

## EDITORIAL

# Turkish migrants and their descendants in Austria Patterns of exclusion and individual and political responses<sup>±</sup>

WIEBKE SIEVERS<sup>♦</sup>  
ILKER ATAÇ<sup>★</sup>  
PHILIPP SCHNELL<sup>▲</sup>

### Abstract

Turkish immigrants and their descendants have become the main target of anti-immigrant political mobilization in Austria since the 1990s. They have come to epitomize the image of the Oriental enemy and the Muslim other. Based on these discursive constructions, Muslims in general, and Turks in particular, have often been described as unwilling to integrate into Austrian society. The articles in this special issue show not only that these discourses and exclusionary attitudes may result in discriminatory practices towards Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria, but also that the alleged unwillingness to integrate may be explained by the lack of effort made by the Austrian government and Austrian institutions to integrate this group.

**Keywords:** Turkish immigrants; descendants; Austria; discrimination; exclusion.

### Introduction

“Vienna prefers Turks”. This headline of an article published in the Austrian daily newspaper *Die Presse* on 15 March 1963 can currently be found on one of several posters designed by the NGO *Initiative Minderheiten* (Initiative Minorities) to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the recruitment agreement signed between Turkey and Austria on 15 May 1964, a document putting the

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Lead author is Wiebke Sievers. The remaining authors are listed alphabetically. They contributed equally to this work.

<sup>♦</sup> Wiebke Sievers is Researcher at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Vienna. E-mail: [wiebke.sievers@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:wiebke.sievers@oeaw.ac.at).

<sup>★</sup> Ilker Ataç is Researcher in the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria. E-mail: [ilker.atac@univie.ac.at](mailto:ilker.atac@univie.ac.at).

<sup>▲</sup> Philipp Schnell is Post-doctoral Researcher at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Vienna. E-mail: [philipp.schnell@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:philipp.schnell@oeaw.ac.at).



official stamp on a migration movement that had unofficially started at the beginning of the 1960s (Initiative Minderheiten, 2014). The poster aims to remind the Austrian population of how welcome Turkish migration to Austria was at the time of the economic boom, when Austrian industry was desperately searching for foreign labor to replace Austrians who had emigrated to Germany and Switzerland, where earnings were higher (Mayer, 2009). These welcoming words stand in stark contrast to the anti-Turkish sentiments expressed in slogans such as “Vienna must not become Istanbul” used by the right-wing populist Freedom Party (FPÖ) in the 2005 Viennese elections. Such public anti-Turkish mobilization can be traced back to the 1990s, when immigration became a party political issue in Austria (Bauböck and Perchinig, 2006).

Turkish immigrants and their descendants have since become the main target of anti-immigrant political mobilization, mainly but not exclusively pushed by the FPÖ, which has become a mainstream party gaining 25% of the vote in the 2010 Viennese elections and 20.5% in the 2013 national elections. Turks in Austria have come to epitomize the image of the Oriental enemy in discourses linking them to the two Ottoman Sieges (known as Turkish Sieges in Austria) in 1529 and 1687 that are the founding narratives of the Habsburg Empire and are still of major importance in Austrian school books today (Strasser, 2008; Wodak and Forchtner, 2014). This image of the Oriental other has more recently been combined with the image of the Muslim other, gaining increasing importance in public and political debates in Austria since 2005 (Hödl, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

Based on these discursive constructions, Muslims in general, and Turks in particular, have often been described as unwilling to integrate into Austrian society. In 2006, the Austrian Interior Minister Liese Prokop, of the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), used a survey she commissioned to argue that 45% of all Austrian Muslims are not willing to integrate (Hödl, 2010: 449). More recently, the FPÖ explained away the lower academic achievements of the children of Turkish immigrants as being due to the insufficient will of Turkish immigrants to integrate (Bayrhammer, 2011).

In this special issue dealing with Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria, these discourses and exclusionary attitudes can be regarded as a starting point for the articles in this collection. What impact do such discourses have on the lives of Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria? How do they react to such exclusionary debates? And how far can their alleged unwillingness to integrate be explained by the lack of effort made by the Austrian government and Austrian institutions to integrate this group?

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<sup>1</sup> The largest group of Muslims in Austria is of Turkish origin. The second-largest group is Bosnian Muslims, who have not, however, suffered from the same anti-Muslim sentiments, probably due to the fact that they are regarded as European rather than as Oriental Muslims in Austria (Strasser, 2008: 184).

### The context: Turkish immigration to Austria and Austrian integration policies

Turkish immigrants first came to Austria as laborers directly recruited by employers and industrialists in the early 1960s, before the official recruitment agreement was signed in 1964. This agreement codified migration from Turkey to Austria as temporary by stating that workers should return to their country of origin after a specified number of years. Migration from Turkey to Austria only began to grow significantly in the early 1970s, when the numbers of workers arriving each year peaked at about 10,000. The 1971 census counted about 16,000 Turkish citizens in Austria, which constituted about 8% of the total foreign population at the time. Even though recruitment was officially stopped in 1973, the numbers of Turkish immigrants continued to grow. On the one hand, policies – such as the Aliens Employment Act that codified the preferential treatment of Austrians on the labor market – designed to push foreigners to leave and to decrease further immigration, inadvertently led to the settlement of a previously mobile workforce. On the other hand, Turkish immigrants could still enter Austria on a tourist visa up to the end of the 1980s, as **Ilker Ataç** discusses in more detail in his contribution to this special issue. This explains why the number of Turkish citizens in Austria had increased to more than 60,000 people or 20.2% of the foreign population by 1982 and had exceeded 100,000 or 24% of the foreign population by 1990 (Schnell, 2014: 45-48). Since then, the Austrian government has strongly regulated migration to Austria. In 2001, the census counted 127,000 Turkish nationals in Austria. It should, however, be mentioned that the number of naturalizations increased in the course of the 1990s – a trend which continued until 2005, when the requirements for naturalization were tightened (Çınar and Waldrauch, 2006: 45; Stern and Valchars, 2013: 2-3). Decreasing immigration and growing naturalization explain why the register-based census in 2011 only counted 112,774 Turkish nationals in Austria (Statistics Austria). The micro-census of the same year counted more than 160,000 persons born in Turkey and a further 100,000 born in Austria of Turkish parents (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell, 2014: 74). Thus, altogether, about 260,000 first- and second-generation people of Turkish origin reside in Austria, with about 60% of these holding Austrian citizenship. This makes the population of Turkish origin the second-largest group of foreign origin after those originating from the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, as explained above, it is the group which has received the most public attention over the last two decades.

Turkish immigrants and their descendants are often constructed as a homogeneous group, which they have *never* been. Since its beginnings in the 1960s, immigration from Turkey to Austria has included minority groups such as Kurds and Alevi, who have used the new opportunities in the diaspora to mobilize against the oppression of these minority identities in Turkey. Nor was labor migration to Austria ever exclusively male, although the targeted

recruitment of women began slightly later than that of the men and numerically remained at a lower level. The Vorarlberg textile industry and the tourism industry relied particularly on the labor of female “guestworkers” (Mayer, 2009). After the cessation of recruitment in 1973, many Turkish immigrants were joined by their spouses and children. Besides labor and family-related migration, refugees came to Austria after the military coup in Turkey in 1980, even though the number of refugees from Turkey officially only began to increase in the late 1980s (Forum Politische Bildung, 2001: 78), again due to the fact that many came on tourist visas up to then. The number of refugees grew again in the early 2000s, mainly due to increasing violence in the Kurdish conflict (Statistics Austria). Last but not least, the group of Turkish immigrants also includes students – between 1,000 and 2,000 per year between 1993 and 2007 (ÖFSE 2008: 6). This diversity is partly reflected in this special issue, with two articles focusing on women (those by **Hametner** and by **Strasser**) and one discussing the growing significance of Kurdish and Alevi cultural activities in Vienna (**Sievers**).

Integration policies did not come on to the political agenda in Austria until the late 1990s. Following the principle of rotation and return in the 1960s, integration was not part of the design, since the permanent settlement of migrants was never envisaged. Instead, after ending the recruitment of foreign workers in 1973, a ban on foreign labourers came into effect – which also impacted on those already residing in Austria – and new laws were implemented to restrict immigration. These laws remained in place until 1990. Up to this date, immigration policy was purely conceived of as labour-market policy and continued to rest on the assumption that the presence of guestworkers was of a temporary nature (Perchinig and König, 2003). Unemployment, minor criminal offences or deviant behaviour could lead to the termination of a residence permit and to expulsion (Kraler and Sohler, 2005: 9). This resulted in a high degree of insecurity among foreign nationals, including Turkish workers and their families, up to the 1990s. The integration of long-term foreign residents, such as Turkish families, eventually took its place on the political agenda in 1997, when the Austrian government introduced what they called an integration package. This package contained a reform of the “Aliens Act”, which addressed prior deficiencies by introducing, for the first time, a stepwise residence stabilization process for long-term foreign residents. This implied protection from expulsion for third-country nationals (including Turkish citizens) who had been living in Austria for more than five years (Ataç, 2014; Kraler and Sohler, 2005: 10-11). This focus on legal integration changed when the FPÖ entered the government under the lead of the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) in 2000. Since then, integration has been conceived as a duty of the individual to adapt to an alleged Austrian value system (Permoser and Rosenberger, 2012: 45). This approach only partly changed in 2011, when the Austrian government established a State Secretariat for Inte-

gration.<sup>2</sup> Although this new institution introduced an economically oriented integration discourse, as expressed in the slogan “Integration through performance” (Rosenberger, 2013), it did not lead to a fundamental change in earlier understandings of integration. As a consequence, the Secretariat has not addressed important issues for integration, such as the removal of structural barriers in education and employment and the widening of political participation and representation through a reform of the comparatively strict citizenship legislation (Rosenberger, Gruber and Peintinger, 2012).

### **This special issue: patterns of exclusion and individual and political responses**

The restrictive Austrian policy context and the growing negative undertone in public, medial and political discourses on Turkish immigrants and their descendants are the backdrop for this special issue. Our five contributors analyse Turkish settlement in Austria from multidisciplinary perspectives in various life domains. This approach allows us to highlight overlaps between the different dimensions of Turkish immigration to, and Turkish lives in, Austria. We are interested in exploring patterns of inclusion and exclusion of Turkish immigrants and their descendants in several life domains.

◦ This special issue starts with a contribution by **Ilker Ataç**, who examines the role and interaction of transnational rights, migrant networks and dynamics in Turkey in shaping Turkish migration to Austria and limiting the effect of Austrian government policies.

◦ **Katharina Hametner**'s article explores how discursive ascriptions and everyday experiences structure the habitus of young Austrian-Turkish women and their different ways of dealing with their experiences of discrimination, ranging from retreating to transcending.

◦ The determinants for the social well-being of second-generation Turks in Austria are at the heart of **Philipp Schnell**'s contribution. He explores how socio-economic achievements, intergenerational progress and experiences of discrimination by second-generation Turks shape feelings of belonging, out-group trust and individual self-esteem.

◦ Next, **Sabine Strasser** discusses practices of, and discourses on, family formation across borders, using empirical material collected through ethnographic fieldwork in a small rural town in Austria. Her findings reveal that transnational marriages are frequently seen as a sign of forced marriage and are discussed in public discourse on a par with violence against women. These perceptions essentialize and overemphasize “Turkish culture” and reinforce tensions between the majority population and the Turkish community.

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<sup>2</sup> The Secretariat was incorporated into the Ministry for European and International Affairs when the state secretary, Sebastian Kurz, took over this ministry in 2014.

° Finally, **Wiebke Sievers** asks how far the considerable presence of the Turkish community in Austria's capital city has diversified Viennese cultural life. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, Sievers discusses Viennese Turks' representation in funding for arts and culture, and their specific use of these funds for diversifying both Austrian and Turkish cultures.

Irrespective of the fields and domains studied by our contributors, all the articles indicate that integration practices by members of the Turkish-origin community in Austria are, to a large extent, determined by the Austrian context of reception. As explained above, this context is characterized not only by public discourses marking Turkish immigrants and their descendants as others, but also by a delayed interest on the part of the Austrian government in integrating immigrants and their descendants. Exclusionary practices by institutional arrangements, such as the education system or immigration regimes, additionally affect immigrants' and their children's quest for a place and position in Austrian society.

More precisely, the discursive context – including the political climate, the societal discourse of everyday communication and interaction, and the media discourse – produces implicit and explicit stereotypes and hierarchies of immigrant groups in receiving societies (Portes and Böröcz 1989: 618–619). Often described and presented as problematic and unwilling to integrate, Turkish communities in Austria have come to be constructed as traditional, religious (Islam) and patriarchal (Strasser 2008) and thus as the binary opposite of the allegedly liberal, Western, Austrian society. As shown in the contribution by Katharina Hametner, these processes of othering, stereotyping, degradation and exclusion in discourses find their way into real discriminatory practices at the individual level. Her qualitative interviews with young Austrian-Turkish women reveal direct verbal attacks and everyday discrimination experiences in school, for example, by classmates or teachers. Studying the transnational marriages and family formation of Turkish descendants, Sabine Strasser describes how existing group tensions are fuelled by discourses on marriage across borders. As her findings uncover, the majority population (including neighbours, teachers and policy-makers) is sceptical about the right of the Turkish second generation to freely choose a partner through transnational marriage, and perceive it as a threat to social integration. Moreover, transnational marriages are frequently seen as a sign of forced marriage and associated in the public discourse with violence against women. Strasser further describes how these negative group ascriptions, which have discursive meaning, then become established in institutional settings. Political and medial discourses on forced marriage in Austria led to revised and restricted policy interventions and amendments of marriage legislation.

Furthermore, several contributions in this special issue report that Austrian institutional arrangements, of which some are ethnic-/race-neutral in intent, lead to unfavourable living conditions for Turkish immigrants and their descendants. To begin with, Philipp Schnell's analysis on educational attainment

reveals that second-generation Turks are over-represented in the lower educational strata compared to the majority population. They are more frequently relegated into lower ability tracks at the first selection stage in the Austrian education system. Consequently, they are less often able to climb the educational ladder and to achieve higher educational credentials. As shown elsewhere (Schnell 2014; Schnell and Crul 2014), these pronounced group differences at the stage of first selection remain significant, even after controlling for social-class differences in the parental generation. Gomolla and Radtke (2002) have argued in the German context that ethnic-cultural ascriptions by school personnel are behind those higher rates of downward streaming for the children of immigrants. Such an explanation might also apply to Turkish descendants in Austria, where schools still seem to act as important sites of reproduction of the majority culture.

The significant role of institutional settings for integration practices by Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria is also evident in the remaining contributions to this special issue. Ilker Ataç underlines the fact that the lack of integration measures in Austria until the mid-1980s and the limited number of rights, notably with regard to security of residence and its dependency on employment status, produced precarious living situations for Turkish immigrants and their children. Moreover, his article shows that Turkish citizens are particularly affected by new instruments of immigration policy, such as economic criteria and language tests. In a similar vein, Sabine Strasser's article underlines the fact that the current Austrian immigration regime still has profound consequences for members of the Turkish community. Her analysis of the perception of transnational marriage migration illustrates that restrictions on family reunification (raising the minimum age for family reunification and demanding a German-language certificate and a regular income) have substantially limited the right to freedom of choice for partner selection among Turkish immigrants and their descendants. Finally, Wiebke Sievers' study on the participation of Viennese-Turkish artists in Viennese culture exposes the fact that they are largely left out when it comes to the allocation of mainstream funding for the arts. Instead, they only find recognition in funding streams specifically devoted to multicultural activities, i.e. their activities are regarded as an addendum rather than as an integral part of Viennese cultural activities. This may have the effect of diminishing the artistic recognition of these cultural activities, as they could be perceived as not being good enough for mainstream funding. Taken together, the examples provided by our contributors indicate persistent patterns of institutional discrimination for Turkish immigrants and their descendants which – together with negative discourse contexts and exclusionary attitudes – represent serious challenges for Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria since they constitute structural and individual boundaries that are difficult to overcome.

For decades, researchers have highlighted that discrimination, regardless of whether it is real or perceived, has detrimental consequences not only for

those who are hit by it, but also for society as a whole (Antonovsky, 1960: 86; Bastos *et al.*, 2006: 218). Several of the papers in this special issue confirm these observations. They illustrate how racism, discrimination and exclusion lead to a distancing of those affected from Austrian society. Katharina Hametner indicates that one of the strategies used by Turkish Austrian women to deal with racist experiences is to withdraw from frequenting persons and places which expose them to such experiences. These strategies are often combined with reduced ambitions concerning their careers and patterns of isolation. And Philipp Schnell shows that experiences of discrimination in education and occupation result in weak feelings of belonging to Austria among the Turkish second generation. Moreover, he implies that this will not change in the near future since disadvantages in education persist. As Katharina Hametner suggests, such a distancing from Austrian society may go hand-in-hand with a growing identification with persons and places considered to be a safe haven from such experiences. To be more precise, it may imply growing identification with co-ethnics and sometimes even a return to Turkey. Similarly Sabine Strasser states that social exclusion may be one of the reasons for the comparatively large number of cross-border marriages among Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria. That discrimination may result in a reinforcement of ethnic ties was observed as early as 1960 by Aaron Antonovsky (1960: 87–88):

Discrimination produces a “reaction formation”: some of its victims retreat to the safety of the old culture and ghetto, abandoning efforts at overcoming the barriers to integration. This retreat may become a “return”, a value in itself, and continue even after the barriers are removed”.

As Peter Weinreich (2009: 125) rightly points out, this seems to be a healthier and more beneficial option for the affected individual than integration or assimilation, especially when violence is involved. But it is also detrimental to society as a whole, as it results in a deep divide within – in this case Austrian – society between those regarding themselves as natives and Turkish immigrants and their descendants who are perceived as “others”.

This detrimental effect of discrimination on the Austrian community has also been recognized by the country’s policy-makers. The National Action Plan for Integration, published in 2010, states: “A central aim of integration policies is to create a sense of community shared both by the majority and by the migrants. To reach this aim we will also have to implement measures to counter racism and discrimination” (BMI, 2010: 3). However, the measures implemented thus far have mainly concerned minor areas, such as sport and leisure (Expert Council for Integration, 2012: 48–49), while decreasing discrimination in critical areas, such as education and institutions, was still regarded as an important field of action in 2013 (Expert Council for Integration, 2013: 16). This does not mean that there are no anti-discrimination regula-



tions in Austria. Article 66, Paragraph 1, of the Austrian State Treaty grants all citizens equal civic and political rights regardless of their race, language or religion. In addition, Austria ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1972 (Forum Politische Bildung, 2001: 36). However, concrete anti-discrimination regulations which also apply to non-nationals, were only introduced in response to EU legislation over the last decade. Moreover, the latest version of the *Migrant Integration Policy Index* highlights important deficiencies regarding the implementation of these rules in Austria: “All residents, regardless of their background, have to live with more discrimination than in almost all European countries” (Niessen *et al.*, 2011: 31). Austria is one of the few EU member-states to have only implemented the absolute minimum standards prescribed by the EU. Moreover, those hit by discrimination have few options for enforcing their rights. However, even if anti-discrimination legislation became more effective in Austria, it would never be able to solve the problem of institutional discrimination, described in detail above. Such major changes need the political will for institutional change rather than just a legislation that grants individuals the right to compensation when they can prove that they were discriminated against.

Yet, Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria do not leave it to policy-makers to overcome racism and discrimination. They stand up to such experiences, both in their private lives and in the public sphere. Many of the Turkish Austrian women interviewed by Katharina Hametner thus expressly described their experiences as racism and actively opposed stereotypical images by providing alternative insights into Turkish culture and Islam, thereby also countering the discursive ascription of Muslim women as uneducated and passive. Similar reactions can be found in Sabine Strasser’s contribution. Her interviewees openly expressed their objection to transnational marriages being conflated in the Austrian public’s mind with forced or fictitious marriages and denounced any restriction of transnational marriage by law as discrimination. Moreover, as Ilker Ataç illustrates, Turkish citizens have also taken legal action against discrimination. He cites two cases where this has led to improvements in social rights and immigration legislation: the right to emergency support and voting rights in workers’ councils and the influential Chamber of Labour. Last but not least, Wiebke Sievers shows that Turkish immigrants and their descendants have used art and culture not only to make exclusions visible, but also to work towards the inclusion of manifold voices in Austrian society. Viennese Turkish immigrants and their descendants have not only been trying to overcome hegemonic power structures within the Viennese artistic field, they have also made the diversity within the Turkish community visible and have provided ideas for a different understanding of community which move beyond ethnically homogeneous understandings of culture. In particular, recent Turkish-Viennese activities on the theatre scene highlight the dynamics of othering that need to be abolished and demand recognition of the fact that hybrid identities have become a natural part of Austrian society, and not only among immigrants and their descendants.

While such a new understanding of community still waits to be put into practice in Austria, there are, nevertheless, indications of change in this direction. Several Austrians of Turkish origin have become members of both local parliaments and the national parliament in the last decade. Several communes have implemented diversity policies. In addition, the city of Vienna arranged a wide public debate about living together in a diverse community that resulted in the Vienna Charta, which codifies tolerance towards diverse lifestyles and languages (Stadt Wien, 2013). Three bottom-up initiatives also aim to increase the awareness of migration as being part of Austrian history by installing migration archives in Salzburg, Vienna, and Vorarlberg. Last but not least, the Turkish language may soon be taught at upper-secondary level in Austrian schools. These are just some of the many glimpses of the slow, but continuous, changes currently taking place in Austrian society that may eventually improve the situation of Turkish immigrants and their descendants in Austria.

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