

Ageing in Developing Countries: Population Projections and Policy- Making in Turkey

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1. Abstract

The global ageing has become one of most prominent agenda in the recent years. Unlike the common belief that aging population is a trend only in rich countries, developing countries also started to face with the same fact, like Turkey. According to the Turkish Statistics Institute's (TurkStat) figures and forecasts, Turkey will continue aging, as the ratio of elderly people (age of 65 and more) reaching 10.2 percent by 2023 along with half of the population being over age 34 over the same period. In order to shed the light on the current demographic trends in Turkey, this paper presents the population figures, demographic prospects and the related policy making. The first part of this paper focuses on analyzing the available data on demographics and population in Turkey from a comparative perspective with the previous years. Moreover, the paper sets clear demographic prospects for Turkey by 2075.

In the second part, the policies, projects and law proposals adopted by the Turkish policy-makers during the ruling Justice and Development Party era (AK Party) to cope with the aging population are been presented. Additionally, the rhetoric of the prominent political figures during their public speeches that directly or indirectly promoting population increase (i.e. encouraging recently married couples to have at least three children, anti-abortion sentiments etc.) is further stated in this paper.

The concluding part of the paper consists of the possible other solutions and recommendations for reversing or the at least slowing down of the aging population in Turkey. With that regard, the possibility of the foreigners, most notably the hundred thousands of Syrians who took refuge amid the internal strife in their country to be accepted as permanent settlers would become a merit for Turkey to articulate necessary workforce for future generations.

2. Introduction

The republic of Turkey was established in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne. In the early years since its establishment, the new administration in Ankara adopted pronatalist policies to increase population that suffered from long-lasting wars starting with the turbulence in the lands of Ottoman Empire: “the years 1911 to 1922 saw many Turks die in military action (during the Italian war, Balkan wars, World War I and the Independence War itself, and many other persons also suffered to the point of death from civil disorders and very poor living conditions”(Shorter, 1985, p.423). Slow population increase in Turkey continued also during the Second World War years starting in 1939. Despite Turkey was not directly involved in the war, significant number of male population, who could be get married and become father, called to arms during the Second World War years.

However, the population growth rate in Turkey started to accelerate in the aftermath of war. According to the first Five- Year Development Plan (1963), the annual population increase rate was at 10.6 per mille in 1940-1945, while this rate continued to increase to 22 per mille in 1954-1950 and to 29.5 per mille in 1955-1960. It can be also important to note that significant number of migrants coming to Turkey from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia contributed rapid population increase in Turkey as over 1.2 million people migrated during 1923-1960 (Gelekçi, 2014).

The rapid increase in population growth in Turkey led government to adopt more cautious policies towards the issue. While the pronatalist approaches were prominent in pre-1960 era, population-planning instruments were introduced in the post-1960 years in Turkey. Amid rapid population increase, rural to urban migration, unplanned urbanization and other socio-economic problems have started to pose challenges for the policy makers in Ankara. With that regard, State Planning Organization was established in 1960 and population planning, for the first time, became an agenda item in the first Five Year Development Plan of 1963-1967. The new population policies of the plan includes: abolishment of provision of law that prohibits the importing and marketing the birth control measures, providing information for doctors and other health personnel on family planning, introducing family planning courses, investigating ways for importing birth control tools

and pills for cheaper and providing those measures for free for the people who needed (Kalkınma Planı, 1963).

In the following decades, the birth rate in Turkey has started to decline unexpectedly: according to the figures of the Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat), the crude birth rate in decreased from 43 per 1000 people in 1960-1965 to 28 per 1000 people in 1988-1989 (TurkStat, 1996). It has been argued, however, that the main reason behind such a sharp decline was not because of the population control policies themselves. Rather, it was the social and structural factors on changing status of women in the society, developing healthcare and education of children and the eradication of poverty that encouraged families to take contraceptive measures (TÜSİAD, 1999).

The population of Turkey has increased steadily from 13.6 million in 1927 (first census) to 67.8 million in 2000 (TurkStat, 2000). Yet, population increase rate has continued to decline since 1960; according to TurkStat figures the population growth rate was 25 per annum in 1970s, 20 per annum in 1980s and 15 per annum in 2000s (Turkstat, 2000). According to the forecasts, this trend is expected to continue in the following decades and to be at 9 per annum by the 100th anniversary of the republic in 2023.

Against this background, the first part of this paper demonstrates the size of the population, annual growth rate since 2000 and population prospects by 2075 in Turkey based on the official figures of Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat). As the figures show Turkey has been have a slowing population increase rate and this trend will continue in the future. In the following part, direct or indirect policies (established institutions, laws passed and public speeches of prominent political figures) towards encouraging population increase during moderate conservative Justice and Development Party rule (2002-2014) are shown. As Turkey currently hosts many refugees from Syria, the final part of the paper focuses on possible integration of those refugees in Turkey to achieve balancing declining Turkish population in the future.

3. Turkey's Population Trends in the Era of Global Ageing

In the late 20th century, the ageing societies were one of the characteristics some of the developed Western European and East Asian countries. Yet, since the beginning of the 21st century, ageing has

become a worldwide phenomenon that has certain socio-economic implications. A decrease in population size in many developed countries will lead to 'graying economies' that is to say as the workforce get older; the productivity, the real GDP growth and the entrepreneurship in those economies decline (Howe&Jackson, 2011, p.21). Given the importance of the issue, numerous national and international institutions have frequently highlighted the global ageing with statistics and its possible consequences in the near future. With that regard, the United Nations' report titled "World Population Ageing 1950-2050" (2002) demonstrates four key dimensions of global ageing; that is; it is unprecedented, pervasive, profound and enduring. According to the UN report (2002), the number of people over 60 (older) will outpace the number of people under 15 (younger) by 2050, for the first time in history. Equally important, the global ageing is enduring that while the proportion of the older people was at 8 percent in 1950 and 10 percent in 2000, this number is projected to grow steadily to 21 percent by 2050 (United Nations, 2002). The executive summary of the report, therefore concludes, "the declines in fertility reinforced by increasing longevity have produced and will continue to produce unprecedented changes in the structure of all societies, notably the historic reversal in the proportions of young and older persons. The profound, pervasive and enduring consequences of population ageing present enormous opportunities as well as enormous challenges for all societies" (United Nations, 2002, p.xxxi).

The latest report of the National Intelligence Council (2012) also forecasts similar scenarios on global ageing. According to the Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds report, ageing in both Western and developing world; and shrinking youthful societies globally are some of the "megatrends" in the near future. One of the most striking results of the report demonstrates that with a 'tectonic shift', the number of countries with post-mature median age societies (median age over 45) will increase dramatically by 2030. With that regard, Turkey that has been classified as intermediate level of median age of country (25-35 years) will also become a mature society (median age 35-45) by 2030 (Global Trends, 2012, p.21).

Demographic patterns and trends presented by the Turkish Statistics Institute, whose figures are used in this paper, support the facts on ageing in Turkey as a developing country. In the 21st century,

total population of Turkey increases steadily in numerical terms. According to 2000 population census, Turkey's population was 67.8 million, as it was the latest data available in TurkStat figures that held by census-takers manually in almost every five years. In 2007, Turkey has shifted to use Addressed Based Population Registration System (ABPRS) to collect updated information on size and characteristics of the population and monitor population movements regularly within the legal framework of The Population Registration Law No. 5490 in 2006 that authorized Turkish Statistics Institute to establish aforementioned system (TurkStat, 2015).

ABPRS figures shows that the population of Turkey totaled 70.586.256 in 2007; 71.517.100 in 2008; 72.561.312 in 2009; 73.722.988 in 2010; 74.724.296 in 2011; 75.627.384 in 2012; 76.667.867 in 2013; and 77.695.904 in 2014 (see Table 1). However, despite the increase in the total population over the years, the combination of age groups' percentage of the total population has shown significant differences.

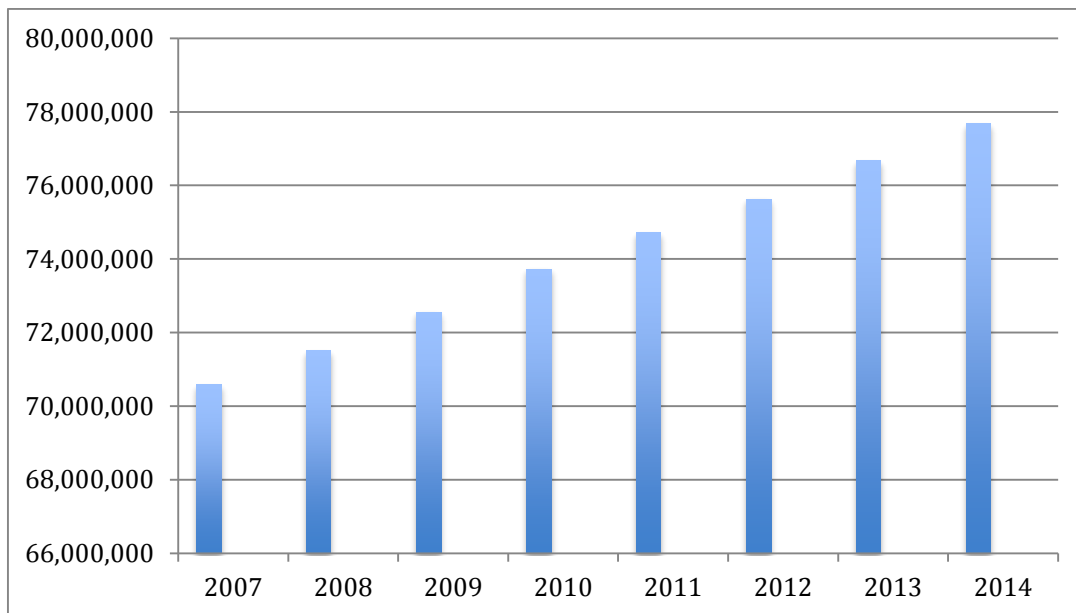


Figure 1: Population in Turkey

The percentage of the children and young people (0-14 years) over the total population has declined over the years; while it was over 40 percent in 1970s, the same group's percentage decreased to 34.4 percent in 1990 and 29.2 percent in 2000. According to the ABPRS figures, the decline of younger population in Turkey has continued since 2007. The percentage of 0-14 year age group was at 26.4 percent in 2007; 25.6 percent in 2010; and 24.3 percent in 2014.

The older age group (65 years and more) also increased both numerically and proportionately. The number of older people was 1.749.563 in 2000, which was equal to 5.7 percent of the total population in Turkey. In 2007, the percentage of older people rose to 7.1 percent, 7.2 percent in 2010; and 8 percent in 2014 with the total population of nearly 3.5 million.

In the first decades of Turkish Republic, encouraging policies of the state have resulted in high fertility rate as 7 children per women in 1930s and almost maintained same levels until 1950s (Koc, Eryurt, Adalli, and Seckiner, 2010). Yet, as the internal migration from rural areas to urban centers starting in mid-1950s fertility rate in Turkey has started to decline rapidly below 3 children per women in the beginning of the 2000s. In 2001, the total fertility rate per women was 2.37 children, while it declined to 2.17 children per women in 2014. The socio-economic changes (i.e. increase in urbanization, education level, and women's participation in the workforce), which led the rise of marriage age and birth control measures in Turkey, have contributed significantly the slow down of the fertility rate in the recent years. The legal minimum marriage age for both men and women was set at 17 in 2002. While the average marriage age for the first time in 15-49 years old men and women in 1940 was 23 and 19 respectively, it rose to 25 for men and 22 for women in 1990s; and in 2000s the same ages have been around 27 for men and 24 for women, an average of 4 years increase for both women and men in the last 70 years in the post-war history of the republic (Koç et al., 2010).

In order to develop appropriate policies to address changing demographic patterns and new trends in the future, TurkStat (2013) has calculated and published population projections for 2023, 2050 and 2075. In these projections, Turkey's population will be at 84 247 088 in 2032, 100th anniversary of the republic, and population increase will continue to increase in a slow pace until 2050 when Turkey's population will reach its maximum quantity with 93 475 575 people. After the year 2050,

the population will started to decrease, and it is projected to be 89 172 088 in 2075. Therefore, according to this scenario Turkey's population will never reach 100 million.

TurkStat (2013) projections also estimate that the proportion of elderly people in the total population will reach to 10.2 percent in 2032. "If the current trends of demographic indicators persist, the population of Turkey will continue ageing. Elderly population, which is the population at 65 years of age and over, is 5.7 million in 2012 with a proportion of 7.5% and this population will reach to 8.6 million people with a proportion of 10.2% in 2023"(TurkStat, 2013, parag. 5). Elderly population will continue to increase to 19.5 million in 2050, and 24.7 million in 2075 and the proportion of elderly population in the total population will increase to 20.8% in 2050 and 27.7% in 2075. The median age in Turkey will also rise from 30.1 in 2012 to 34 in 2023. Turkey will head towards becoming a mature society as the median age is expected to be 42.9 in 2050 and 47.4 in 2075.

The basic scenario (scenario 1), in which total fertility rate decreases in its natural flow and reaches to its lowest value 1.65 in 2050, and then increases after this year and reaches the value of 1.85 in 2075, is taken into consideration for the projections demonstrated above. In order to show the effect of fertility rate changes on the size of the population, age structure and other demographic trends in Turkey, TurkStat also develops two additional scenarios for the population projections by 2075 (TurkStat, 2013). With that regard, Scenario 2 assumes that the total fertility rate in Turkey increases to 2.11 in 2020 and to 2.50 in 2050 gradually, and then remains stable between the years 2050 and 2075. In this scenario, the total population of Turkey will be over 100 million in 2044 and will reach 199, 344, 690 in 2075. Finally in Scenario 3, it is assumed that total fertility rate increases gradually to 3 in 2050, and then remains stable to 2075. Three scenarios show that fertility rate creates great differences in population projections as it affects both population size and proportion of the different age groups. If the fertility rate increases as in the case of Scenerio 2 and 3, Turkey's ageing trend will slowdown and reverse in the long run (see Figure 1).

Scenario		2013	2023	2050	2075
Scenario 1 (Basic Scenario)	Total Population	76 481 847	84 247 088	93 475 575	89 172 088
	Proportion of 65 years and over (%)	7,7	10,2	20,8	27,7
Scenario 2	Total Population	76 481 847	85 153 647	104 309 596	119 344 690
	Proportion of 65 years and over (%)	7,7	10,1	18,7	20,7
Scenario 3	Total Population	76 481 847	85 598 777	110 546 401	140 672 782
	Proportion of 65 years and over (%)	7,7	10,1	17,6	17,5

Figure 2: Population scenarios 2013-2075

Source: TurkStat, 2013

In 2014, population size of Turkey was equivalent to 1.08 percent of the total global population and ranked as 18th most populous country in the world (Worldometers, 2014). According to TurkStat (2013) standard projection, in 2050 Turkey will drop to 20th in rank, while the world population is expected to reach approximately 9.3 billion. The same data also estimates that in 2075, world population size will increase to 9 billions and 905 millions people while the rank of Turkey will fall to 24.

4.Targeting Ageing: Regulations and Policy Agenda in Turkey

Since the moderate conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in early 2000s, Turkey has gone through significant reform processes. Neo-liberal structural reforms have resulted in boom in economic growth as according to the Turkish Investment Support and Promotion Agency (İSPAT) figures, the Turkish economy grew with an average annual real GDP growth rate of 4.7 percent over the period of 2002 to 2014 (Economic Outlook, 2014).

During the aforementioned period, AKP has also taken significant steps in social policy and welfare reforms in areas of education, healthcare, social insurance, and regulations on maternity leave and child benefits that directly or indirectly supports population increase in Turkey. Moreover, it is important to note that AKP during its single party government rule (2002-2014) put significance importance on family, family values and having children. This part of the paper, therefore, demonstrates the reforms, regulations and political agenda in 2000s amid fertility decline in Turkey.

In Turkey, constitutionally the government plays a direct role in preserving; protecting and planning of the families as the status of women and children in the family are secured by the state (Çarkoğlu, Kafesçioğlu&Mitrani, 2011). Initially, social security system went through substantial reform during AKP government in 2006 and three different social security institutions (Social Insurances Institution, Retirement Fund and Bag-Kur) have been unified under one single branch and Social Security Institution (SGK) was established. This reform is significant in the context of this paper as it paved the way for the enactment of the Social Insurances and General Health Insurance Law No. 5510 in 2006 in order to create equal, accessible and qualified health services for whole population (SGK, 2011). Universal Health Insurance that provides healthcare services for all living in Turkey was introduced with the social security reform. According to the universal health insurance in Turkey, all children under 18 and women who receive inpatient and ambulatory treatment due to maternity can benefit from healthcare services without any pre-condition.

The Social Security Institution also covers assisted reproductive methods under certain conditions with some co-payments and limits. SGK covers IVF treatments of married couples, if at least one of the partners is employed, up to three cycles. Women between 29-40 ages who could not have children with natural course or other treatments with medical diagnosis have benefited from IVF treatments covered by the SSI since 2007. Over the years since 2007, the scope of in vitro fertilization (IVF) has been further extended. With a new regulation in law in 2015, married men and women who have not had children can apply SSI for IVF treatment in their second marriages even if they had children from their previous marriage (Bulut, 2015). It can be noted that, therefore, the government has initiated supportive and encouraging healthcare policies for those who have children and who want to have children.

Another supportive regulation was made on maternity leave and childcare to support employed women with children. Prior to the latest law enactment in 2015, the SGK covered 16 weeks of paid and up to 6 months unpaid maternity leave. Moreover, the Labor Law No 4857 Article 74 envisaged a total 90 minutes leave for employed nursing mothers (Çağlayan, 2010). For the fathers, in the light of previous Labor Law, three workdays were granted with payment, as the role of the fathers in

childcare was minimally taken into consideration (Çarkoğlu et al., 2011). Moreover, since 2013 Labor Law in Turkey render companies or employers with more than 150 women employees to provide kindergarten facilities. However, many companies employ less than 150 female workers or some ignores the obligation (UNICEF, n.d.).

In 2015, the government initiated the Program on Protection of Family and Dynamic Population Structure to provide further incentives for working women to have children. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu launched the program on January 2015 for a reform in the Labor Law. According to the new program, part-time working with full payment will be available up until for two months if they have one child, four months for two children and six months for three or more children after their official maternity leave for 16 weeks. The role of fathers in childcare has also been extended with the reform as paternity leave for male employees for five days leave if their wives give birth to a child is granted. Both parents can also opted for part-time working (30 hours in a week) to take care of their children until the age of 6. Davutoğlu also announced that government will provide direct payments in cash for the mothers; 300 Turkish lira for one child, 400 Turkish lira for two children and 600 Turkish lira for three children (Anadolu Agency, 2015).

Indirect encouragements are envisioned in the form tax incentives for nurseries to be opened and obliging municipalities to open day nurseries. More over, the new program aims at opening saving account for parents to deposit money for their children's marriage and the government will contribute 15 percent to the amount. According to the plan, the dowry account will be activated when the children become 18 years old to promote marriages among the young people. Last but not least, the government plans initiating premarital education programs for young people to prepare them for marriage. The draft law known as 'family package' accepted on March 28, 2015 by the Parliamentary Committee on Health, Family, Labor and Social Affairs and remains on the agenda of the Parliament (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2015).

Population trends and family policies also occupied a certain place in political agenda and speeches of the prominent government figures during AKP rule. During his speech on International Women Day in 2008, then the leader of the AKP and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said

that in order to protect young population structure in Turkey, families should have at least three children (AK PARTİ, 2008). Similarly, Erdoğan has repeatedly urged couples for having at least three children in several summits, wedding ceremonies and meetings. During the International Family and Social Policies Summit in 2013 Erdoğan said “one or two children mean bankruptcy. Three children mean we are not improving but not receding either. So, I repeat, at least three children are necessary in each family, because our population risks aging. We are still on the good side, as we still own a young and dynamic population. But we are slowly aging. Presently, the whole western world is trying to cope with this problem. Please do not take our susceptibility lightly, this is a very serious issue,” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2013, parag. 2).

Anti-abortion sentiments have also been one of the agenda items of the AKP government. Then Prime Minister Erdoğan has lashed abortion and labeled it as murders as the Turkish government was trying to reduce the number of abortions and Caesarean births (Vela, 2012). Anti-abortion sentiments created outrage among women rights advocates and many women marched shouting “my body, my choice” in protesting controversial planned abortion law reducing the operation until 4 weeks from conception, except in emergencies. Planned law was withdrawn by the AKP (Al Jazeera, 2012). Since 1983, law has allowed induced abortions during the first ten weeks of gestation upon request. Over the last 20 years, the number of induced abortions in Turkey has a declining trend. In 1993, the number of induced abortions per 100 pregnancies was 18, and it reduced to 14.5 in 1998, 11.3 in 2003, 10 in 2008 and 4.7 in 2013 (Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, 2014).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, Turkey has gone through substantial transformation in many aspects. While the neo-liberal economic policies accelerated the economic growth, neo-conservative and social policies of AKP government have targeted slowing population increase in Turkey. Although the effects of social policies aiming at reversing the ageing trends in Turkey may require longer time to analyze, during the AKP rule (2003-2014), the emphasis on the family and population increase was one of the focal points in social policies.

5.Syrian Influx to Turkey: Challenges and Advantages

While demographical transformation towards ageing takes place, since 2011 Turkey has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Syrians, who fled from civil war in their country. The official figures of the Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) around 220.000 Syrian refugees are living in 22 different camps in Turkey. Regarding the total number including those live outside the camps the UN Refugee Agency reports 1,772,535 individual Syrians fled to Turkey (UNHCR, 2015). As the conflict in Syria continues, the future number of Syrians in Turkey remains unclear. Hosting nearly 2 million Syrians has also brought a certain economic burden on Turkish government as so far Turkey has spend over 6 billion US dollar and received only 300.000 million from international community (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015). As the current situation seems unsustainable in the long run, Turkey may benefit from this population influx to articulate its economic growth. Seeing Turkey as a safe heaven for their investments, in 2014, Syrian funded foreign firms established in Turkey topped and the total number was at 1,222 which was over 26 percent of foreign-funded firm during January-November 2014 period (Gonultas& Bagrik, 2014).

Turkey introduced new regulations in December 2014 to ensure legal status of Syrians and provided them identification cards for benefiting healthcare services and education. The main challenge for Syrians living outside camps, however, is finding permanent jobs to sustain their livelihood. Currently, Turkish Labor Law does not allow Syrians to work, but issuing conditional work permits has been on the agenda of the Council of Ministers (Yeginsu, 2014). Many Syrians are working in the cities illegally for lower wages.

Population and demographic studies on Syrian refugees in Turkey, conducted by AFAD (2014), shows that over 20 percent of Syrians refugees in Turkey have education at the high school level or higher. Same study also demonstrates that the percentage of the middle age group (13-54 years old) constitutes 68.7 percent of the total Syrian refugees living in the camps; and 59.9 percent of the total Syrians living outside camps. With that regard, Turkey may pursue selective employment strategies among Syrians to increase its qualified workforce structure in the future.

6. Conclusion

As previous parts of this paper try to demonstrate, Turkey is experiencing declining population increase rate for decades and the demographic projections estimates this trend will continue in the near future. It is also important to note that, however, according to classical demographic transition model, Turkey has been passing through the third phase of decreasing birth rates and lower death rates, and in the end decelerating natural population increase (Pool, 2007). Since 1975, the middle age group (15-64 years) who composes work force in Turkey has been increasing. According to TurkStat (2014), the total percentage of middle age group was 54.7 percent of the total population in 1975; and it increased to 58.1 percent in 1985, 64.5 percent in 2000, 67 percent in 2010 and 67.8 percent in 2014. Distribution of the age groups' percentage within the total population is closely linked with economic development and growth. Having an increasing working age group can be beneficial in terms of economic growth. "In fact, the combined effect of this large working-age population and health, family, labor, financial, and human capital policies can effect virtuous cycles of wealth creation" (Bloom, D., Canning, D., & Sevilla, J., 2003, p. 11). Therefore, Turkey has been passing through the demographic period called 'window of opportunity' as the percentage of the potential workers is projected to increase until 2023, and then decline to 63.4 in 2050 and 57.7 in 2075 (TurkStat, Population Projections 2013-2075, 2013).

In sum, the results and the effectiveness of the government policies towards controlling slowing population increase rate require longer time to analyze and go beyond the scope of this paper. However, in the short to medium term, the government policies towards families encouraging having children might be beneficial to increase fertility rates in Turkey. Apart from that, with the help of well-conceived policymaking, Syrian refugee influx can be turned into advantage of Turkey amid population ageing. Since, the study of AFAD (2014) demonstrates that significant percentage of Syrians in Turkey is at their working age and over one fifth of total refugees have had high school or higher level of education.

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