a privilege) has been undermined by the increase in transnational politics since the 1990s. The revolution in technologies and decrease in transportation prices led to an increase in transborder activities. Diaspora creates “collective memory and insistence on multiplicity of diasporic identity [is relevant] to the social, political, and economic practices of diasporic communities” (Malek 2016: 26). A rising number of migrants commute between the home and host countries, invest and trade goods. Another issue is the mobilisation of the diaspora, its sense of belonging and identities, the narrative of departure and the idea of home(s). This is linked to the relationship of the home country with its citizens abroad, which bears possible positive and negative outcomes, where in the latter case, the homeland is said to hamper integration. National background becomes an easy distinguishing point for identifying “us” and “them”. Generally, loyalty and ties to the home country are seen as a problem for migrants’ integration, i.e. social cohesion, because members of the diaspora are seen as compatriots and the country of origin wishes to preserve their “national character”, sometimes trying to engage them in domestic political battles abroad.

While European and Czech attention have been recently directed mostly to the refugees arriving through Turkey as a transit country, the rising authoritarianism of the Turkish government that escalated after the 2016 failed coup and the deteriorating economic and security situation in the country have been major push factors leading to a steady increase in an exodus of Turkish citizens. While research has been mapping the developments in those EU countries which traditionally have large Turkish minorities such as Germany and the Netherlands, there has been little attempt to investigate the structure of current Turkish migration to Central Europe. Recently, Turks have become the single largest Muslim community in the Czech Republic and it is possible that they want to settle in the country for a longer period of time. This paper focuses on the position of Turkish migrants in the specific context of the Czech

Republic. The objective is to define the nature of Turkish migration to the Czech Republic as part of broader migration patterns, where the country has become a destination country for an increasing number of migrants. It investigates the Turkish community's assessment of adaptation to the Czech environment and their position within the wider Turkish diaspora policy. I argue that that the non-transparent Czech immigration policy and Czech Islamophobia are potential factors influencing the adaptation process of the Turkish community, which might affect their decision to remain in the country. Furthermore, the small size of the Turkish community can hamper the migrants' social life, who might wish to maintain strong ties with the homeland and the diaspora community in Europe.

The Turkish diaspora in Europe

Turkish national identity was built on Turkification and immigration of Turks from neighbouring countries and on policies leading to direct and indirect expulsion of ethnic minorities. Since the 1960s, the Turkish government signed labour agreements with several countries providing "guest workers" helping the country's excess labour and enabling the flow of remittances. Economic migration peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s and was followed since 1975 by family reunification making the migration more permanent, together with political migration of leftists and Kurds after the 1980 military coup. Another wave of political migrants came from the "Kurdish" regions in the 1990s.² The early 2000s witnessed a declining trend³ of Turkish migration to Europe due to the economic and political reforms of the new Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the increasing standard of living in the country, which increasingly made Turkey a destination country as well. Prior to the 2016 failed coup, Turkish-born migrants accounted for 2.9 million people (2014–2015), of which 2.5 lived in Europe, thus Turks were the second largest migrant group in Europe after Moroccans; more than half lived in Germany, followed by France and the Netherlands (De Bel-Air 2016).

A new wave of Turkish emigration started after the failed coup of 2016, after which the economic situation and political freedoms deteriorated in the country (see Table 1).⁴ According to the official figures from the Turkish Statistical

2 There are thirteen regions in Turkey, where a majority of the population are ethnic Kurds. They are located in the south-east and east of the country. These include İğdir, Tunceli, Bingöl, Muş, Ağrı, Adiyaman, Diyarbakır, Siirt, Bitlis, Van, Şanlıurfa, Mardin and Hakkâri.

3 The numbers of asylum applications had declined already earlier. For instance, in Germany, 25,514 Turks applied for political asylum in 1995, which dropped to 8,968 in 2000 and to 1,365 in 2014 (De Bel-Air 2016).

4 The 2019 Economist Intelligence Unit report labelled Turkey a hybrid regime, falling by 10 points from the previous year. With a total of 4.37 points (placing between Palestine and Gambia), it scored the lowest of Western European countries, ranking 110th in the world and for six years has been experiencing

Institute (TÜİK), a total of 69,326 Turks left the country in 2016, followed by a sharp increase in 2017 (113,326) and another increase in 2018 (136,740). Eurostat data showed that over 42,000 Turks sought asylum in the EU in 2018 and 2019, thus, a majority left Turkey without applying for asylum. According to a January 2019 Dutch report, the number of Turks looking for employment in the country doubled since 2016 (an increase from 540 to 1020 of Turkish university graduates between 2016 and 2018), with their reasons citing “the shortage of freedoms in the country” and the economic situation. Başer and Korkmaz (2018: 2) found that the people leaving Turkey since 2016 represented mostly “privileged, educated citizens.” Obtaining passports and a Schengen visa has become costly⁵ for Turkish citizens, and only the more privileged can try to look for employment abroad or can apply for the so-called golden visa (through investment or purchase of property) – in 2018, 10% of Turkish millionaires left the country.

Table 1: First time asylum applications from Turkey

	EU-28	Germany	Greece	France	Czech Republic
2014	4,415	1,565	30	1,400	0
2015	4,180	1,490	35	1,015	0
2016	10,105	5,385	180	1,005	30
2017	14,655	8,030	1,820	1,285	20
2018	22,075	10,160	4,820	2,045	30
2019	20,490 (Jan-Oct)	10,775	3,790	3,175 (Jan-Nov)	20 (Jan-Nov)

Source: Eurostat 2019.

Turkey is one of the countries, which actively seek to maintain contact with its citizens and its diaspora policy has a decades long history. Aydin (2014: 8) noted that the Turkish government has pursued a “defensive policy of influence and identity” trying to strengthen the ties and loyalty to the country. The 1980 coup marked the beginning of an era when the Turkish regime sought to secure the diaspora’s support while acquiring influence over them and the host countries. Turkey supported “incorporation in host societies [and discouraged] cultural

a decline (Economist 2020). IHS Markit (2018) evaluated the risk rating of Turkey as elevated (political and operational), high (legal, tax and security) and severe (economic). For a more detailed analysis, see the full report.

5 In 2020, a Turkish passport valid for 10 years cost 1,155 Turkish lira (TL, around 196 USD), while the minimum wage was 2,325 TL in 2020. The Schengen visa was raised from 60 to 80 € in February 2020, which was an additional 526 TL. Most applicants receive a single-entry short-term visa and have to go through the costly and sometimes time-consuming process repeatedly. The government also cancelled the passports of many people and/or restricted their travels abroad.

and political assimilation” (De Bel-Air 2016: 1). Article 62 of the 1982 Turkish Constitution stated that: “The State shall take the necessary measures to ensure family unity, the education of children, the cultural needs, and the social security of Turkish citizens working abroad, safeguard their ties with the home country and help them on their return home.”⁶ A further aim was to strengthen the Muslim identity of Turks abroad,⁷ while supporting their integration in the host country and their active role in domestic politics (Aydin 2014). Thus, the main features of the Turkish diaspora policy combined integration incentives with Kemalist nationalism and Islam. It provided possibilities for strong emotional bonds to Turkey while separating Turks from the other migrant groups.

In the 1980s, Turkey also allowed Turkish citizens to hold dual citizenship and vote at customs several weeks before the elections. In the 1990s, Turks without Turkish citizenship received Pink cards (today Blue Cards), Turkish political parties could set up branches abroad, and institutional changes were later made under the office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Labour to assist Turks abroad and collect information about the challenges they faced. In 2010, the government set up a new agency, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), and defined its three objectives: “... to protect the family structure, socio-cultural values of our diaspora and the transmission of them to future generations...”. Thus, the government has become increasingly proactive, especially in countries with sizeable Turkish minorities.

The diaspora experience depends on the migrants’ preferable identity, how they relate their “localized knowledge to various socially constructed, nested imaginaries” (Vainikka 2016: 9). It would be a mistake to consider the Turkish diaspora a monolithic group of people. While some arrived in Europe as economic migrants, others came because they felt their lifestyle or political rights were threatened. Some developed a transnational diaspora identity, others could be better defined as living in an exile mentality. The distinction is often blurred due to the situation in the receiving country, the nature and complexity of Turkish migration patterns, and the complex domestic economic, political and social factors. Leaving aside the specifics of the receiving country, the polarisation of the Turkish society and politics is present and visible in the Turkish communities. The timing and reasons for leaving the country influence

6 After the 1980, Kurds and Alevis were not included in the definition of Turkish emigrants and into the definition of Turkishness unlike the Turks who lived in the former Ottoman lands or even people of broader Turkic origins.

7 Article 136 of the 1982 Constitution stated that “The Department of Religious Affairs [Diyanet], which is within the general administration, shall exercise its duties prescribed in its particular law, in accordance with the principles of secularism, removed from all political views and ideas, and aiming at national solidarity and integrity” thus linking nationalism with religion in the long history of discussion on the specific nature of Turkish Islam, which dates back to the nineteenth century and aims at Turkifying Islam or Islamising Turkishness (Sunier – van der Linden – van de Bovenkamp 2016) and in the post-1980 coup era became known as the Turkish-Islam synthesis.

the migrants' perception of Turkey, relations with other members of the community and the plans for return.

Given the migration discourse in the EU and the nature of the Turkish diaspora, Dedeoğlu and Genç (2015) mention two factors in the debate on Turkish migrants: their integration and future migration patterns. The latter concerns the debate about possible future Turkish membership in the EU, the visa liberalisation programme linked to the 2016 EU-Turkey refugee deal and more generally the migration flows of Turkish and non-Turkish citizens from Turkey, which have been used by the critics of Turkish EU membership ever since Turkey became an EU candidate country. The discussion on their integration often involved matters of loyalty, language, citizenship and dominant culture. Much of the debate also relates to the assessment of the current political situation in Turkey, the role of Islam in Turkish national identity, and in some cases the position of the Kurdish minority in Turkey. The perception of successful integration varies by country and is largely affected by the history of migration, the characteristics of the migrant community, and the nature of immigration policies in the country. It is therefore affected by a multitude of economic, political, social and cultural factors.⁸

The Czech Republic

Although the Czech Republic has a relatively low share of foreigners per capita,⁹ the number of foreigners with permanent and temporary residency has been increasing since 2001, recently affected by the persisting labour shortages in the country. At the end of 2018, 564,345 foreigners lived in the Czech Republic, most frequently Ukrainians, Slovaks and the Vietnamese. By the end of 2018, foreign nationals constituted 12.4% of the total employment in the Czech Republic. Table 2 summarizes additional basic data on foreign nationals in the country.

Czechs exhibit relatively hostile attitudes to foreigners. In 2018, 58% of Czechs saw foreigners as a problem (73% in 2003); 64% believed that foreigners increased crime rates, and 62% believed foreigners represented a health risk, while the number of people claiming foreigners increased total unemployment has steadily decreased from 79% in 2014 to 41% in 2018. The share of people who believed foreigners threatened the Czech way of life has increased in absolute terms since 2009 (46%, respectively 36%) but had had a declining trend since 2016 when it peaked at 53%. Only 20% believed that foreigners helped solve the problems of ageing society and that they contributed to economic growth. Similarly, only 18% believed they enriched the local culture. People in Bohemia were more likely to say that foreigners were not a problem while

8 For variations across multiple countries, see e.g. Dedeoğlu and Genç (2015).

9 It ranked 19th in the EU-28: CR 4.9%, EU-28 average 9% (ČSÚ 2019).

Moravians were more likely to say that no foreigners lived in their area. People who personally knew foreigners or had foreigners as friends were more likely to say that foreigners were not a problem (CVVM 2018).

Table 2: Selected Data on Foreign Nationals in the Czech Republic (31/12/2018)

Number of foreigners	Total Women EU nationals Third country nationals	564,345 244,768 () 232,493 331,852
Most frequent citizenship of foreigners	Ukraine Slovakia Vietnam Other	23% 21% 11% 45%
Most frequent place of settlement	Prague Stredocesky Jihomoravsky	205,595 76,393 50,351
Foreigners by category of residence	Permanent residence Temporary residence EU nationals Long-term residence Long-term visa Asylum	289,459 145,177 113,793 15,916 2,586
Foreigners by age	0-19 20-29 30-44 45-59 60 and +	79,126 91,598 210,202 129,952 53,467
Employment of foreigners	Total Employees Self-employed	658,600 568,500 89,800

Source ČSÚ 2019, 2020.

The lack of comfort with becoming a destination country has been translated into a more restrictive immigration policy both on the level of political statements and policy implementation, which have witnessed a number of discrepancies and inconsistencies. Šimáčková (2018:10) noted that the CR has become a destination country due to the values and principles it offers to its population. These are what the immigrants seek, i.e., rule of law and protection of human rights, but the failure to protect the rights of the foreigners raises the question, how they can identify with the country's fundamental principles, when the Czech immigration and asylum laws are "exceptionally inconsistent, incomprehensible and parts of it have been declared repeatedly by the Constitutional court as unconstitutional" (12). She noted that the immigration laws, their execution and judicial practice violate rule of law based on transparency, clarity

and enforceability and the equality of all people. The administrative proceedings were also often problematic and the country did not seem to know whether it wanted foreigners or not and if so, which ones. Until applying for permanent residency, there were no integration requirements, which were more extensive only in the case of citizenship applications. People under international protection and asylum applicants were also not required to integrate into society except for children at the compulsory education age (Šimáčková 2018). This brings the question as to whether the current Czech integration policy matches the new position of a destination country for an increasing variety of migrants and whether it can address the legitimate concerns of the Czech public regarding the diversity of the migration patterns.

In many European countries, Islam is seen as the religion of the underclass because their Muslim communities were a result of post-WW2 labour migration, which filled low-skilled jobs. In Central Europe, however, there have been no significant Muslim migrant communities. The majority population see Muslims, however, as uneducated, violent and dangerous, thus, they evoke hate and hostility. In a 2018 survey, while 80% of Czechs did not know any Muslim personally, 35% claimed they would not like to have a Muslim co-worker, 81% opposed the idea their children had a Muslim partner, and 35% would not like their child to attend school with a Muslim child. 52% did not agree that Muslims could obtain Czech citizenship. The terrorist attacks in Europe also led to fears about Muslim terrorists and their radicalization in Europe. The survey revealed that while fear of Muslims did not distinguish much between Arabs and Muslims from other Muslim countries (feared by 79, and 78% respectively), the number was only slightly lower for the Balkans and post-Soviet republics (70%), somewhat lower for Czech converts (61%), and lowest but still high for second generation Muslims living in the country (51%). The survey revealed a very positive correlation between respondents with general xenophobia and a rejecting position towards Muslims (95% of respondents with a high level of xenophobia had a closed view of Muslims as compared to 29% of people displaying low levels of xenophobia) (Idnes.cz 2018). Schiffauer (2007) summarised the European reservations about Islam as incompatibility with democracy, an authoritarian family (patriarchy, misogyny, domestic violence) and fundamentalism. The host society determines who is a bad and good Muslim based on the subjective degree of religiosity. A good Muslim is seen as a person, who is not religious and does not follow the rules of the religion, and is thus seen as capable of integration into the host society. Much of this also applies to the Czech context, where some of the migration anxiety is caused by the Islamophobic feelings described above, which together with the current setting of the Czech immigration policy and the politicisation of the issue can potentially hamper the adaptation process of the migrants coming from the Muslim countries, who might already feel culturally marginalised from the host country.

Method

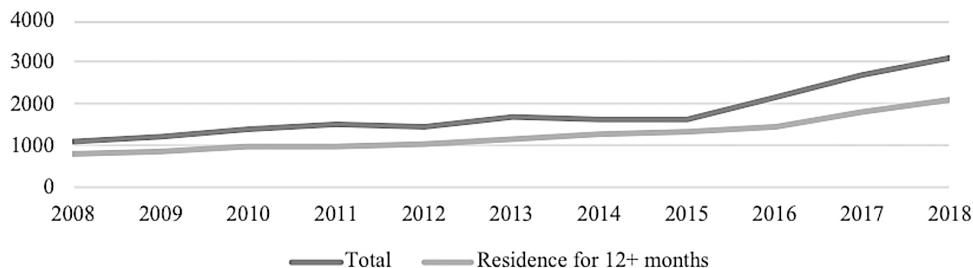
Our study analysed the state of research on migration in the specific context of the Turkish diaspora in Europe. The empirical part relied on available statistical data about foreigners in the Czech Republic obtained from the Czech Statistical office (ČSÚ 2018). The overview of the data for the Turkish citizens is summarised in Annex 1. These data were complemented with data collected from an online survey, which was distributed in Turkish in two Turkish-Czech Facebook groups between 20 July and 17 August 2019. The first group, Turci v Česku/Çek Cumhuriyeti'deki Türkler is a private Facebook group with 1,199 members created in 2012. The second group, Česko Turecko/Çek Türk, has 1,965 members. It is a private group created in 2013 by the Czech-Turkish community of the same name. A total of 98 responses were obtained. The questionnaire combined close and open-ended questions, which enabled a more thorough analysis of the data obtained. Its aim was to map the level of adaptation into Czech society and the attitudes of the Turkish diaspora in the country, which could not be obtained from the general data available from the Czech Statistical Office. The questions were divided into two main groups. The integration level was measured based on selected aspects identified by the World Migration report (2015) as the most frequent obstacles faced by migrants, i.e. language barrier, legal and administrative barriers, discrimination and xenophobia. The second pool of questions focused on several features identified with the diaspora as discussed above, i.e. the connection with the country of origin and engagement with local and transnational diaspora. The link to the home country was measured by questions about the following domestic politics in the Turkish media and generally news about Turkey, by the frequency of their visits to Turkey, their reasons for leaving Turkey, the plans for returning to Turkey but also the level of trust in the Turkish embassy. Annexes 2 and 3 provide the results of the close-ended questions and the population summary. The main limitations were the sampling and distribution of the questionnaire in the Facebook groups, thus, we also relied on the ČSÚ data on the Turkish community in the country. Another problem was distrust on the part of some respondents, which was clear in the board discussions but also in the lower response rates for some questions, which focused on their political preferences and the evaluation of the Turkish embassy.

Findings

The Turkish community in the Czech Republic is small but its numbers have been rising (see Annex 1). Graph 1 shows the increase since 2016; in 2017 Turkey entered the top 25 groups of immigrants in the Czech Republic for the first

time; it is now the sixth largest European third country nationals' group and the largest Muslim community in the country.¹⁰

Graph 1: Number of Turkish Citizens Legally Residing in the Czech Republic (2008–2018)

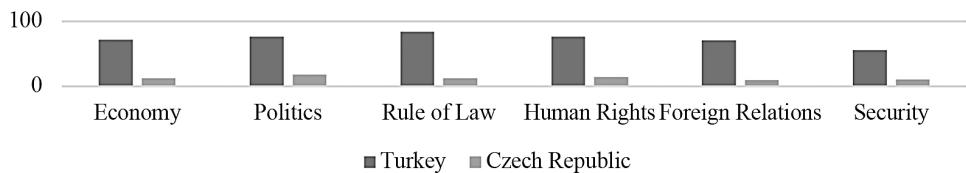


Source: own results

The Czech Republic is not the top country of choice for Turks, but the increase in the immigration numbers indicates that Turkish push factors and Czech pull factors have affected Turkish migration flows since 2016. The possibility of having or finding employment seemed very important in the decision as much as the economic situation in Turkey. Economic reasons were the most often stated primary motives both to leave Turkey and to come to the Czech Republic. The ČSÚ and our data indicated that the Turkish community preferred to settle in the largest and most diverse urban centres in the country, which also had the lowest unemployment rates. The second and third most common reasons for choosing the Czech Republic were family and education. The ability to obtain a family visa provided a significant pull factor and facilitated the integration process including knowledge of the environment and the ability to find an occupation. The relatively low cost of education and universities with international programmes also served as noticeable pull factors. Our data also confirmed the argument of Dedeoğlu and Genç (2017) that political (in)stability can serve as a secondary push and pull factor: the respondents ranked political instability among top five problems in Turkey today (together with unemployment, inflation and terrorism) and evaluated the political situation in Turkey as poor or very poor while the evaluation of the situation in the Czech Republic was positive on all accounts asked (see Graph 2).

¹⁰ The only country with a majority Muslim population that has more foreigners living the Czech Republic is Kazakhstan, where over 70% of the population is Muslim but due to the Soviet past and despite the more recent religious revival in the country, the level of religiosity is relatively low compared with many other Muslim countries.

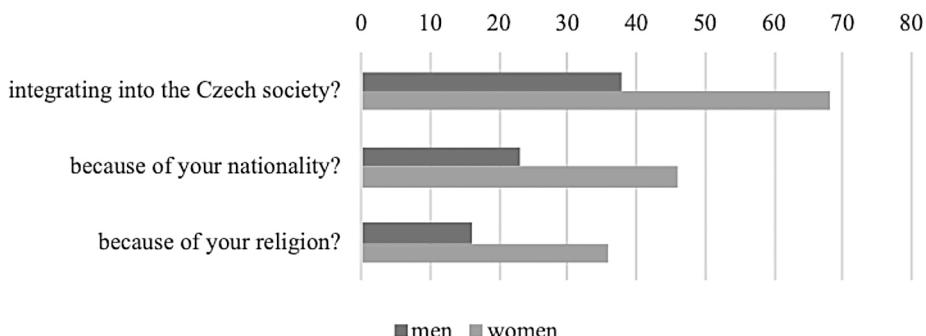
Graph 2: The current situation is poor or very poor in the following areas (%)



Source: own results

Generally, the respondents indicated their will to integrate into Czech society. A majority spoke Czech, did not plan to leave the country in the near future, planned to apply for Czech citizenship and once eligible, vote in the Czech elections. Their children were mostly receiving education in Czech (if applicable).¹¹ When self-evaluating the ability to adapt to Czech society, a majority (58%) claimed they did not face any problems. Those who did were most likely to encounter problems with finding accommodation, with finding friends and having a social life, with the authorities including the police, with access to health care and with finding a job. The region and size of the settlement did not seem to influence problems with integration unlike the sex of the respondent. Women were far more likely to report problems (see graph 3), which will require additional information to identify the causes of this discrepancy.

Graph 3: "Have you encountered any problems ... "



Source: own results

Among the things mentioned that the Czech government could improve in their services to the respondents (and their families, if relevant) were better

¹¹ Annex 1 shows that the number of Turkish children enrolled in Czech schools is very low but the data can be influenced by the number of children, who are dual citizens, thus, are not recorded as foreigners.

integration policies including teaching Czech, adaptation training, consultancy, better access to health care (including birth and post-birth assistance), less bureaucracy and introduction of e-government and English-speaking staff at the departments handling immigration affairs. Although a slight majority of the respondents declared their knowledge of Czech, for many language barrier was one of the crucial problems in their adaptation process and some even considered leaving the country for this reason. While a majority (57%) of the respondents did not consider moving to another country, those who did (32%) most often complained about the low standard of living but also the language barrier, racism, cultural differences and the related problems with socialisation. These respondents were also more likely to report problems with integrating into Czech society and discrimination based on their nationality. The respondents, who reported discrimination based on their nationality, mentioned general racism and prejudice in society but also racism in governmental offices.

The Czech perception of Turkey is to some extent perceived as affecting the majority's approach to the Turkish migrants. The long-standing good relations between the two countries are little known.¹² While the official relations are stable, the public has become increasingly critical. The European Council on Foreign Relations (Aydintasbas 2018) evaluated the Czech-Turkish relations as characterised by declining support for Turkish EU membership among the Czech public due to perception of increasing authoritarianism. Czechs considered the post-2016 Turkish development as a violation of human rights and democracy and did not welcome the changing Turkish relationship with Russia and Israel. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was the least trusted foreign leader in 2016 (yet, most people did not know what he looked like). Czech society's view of Turkey was also affected by the strong representation of the Kurdish perspective on the Turkish "Kurdish problem" and rising Czech anti-Islamism both projected into the understanding of the Turkish involvement in Syria and affecting the perception that the Turkish regime has become increasingly undemocratic. The relations between the countries hit the lowest point during the Salih Muslim crisis in February 2018.¹³

The survey respondents viewed the relationship between Turkey and the CR as mostly neutral/normal (33%) or bad/insufficient (30%) while only 18% assessed it as good. One respondent described the relations as defined by "lack of information and interest" while another stated that the two countries

12 Few people are aware that the relations between the two countries date back to the post-WWI era and continued even during the Cold War era. The first agreement between the two countries was signed in 1924 and several agreements were also signed between Turkey and socialist Czechoslovakia and with the Czech Republic in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Some of the recent agreements facilitated cooperation in terms of double taxation, pensions and social security.

13 The former Syrian Kurdish leader was arrested in Prague and Turkey requested his extradition on terrorism charges but the Czech court released him, which Turkey called "scandalous" (BBC 2018) and against international law.

crossed paths only during the Salih Muslim crisis. One other respondent argued that the Czech Republic was siding with the Americans, which could indirectly damage its relations with Turkey. The respondents also recorded the impact on the negative view of Turkey on their integration into society. Several people complained about racist or discriminatory remarks and behaviour in business and social relations. One respondent noted that people's reactions to him changed when they learnt he was Turkish, so he began saying he was from Cyprus. While none of the respondents directly associated the perceived discriminatory treatment of Turks with the current political situation in Turkey, they recorded that the anti-Turkish attitudes were influenced by the anti-Islam discourse as documented in most of the respondent' personal stories. One respondent stated that even though not religious, being Turkish "I was inevitably subjected to the same treatment" as Muslims. Another noted that when hearing Turkey, Czechs directly think Muslim and do not want to have any contact.

When specifically asked about problems related to their religion, only 16% declared they experienced problems in their workplace, social life and school.¹⁴ One person stated that Czechs did not like foreigners, but especially Muslims. Some respondents, while declaring they did not have any religious beliefs, complained about the anti-Muslim attitudes in the country, while another said he was happy he was not Muslim in this country. Several personal stories were provided when answering this question. One female respondent noted that her son attending primary school was told that he was a Muslim terrorist, and another female respondent wearing a headscarf reported that the glances and prejudiced behaviour were pushing her to insulation from social life. She found it "impossible to find job or friends." The personal stories also included cases of verbal and physical assaults on a friend with a headscarf and the rejection of medical assistance to a covered woman. Generally, those experiencing problems believed that Muslims were not welcome in the Czech Republic and that their religion was causing social problems and issues with finding a job. These perceptions were also reflected in the declared plan to leave the country.

These responses indicated that while Turks were not all that visibly different from the majority in terms of complexion and dress, except for women wearing headscarves, some people perceived them as primarily Muslim. This was affected by the widespread belief that for Muslims, their first source of identification is their religion, which increases hostility together with the belief that Muslims cannot successfully integrate and that they come from poorer countries, and thus, some people "look down upon them" (Nachmani 2016). Paul and Becker (2017: 141–142, 152) argued that Turks were more likely to highlight their similarities with Europeans than Arabs and were actually critical of Arabs and

¹⁴ Some of the anti-Muslim attitudes were recorded, however, in the question on discrimination based on their nationality.

disliked being confused with them: “prioritizing and emphasizing national identity/culture facilitates stigma management”, which could also be found in some of our responses. Several respondents complained that Czechs viewed Turks as Arabs but one respondent noted that the problem with perceiving Turks as Arabs and all Arabs as terrorists was commonplace in Europe in general.

Paul and Becker (2017: 141–142) argued that Turks also dealt with the “Muslim stigma” by emphasizing traditional Turkish hospitality, friendliness, love for children and generosity. The respondents described the local Turkish community as family, close friends and business contacts and defined its members as warm, social, hard-working, well educated, secular and well-integrated people. The negative descriptions of the Turkish community were infrequent and criticised selfishness and pretentious behaviour. The self-descriptions fit the national perspective on Turkish culture defined in Turkey as related to the Central Asian Turkic tradition and different from Arabs (“with their strange views of women and their theocratic political systems”) but also the West (and “its excessive and exploitative nature”) because it builds on “strong family ties, respect for elders and unconditional love of, and commitment to, children... loneliness is a rare phenomenon... the foremost motivation of individuals is not greed... racism seems distant from everyone’s mind” (Iskenderoglu, quoted in Nachmani 2016: 329).

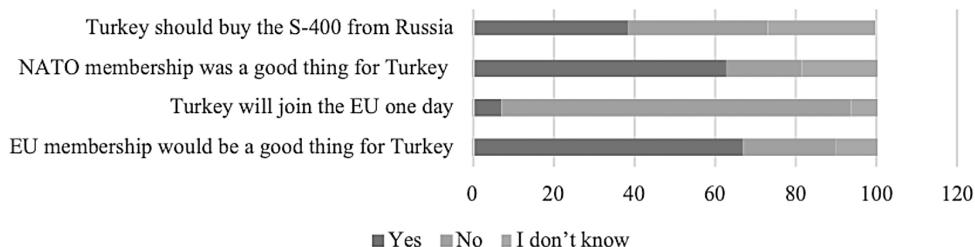
Our results confirm the discomfort some Czechs feel with foreigners and Muslims in particular. There is a question whether Czechs perceive the Turkish migrants primarily as Turks or as Muslims but the image is in both cases highly problematic due to Islamophobia and the unpopularity of the Turkish regime. Collective responsibility is often applied, when Turks are expected to show shame for the violence caused by their government or by Muslims. Given that the negative view of the Turkish regime in Czech society is connected with President Erdogan, who is perceived by the Czechs as an Islamist, there might be a political connection as to how the Czechs perceive the Turks.

Another important aspect was the existence of an (at least on some level) organised local Turkish community, with its activities and links to Turkey or other communities abroad. Vainikka (2016: 17) argued that “the sense of security and freedom, shared values, discourses of trust, conventional practices and comfort in the way of living contribute to seeing national communities as objects of emotional identification.” Two thirds of the respondents were in contact with Turks in their current place of residence, only one respondent did not know about Turks living in the area, which could be caused by his recent arrival, and the small size and geography of his residency in the country. Half the respondents were aware of events and activities organized by the Turks in their neighbourhood and of those informed, a slight majority participated in these events. Among those who were not aware of the events in the area, 62% declared they would like to attend. The links to Turks in other European countries

were less common, 44% had contacts with Turks in other European countries. It is worth noting that those who planned to leave the Czech Republic were considering Germany (46%), the Netherlands (41%) and the UK (33%). The fact that these countries have significant Turkish minorities could be a factor in the decision, because those considering the move expected not only better living conditions but also a better social life.

The mobilization of Turkish immigrants can represent an opportunity but also a challenge to the Turkish state and the host country. In recent debates about Turkish nationals in other European countries, one hears about the level of control the Turkish government has over its diaspora and some worry about the Turkish diaspora being the “fifth column” especially linked to the spread of conservative social values and Islam (Aydin 2014). Our findings indicate that the Turkish community in the CR maintained close ties with Turkey. More than half visited Turkey at least once a year (55%) and they were quite engaged in following the events in the home country; 92% followed the news in Turkey, usually combining various sources but mostly relying on the Internet (93%) and the social media (77%), but also news from family and friends (53%). The involvement in Turkish politics was strong through elections – 85% of Turks voted or planned to vote in Turkish elections. The political views of the respondents were pro-European and pro-Western (see Graph 3).

Graph 4: Selected Foreign Policy Views



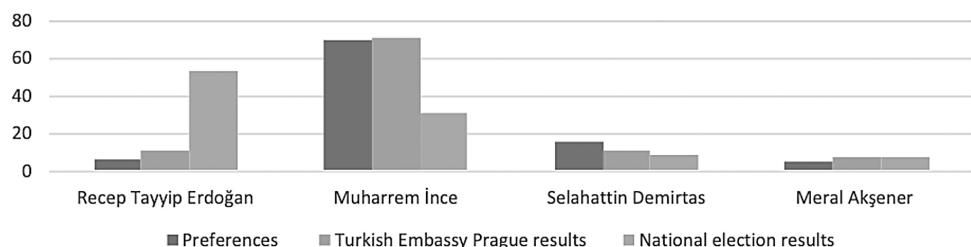
Source: own results

The respondents and the official results of the Turkish embassy in Prague from the 2018 presidential election also showed high support politically for the main opposition candidate Muharrem Ince (Republican People's Party, CHP) and low support for Recep Tayyip Erdogan (see Graph 4).¹⁵ This clearly distinguished

¹⁵ Given the fact that some of the respondents did not vote in Prague due to their arrival to the country and their registration as voters (while 80% claimed they voted in the Turkish election, the 2018 presidential election had a 53% turnout in Prague), the sampling limits of the online survey through the social media, and the fact that 9 respondents did not answer the question, the numbers correspond well with the results announced by the Turkish embassy in Prague except for the results of Erdogan.

the Czech Turkish community from the diaspora in some EU countries with a more numerous Turkish community, where President Erdogan won and with a higher percentage than in Turkey.¹⁶ The support for the CHP candidate could also explain the relatively low perception of religious discrimination in the country as recorded by the respondents (discussed above) because the CHP electorate are generally non-religious, secular voters (cf. Ciddi 2009).

Graph 5: Support for presidential candidates, 2018 election



Note: voter turnout in Prague 53%, total diaspora turnout was 48.8%

Source: own results, Sabah 2018.

Unlike for instance Germany, the Turkish government does not seem to have a strong ally in the Turkish diaspora in the CR, where many Turks do not support the AKP and negatively assess the political and economic situation in Turkey. The service of the Turkish embassy in Prague was generally assessed as not particularly good, with only 20% of the respondents finding it very good and good and 68% claiming that the embassy should provide more services than it did. These included organizing events which would support the Turkish community (meeting of Turks, connecting Turkish children with their Turkish culture and language, social gatherings, educational activities, and economic opportunities; all these should have a regular programme) but also improving Turkey's image in the host society, promoting Turkish culture and Turkey in general. The demand to help increase the cohesion of the Turkish community and "unity" was particularly frequent.

The findings confirm Aydin's argument (2014) that most Turks maintain very close relations with the home country and wanted to keep their "lively connections"; they especially agreed on the need to preserve the culture and language as links to the motherland. The embassy did not seem all that active, however,

¹⁶ While the comparison is not the focus of the study, we also need to note that the diaspora turnout was quite low and much lower than in Turkey, thus, the results might not represent the views of the Turkish diaspora in general. Erdogan received the highest number of votes in Austria (72.3%, voter turnout 48.9%), in the Netherlands (73%, voter turnout 46.7%) and in Belgium (74.9%, voter turnout 53.6%). For more see Sabah 2018.

in supporting the local Turkish community. The website of the embassy does not inform about any activities for local Turkish citizens or links to the official diaspora programmes of the Turkish government.¹⁷ Thus, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) does not seem to be interested in supporting Turkish diaspora activities in the country including those directly related to its proclaimed goals such as education of children. When asked about classes teaching children Turkish and helping their families socialize, the embassy's reaction was limited to supply of books in Turkish (M.C. 2020).¹⁸ Several projects involving children of the Turkish community are currently under preparation, all without the direct involvement of the embassy. While asking for more services, the responses revealed ambivalent levels of trust in the embassy: 41% trusted it and 37% did not, while a relatively high share of the respondents refused to answer the question (24%). This might also be related to the claims that the Turkish embassy had been spying on the citizens in Prague (and other European cities), who were critical of President Erdogan and affiliated with the Gülen movement,¹⁹ as claimed by the pro-Gülenist news portal Nordic Monitor (Bozkurt 2019).²⁰

At the same time, the respondents demanded more assistance with their life in the country from the embassy such as receiving information in Turkish about the visa and residency application processes, housing, health care, transportation, diploma recognition, employment opportunities – generally services facilitating their early adaptation, but also assisting their long-term integration such as organizing Czech language courses and learning about bilateral agreements concerning social policy and retirement rights. This indicated the dissatisfaction with the work of the embassy but indirectly also the insufficiency of the Turkish support groups and the inadequacy of the integration services available to immigrants in the CR including the availability and awareness about the Czech integration centres.

¹⁷ This might change after the new ambassador Egemen Bağış was appointed in autumn 2019. He met with various Czech-Turkish groups active in the country and is planning to organize a one week cultural festival in Prague in June 2020. More specific information is not available at the moment but the aim is to promote Turkey in the Czech Republic and strengthen the ties of the Turkish community.

¹⁸ The interview with the president of a Czech-Turkish association, which cooperates with the embassy on cultural affairs, was conducted on 21 February 2020. The interviewee wanted to remain anonymous so we do not provide the full name of the association.

¹⁹ A social-religious movement built around the preacher Fethullah Gülen formed an informal alliance with the AKP until 2013. The government holds it responsible for the 2016 failed coups. For more, see e.g. Tungul (2018).

²⁰ The article claimed that they had been “targeted by a campaign of intimidation and harassment and denied consular services abroad, while their relatives and friends back in Turkey risked the possibility of jail time, asset seizure and persecution on fabricated criminal charges.”

Conclusion

International migration is a phenomenon, bringing many opportunities but also threats to the host societies, which leads to an increasing hostility to migrants across the Western world. National migration laws are becoming stricter, while politicians and the media are becoming increasingly antagonistic, especially to asylum seekers but also other migrants, who they often associate with disorder and criminality (Snyder 2011). Despite the anti-immigration sentiments in the Czech Republic, it has become a destination country for an increasing number of people. While job insecurity and low income, exacerbated by (possible) political persecution, can be important push factors in a country undergoing a prolonged economic crisis and rising authoritarianism like Turkey, foreigners looking for employment help fight shortages in the host countries like the Czech Republic and can potentially address certain problems of ageing societies. The perceptions of political stability, rule of law and respect for human rights associated with EU membership serve as additional pull factors for third country nationals. The decisions to live abroad or to return to the homeland take into consideration social, economic and political factors. The factors of economic and political stability are complemented with the distance from the country of origin and the ability to reach the kin/host country at an acceptable cost, the existence of possible (transnational) migrant networks, and the standard of living in the kin/host country.

The originally economic push factors of Turkish migration to Europe in the 1960s have developed into a far more complex web of reasons for migration and have affected its patterns and characteristics. While the European public opinion is rather negative about current Turkey, Turkish communities can now be found in all EU countries, including Central Europe. The Turkish diaspora policy and transnational connections between Turks are often seen as obstacles to their successful integration into the host societies and are called the fifth column or Trojan horse. The rising authoritarianism of President Erdogan and the results of the Turkish elections abroad seem to confirm that view in some European countries. The host society blames them for social conservatism and perceives their collective Muslim identity as a problem or even a threat. The political views of the Turks in the Czech Republic do not support this view but it would be interesting to see whether the Czech public would associate the Turkish migrants with pro-Erdogan attitudes due to their nationality or due to the news about the support of the Turkish diaspora for Erdogan in countries like Austria and Germany.

The homeland provides a strong point for identity formation and preservation of the diaspora. The individualised definition of migrants' Turkishness depends on the memory of the life before leaving, the narrative of the departure, the reception and environment in the host country and the relations with the other members of the diaspora and the kin state. They might believe or hope

that one day they will be able to return to the country, when the political situation changes. In their case, the emotion of loyalty to their homeland can be replaced by an emotion of resentment to the country of origin as it stands today. We witness the idealization of the homeland but also the shame of the homeland and these feelings do not have to be mutually exclusive. The people who left because of some political turmoil such as the 1980 military coup, during the Kurdish insurgency or most recently after the 15 July failed coup experienced a “traumatic loss”. They maintained a memory of the place and the trauma and create their own discourse of why they had left the country as witnessed in the case of the Turkish Kurds, and more recently the members of the Gülen movement. In this context, more research is needed to assess the memory and diaspora narratives of selected sections of the Turkish diaspora.

The Turkish community in the Czech Republic has been rising in numbers and the majority of its members seem interested in staying in the country for a longer period of time and in integrating with Czech society. The anti-Islamic feelings might not be sufficient deterrents to migrants coming from Muslim countries because there is a general perception that Islamophobia is on the rise in the West in general. It was apparent that the inconsistencies in Czech immigration policy and the lack of requirements for integration of immigrants has been reflected in the problems the Turkish citizens recorded and the demands they expressed towards the Czech authorities and the Turkish embassy. The evaluation of the level of their integration depends on what the receiving state considers successful integration, which obviously brings substantial differences between individual countries. Thus, it is not only the nature of the diaspora but also the receiving state that define the result. The Czech immigration policy lacks consistent and lucid integration priorities and goals, which would better reflect the position of the destination country and assist with the integration, which is required both on the level of political decisions and policy implementation by the state authorities. Such a policy should reflect the fact that while there are dominant migrant groups, a majority of the migrants come from third countries. They do not therefore have EU citizenship rights, often wish to apply for permanent residency, and many of them will be raising their children in the Czech Republic. Acknowledging and preparing for diversity might contribute to economic prosperity but also political stability and democratic maturity.

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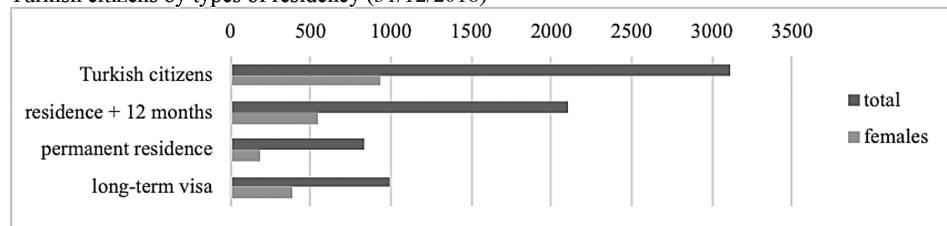
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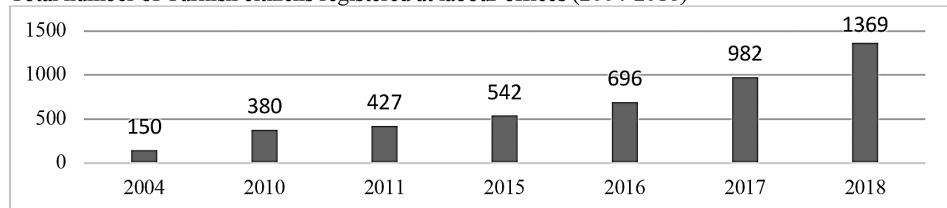
Lucie Tungul graduated from Miami University, Ohio (International Relations), and Palacky University in Olomouc (Politics and European Studies). Her areas of interest are European integration with a special focus on Europeanization, democratization, Euroscepticism, migration processes and identity discourses. She worked as an assistant professor at Fatih University, Istanbul, between 2006 and 2016. She is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Politics and Social Sciences, Law Faculty, Palacky University and Head of Research at the political institute TO-PAZ. Email: lucie.tungul@upol.cz

Annex 1: Selected official data on Turkish citizens in the Czech Republic

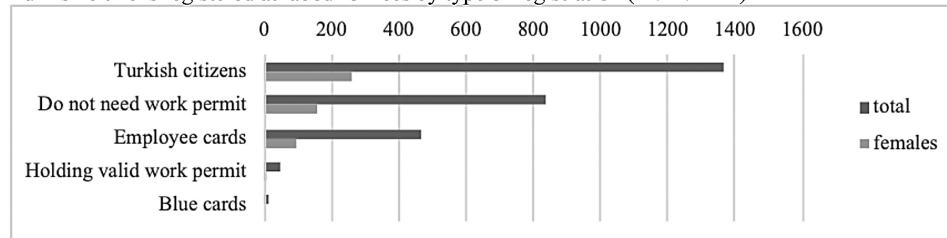
Turkish citizens by types of residency (31/12/2018)



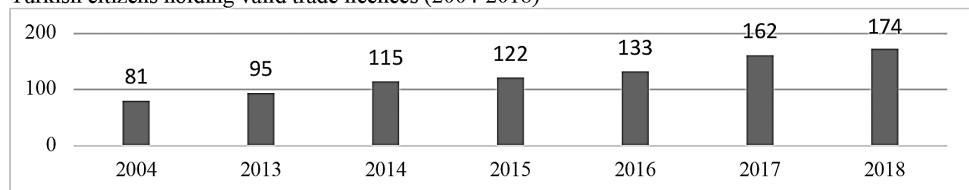
Total number of Turkish citizens registered at labour offices (2004-2018)



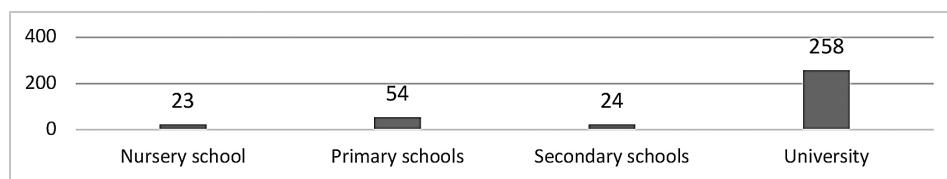
Turkish citizens registered at labour offices by type of registration (31/12/2018)



Turkish citizens holding valid trade licences (2004-2018)



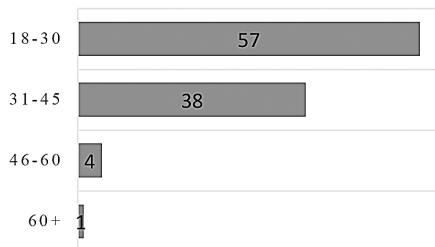
Turkish children, pupils and students enrolled in the Czech education system (31/12/2018)



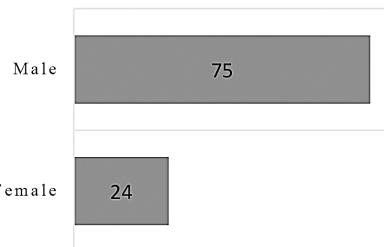
Source: ČSÚ 2019.

Annex 2: Basic sociodemographics of the survey respondents (N=98)

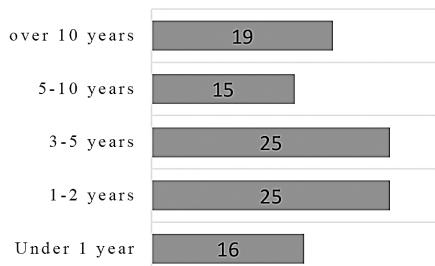
Age



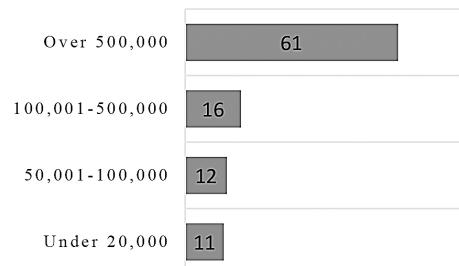
Sex



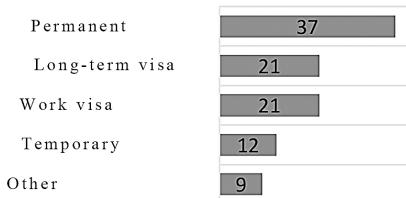
Length of stay in the Czech Republic



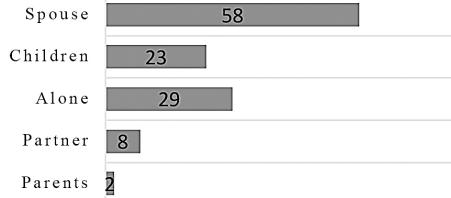
Size of settlement



Type of residency



Household shared with



Annex 3: Summary of selected questions and responses

<i>Do you plan to apply for Czech citizenship?</i>	Yes No Don't know	60% 18% 22%	<i>Your problems with adaption, if any, concerned</i>	<i>Accommodation</i> <i>Social life</i> <i>Police</i> <i>Work permit</i> <i>Health care</i> <i>Finding a job</i>	61% 37% 35% 33% 33% 30%
<i>Do your children (if you have any) receive education in Czech?</i>	Yes No	88% 12%	<i>Have you encountered any problems because of your nationality?</i>	Yes No	26% 74%
<i>Do you visit Turkey?</i>	Yes No If yes, I go Once a year Twice a year/more	94% 6% 55% 26%	<i>Have you had any problems because of your religion?</i>	Yes No	16% 74%
<i>Primary reason to leave Turkey</i>	Economic Family Political Education Other	27% 26% 18% 17% 12%	<i>Are you in contact with other Turks in your area of residence?</i>	Yes No	67% 33%
<i>Why did you choose the Czech Republic?</i>	Occupation Family Education Other	55% 24% 15% 6%	<i>Are you aware of any events or activities organized by other Turkish citizens in your area?</i>	Yes No	50% 50%
<i>Do you plan to move to another country in the near future?</i>	No Yes, reasons: Economic/academic Racism/xenophobia Social/cultural Language barrier	57% 32%, 42% 19% 19% 13%	<i>Do you have regular contacts with Turks in other European countries?</i>	Yes No	43% 57%
<i>Do you plan to move back to Turkey one day?</i>	Yes No If yes, in ... years Less than 5 5-10 More than 10	21% 65% 15% 46% 31%	<i>Do you follow events in Turkey?</i>	Yes No	92% 8%
<i>Which languages other than Turkish you speak?</i>	English Czech German	92% 53% 20%	<i>If yes, you receive information from</i>	Internet Social media Friends/family Television	93% 77% 53% 26%
<i>Have you or your close ones encountered any problems adapting to Czech society?</i>	Yes No	43% 57%	<i>Do you plan to vote in ... elections?</i>	Czech Yes No Turkish Yes No	72% 28% 86% 14%