

IMMIGRATION TO THE UK: THE CASE OF TURKS

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Introduction¹

The 2001 census in the UK has sparked a great deal of interest in who makes up its population of nearly 60 million.² With more than 300 languages spoken across London (GLA 2005) and a quarter of its residents born abroad,³ the city lays claim to being the most multicultural place in the world. But while London is home to people from across the globe, a growing number of immigrants are settling outside of the main cities, most recently in more rural areas. The UK has been described as a symbol of ‘the world in one country’⁴ where the diversity of culture and language, ethnic identity and religion is to be celebrated and enjoyed. Others go further and paint an image of ‘super-diversity’ in the UK which goes beyond simple outward signs of difference (Vertovec 2005). What is unique today, in contrast to the postwar worker migrations from the Caribbean and South Asia, are the diverse migration routes through which migrants come and the different legal statuses they hold upon arrival. These ‘new immigrants’ (Berkeley *et al.* 2005) are today more likely to arrive from Eastern Europe than from the West Indies, and to come for a broader set of reasons.

According to recent opinion polls, though, they are also likely to face an ambivalent reception. Not since the intemperate remarks of leading politicians about immigrants in the late 1970s, and the ‘race riots’ in Brixton, in south London, in the early 1980s, have so many people in Britain expressed concern about immigration. The steady rise since the mid-1990s in concern about *levels* of immigration in particular reflects the prominence that migration has had on the recent political landscape. Contributing factors include the growth in numbers claiming asylum in the UK, street clashes between British Asians and white youth in some northern industrial towns in July 2001, the potential for mass migration from Central and Eastern Europe following EU enlargement in May 2004, and the hidden scale of ‘illegal’ migration. The political response has, for the most part, aimed to tackle undocumented forms of migration through tighter border controls and measures to discourage fraudulent asylum claims. At the same time, though, there has been a sea change in thinking as regards the role of legal migration in the UK economy. No longer does the state aim to restrict levels of *legal* immigration to a minimum, but explicitly ties the country’s economic

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² Countries making up the UK are England (83.6 per cent of the total population), Scotland (8.6 per cent), Wales (4.9 per cent) and Northern Ireland (2.9 per cent).

³ This particular figure refers to people born outside the British Isles (i.e. the UK and the Republic of Ireland), and therefore does not include the many migrants to the UK born in Ireland.

⁴ See www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,,1690291,00.html. N.B. In this instance, the newspaper refers to Britain (i.e. the countries of the UK minus Northern Ireland).

interests to recruiting migrants to fill particular job vacancies and skill shortages in the labour market.

The first postwar migrations

The arrival in London in June 1948 of the *Empire Windrush*, a former German troop ship with mainly young West Indian men on board, provides one of the first iconic images of postwar migration to the UK. The spontaneous nature of this migration, about which the UK government only became aware once the ship had left Jamaica far behind, brought the potential scale of emigration from the British Empire to the country's attention – citizens of the British colonies were at the time free to enter the UK as British passport holders. Whilst this inspired a knee-jerk reaction in some who called for action to stem future emigration from the colonies, a few government departments (transport and health) would in contrast see the economic opportunities presented by such a willing group of migrants. In subsequent years, immigrants were actively recruited from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent to fill posts on London's buses and underground network, and in the newly-created National Health Service.

The majority of migrants would, nonetheless, continue to arrive spontaneously and, for some observers, as uninvited guests. As migrations to the UK from India and Pakistan gained momentum in the late 1950s, successive legislation was passed over less than a decade to restrict the citizenship and entry rights of most people from the 'New Commonwealth' (i.e. countries forming part of the British Empire with the exception of Australia, Canada and New Zealand). By 1972, the British passport of a Jamaican or Indian had become virtually worthless – instead, a work permit, or proof that a parent or grandparent had been born in the UK, was required before immigrants were allowed to settle in the UK. By linking ethnicity and citizenship through an emphasis on country of birth, the UK sought to regulate 'black' migration to the UK. Most people living in the British colonies, of course, would not have had a parent or grandparent born in the UK.

The combination of race and unregulated migration was a potent mix, and to a large extent explains why other national groups in the UK were not subject in the postwar period to similar levels of social and political disquiet. It is to be borne in mind that of the foreign-born population in Britain (i.e. not including Northern Ireland) in 1971, only one in four were from South Asia or the Caribbean (Rendall and Salt 2005: Table 8.2). More than half were from Europe, including a sizeable and long-settled Irish community whose numbers had been swollen by a second wave of

large-scale emigration from Ireland from the 1930s through to the end of the 1950s (Jackson 1963). Despite widespread resentment towards Irish migrants in the mid-nineteenth century, a government working party in 1955 claimed that ‘coloured people’ posed more ‘difficulties’ than Irish migrants, asserting that ‘the outstanding difference is that the Irish are not ... a different race from the ordinary inhabitants of Great Britain’ (cited in Winder 2004: 262). Like the Irish, the Italians also had a long history of migration to the UK dating back to the 19th century, and which continued after the Second World War. The 1950s saw an average of 8,000 Italians a year arrive on four-year contracts to work in heavy industries such as steel, brick and coal mining – a good number would settle, buy homes, and send for their families (King 1977). Upwards of 77,000 homeless refugees from Eastern Europe – recruited from Displaced Persons camps in Germany and Austria – also arrived and settled in the UK in the late 1940s as part of a government scheme to source labour for essential sectors of the economy (principally agriculture, domestic work and the coal mines) (Kay and Miles 1992; McDowell 2005). A decade or so later thousands of Cypriot families would take advantage of the island’s colonial ties to the UK to find work in London’s catering and clothing industries (King and Bridal 1982).

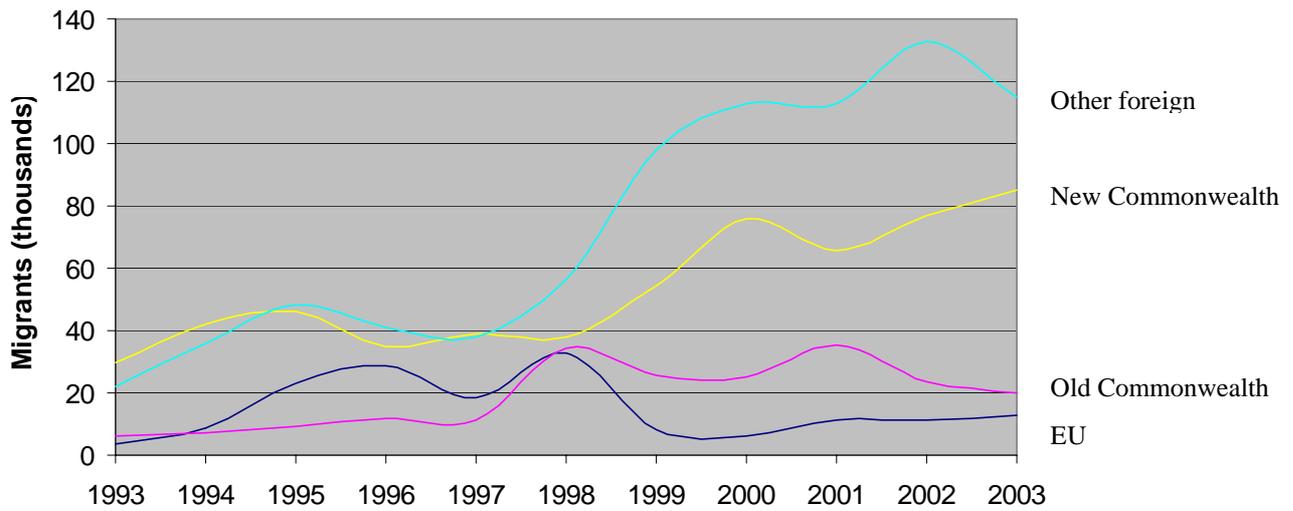
One final, virtually forgotten twist in the story of postwar migration should also be noted. Migration in 1960s’ Britain was, despite the nation’s collective amnesia today, a two-way process. As immigrants began to be joined in the UK by family members, each year saw Britons in their tens and hundreds of thousands emigrate to new lives in the Old Commonwealth – to Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (see, for example, Hammerton and Thomson 2005). The majority of British emigrants were not escaping unemployment or poverty, but seeking a better quality of life overseas. The UK, at least in statistical terms, was mainly a country of emigration up until fairly recently.

Migration since the 1990s

From the high levels of emigration in the 1960s, it would take another two decades before the number of immigrants would finally outstrip the number leaving the UK. Even then, net immigration would prior to 1997 barely register above 50,000 a year (less than 0.1 per cent of the total population). At the same time, growth in the population was principally as a result of natural increase (i.e. the number of births exceeding the number of deaths). It has only been since the late 1990s that immigration has become the principal driver behind population growth: an officially estimated net inflow of 223,000 entered the UK in 2004.

Focusing on the mid-late 1990s onwards, a period coinciding with less restrictive policies towards certain categories of immigrants, the UK has become the destination for a range of different national groups. Figure 1 illustrates this trend as migration streams designated as ‘other foreign’ are estimated to have tripled since 1997, clearly outgrowing migration from the ‘New Commonwealth’.⁵

Figure 1 – Net migration by citizenship, 1993-2003



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS)

Data from the 2001 census not only show that the foreign-born population had as a result risen by more than a quarter over the previous decade to 4.9 million (8.3 per cent of the total population),⁶ but also reflect the more diverse migrant inflows into the UK. Many ‘new immigrants’ arrived from war-torn or politically unstable countries, such as Albania, the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. Others travelled from as far away as China and South America, from Turkey and Greece at one end of Europe, and from Finland and Sweden at the other. All, with the exception of Albania where emigration was prohibited before 1990, already had a reasonable migrant presence in

⁵ Importantly, though, Figure 1 does not include significant migration flows from Central and Eastern Europe since EU enlargement in May 2004. This is picked up below.

⁶ The statistics on the foreign-born population include a number of British nationals born overseas as well as immigrants granted British citizenship. Citizenship and country of birth are therefore not analogous – figures based on *citizenship* reveal a smaller number of foreign residents in the UK (c. 5 per cent). Another proviso to the 2001 census is the important distinction between country of birth and ethnicity. A broad range of ethnic groups, for example, are found amongst people born in Africa, only 38 per cent of whom identify themselves as Black in the census, with 31 per cent classifying themselves as White and 20 per cent as Indian (Rendall and Salt 2005: 135). The latter figure relates to the history of indentured Indian labour to the East African Railway in the early twentieth century. Their descendants in Kenya and Uganda were, in the 1960s and 1970s, forcibly expelled as both countries embarked on policies of ‘Africanisation’.

1991, but over the next decade saw their numbers in the UK more than double. In comparison, absolute numbers from the Republic of Ireland and the Caribbean declined, and the proportion of Indian migrants to the total foreign-born population fell below 10 per cent for the first time since the 1960s. It should be noted, though, that the greatest number of foreign-born UK residents remained those from the Republic of Ireland (11 per cent of the total foreign-born population in 2001), followed by India (9.6 per cent) and then Pakistan (6.6 per cent).

Whether this indicates a shift away from more traditional migrant source countries is an interesting point of contention, not least because official UK policy has recently placed emphasis on migration from Central and Eastern Europe to fill (mainly low-skilled) labour shortages in the economy following EU enlargement in May 2004. Certainly, patterns of legal migration since the 2001 census have revealed previously unheard-of national groups resident in the UK (such as Filipinos who did not even feature in the UK census results). At the same time, though, legal migration has continued from areas such as the Indian subcontinent with a history of migration to the UK (e.g. nearly 25 per cent of all work permits recently issued have gone to Indian migrants) (IPPR 2005). Family formation and reunion continues to account for a significant proportion of all migrant inflows, although migrants with work permits (excluding dependents) have outstripped family immigration since 1997. This trend indicates a shift away from family migration as immigrants, particularly from higher-income countries, have tended to arrive as individuals and stay for shorter periods of time. Nearly half of all the most recent immigrants – resident in the UK for less than a year in 2001 – lived in ‘non-family households’ or ‘not in a household’. One of the main factors for this is the attraction of the UK for a growing number of students, who often stay in halls of residence – more than one in five of all the most recent arrivals were full-time students in 2001 (Rendall and Salt 2005: Tables 8.10 and 8.11b). Similarly, the vast majority of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe are young (83% aged 18-34) and without any dependents (only 3% had dependents under the age of 17 with them). Men, however, outnumber women (57:43) (Home Office *et al.* 2006).

Labour migration to the UK

Rising levels of immigration to the UK have coincided with low levels of unemployment, strong economic growth, and a high number of job vacancies. A reported 616,800 vacancies in 2004 included a significant number of posts for which potential recruits lacked the required experience, skills or qualifications, most notably in skilled trades (Learning and Skills Council 2005). Other

'hard-to-fill' vacancies not only comprised jobs for which skills are in decline amongst the UK's working population, but also low-status, poorly-paid and often short-term positions which the native-born are increasingly unwilling to accept. Immigrant workers are as a result found to occupy an even more polarised position in the UK labour market today than in the early 1990s – more likely to work either in higher or lower-skilled occupations than in intermediate positions (Kyambi 2005; Rendall and Salt 2005). This reflects the growing polarised nature of the UK labour market, as the expansion of highly-skilled employment has brought about additional need for low-skilled occupations such as security guards, cleaners, and sales assistants (Goos and Manning 2003).

Successive policy changes and developments since the late 1990s have aimed to be more responsive to employer demand, whilst trying to regulate entry into the UK (i.e. to restrict undocumented forms of migration). This two-pronged approach to immigration forms an integral part of the current system of 'managed migration'. Above all, the policy seeks to reassure an electorate that migration is controlled, that immigrants to the UK deserve to be here, either having been invited through an official scheme or because they come from within the EU labour market, and that only 'genuine' asylum-seekers can enter uninvited. The policy aim to regulate immigration clearly echoes the rationale behind legislative changes in the 1960s and early 1970s to stem 'spontaneous' immigration from the New Commonwealth. But whereas government policy from the 1960s up until the late 1990s aimed to restrict levels of primary immigration to the UK, with the exception of certain migrant categories (e.g. refugees, specialised medical staff, family members, etc.) (RSA 2005: 7), the present system of managed migration acknowledges the need for both lower and high-skilled migrant workers in the UK labour market (albeit with differing opportunities for settlement).

The work-permit scheme, a long-established legal route into the UK for mainly skilled migrants, has seen a three-fold increase in permits issued in recent years to more than 80,000. All permit-holders are entitled to be joined by their spouses or partners (who may take up any lawful employment) and dependents (who as children are entitled to free state education). Access to free healthcare is restricted to those holding work permits for more than 6 months. Permits can be extended, and, after five continuous years in the UK, permit holders are eligible for permanent settlement; i.e. 'indefinite leave to remain' (ILR).

The increase in the number of permits issued has occurred at a time when the government's objective has been to make the scheme internationally competitive by being more responsive to employers' needs. Priority, though, is given to the domestic and European Economic Area (EEA)

workforces over non-EEA workers, which effectively means that work permits will only be issued once employers can prove that a vacancy cannot be filled from within the EEA. The steep rise in work permits issued has occurred at a time of strong domestic economic growth, low levels of unemployment (c. 5 per cent) and a high number of job vacancies. In the mid-1980s, when the rate of unemployment rose to 12 per cent, the number of work permits issued was well below 15,000 per year. The health of the economy as measured by low levels of unemployment, more than policy changes *per se*, appears to be the driving force behind growth in the number of work permits (IPPR 2005: Figure 22).

Almost 47 per cent of all work permits issued between January 2004 and August 2005 were for posts in healthcare (principally for nurses and doctors), with over two-thirds of all Zimbabwean permit holders working as nurses (IPPR 2005: 11-12). The scale of recruitment of health and medical personnel from sub-Saharan countries to the UK⁷ has raised some profound ethical issues about the individual's right to emigrate against the effect of emigration on already inadequate healthcare systems in sending countries (Eastwood *et al.* 2005). The high demand for healthcare workers in the UK has meant that the official ban in the National Health Service (NHS) on hiring nurses and doctors from some of the poorest countries is reportedly being circumvented (Boseley 2005).

The UK's pledge to reduce world poverty and its commitment to the UN Millennium Development goals sit uncomfortably alongside the current reliance in some sectors on skilled migrant workers from developing countries. The lack of joined-up thinking between UK migration policy and specified international development goals, not to mention creative thinking about the role international migration to the UK could play in tackling global inequalities of wealth, is clear when recruitment bans such as on overseas healthcare workers prove ineffective and fail to address the root causes of migration. Migrant remittances back home consistently eclipse overseas development assistance (ODA), and have the potential to tackle poverty at the local level more effectively than aid to governments: money remitted directly to families provides not only the recipients but local economies with a source of income (IPPR 2005: 18). International migration may, depending on the type of work undertaken in the host country, also enhance the skills and knowledge of migrants through the training and work experience gained. Given that few migrants completely sever ties with the sending country, or definitively rule out returning home, international migration should be

⁷ In 2003, 5,880 work permits were approved for healthcare professionals from South Africa, 2,285 from Zimbabwe, 1,510 from Nigeria and 850 from Ghana (Eastwood *et al.* 2005: 1893)

seen as a potential vehicle for transferring skills and actively promoting development goals (see, for instance, Bloch 2005).⁸

Up until very recently South Asian trainee doctors benefited from permit-free migration to the UK to learn skills and gain work experience with which many, in the past, had subsequently returned home. The decision to require work permits from non-EEA trainee doctors, in response to a perceived surfeit of British medical graduates, comes at a time when international student migration (ISM) to the UK has grown to 350,760 students in 2003/04, particularly in postgraduate research. The potential revenue generated through ISM has made the global market for students highly competitive, especially since the full costs of tuition are frequently borne by students, and not by the universities. With limits on the public financing of UK universities, it appears, at least to some commentators, that non-EU students – 45 per cent of whom are estimated to be from developing countries – are subsidising the tertiary education of the native-born population (RSA 2005: 57). Students are also permitted to work (up to 20 hours a week during term time, and 40 hours during holidays) and are a source of much-needed labour in low-skilled posts such as contract cleaning, and in bars, hotels and restaurants. They have the same rights, in terms of being allowed to be joined by close family members and access to public services, as work-permit holders. Until quite recently, though, students were expected to return home once they had completed their studies. Some non-EEA nationals can now qualify to stay in the UK by applying to the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (SEGS), launched in October 2004, which entitles them to remain in the UK for another twelve months in order to pursue their chosen career. Others may apply through the much-publicised Highly-Skilled Migration Programme (HSMP).

The HSMP, launched in early 2002 to attract the most skilled to the UK, is a points-based system which selects migrants on the basis of their education, skills, work experience and past earnings. ‘Bonus’ points are also scored if the spouse or partner joining the applicant has high skill levels and work experience, and if the applicant is under 28 years of age. Unlike the work-permits scheme, candidates do not first need a job offer before moving to the UK and are not ‘tied’ to their employer.

⁸ See the ongoing work of the Development Research Centre on ‘Migration, Globalisation and Poverty’, coordinated from the Sussex Centre for Migration Research at the University of Sussex. For more information on their work, see www.migrationdrc.org.

The HSMP is seen as part of the UK's move to a knowledge-based economy, but in its first two years only 8,451 applications were approved, mainly from India, the USA, Pakistan, South Africa and Australia (IPPR 2004; 2005: 14). The programme's more symbolic role should not be underestimated, though. By seeking to attract highly-skilled workers, the HSMP aims to demonstrate to a sceptical electorate how the government, in its own words, is 'making migration work for Britain' (Home Office 2005a). There are two rather shaky assumptions underpinning this policy discourse.

Firstly, the UK's interests remain foremost: in response to a recent government consultation document, 63 per cent of respondents agreed that a migration system should primarily be geared towards the economic interests of the UK (Home Office 2005b). Where development-oriented goals in sending countries are alluded to, they are again considered in terms of prevention (e.g. the NHS recruitment ban on sub-Saharan nurses) or even coercion – the government recently floated the idea of enforcing compulsory remittances on low-skilled migrants (presumably this has more to do with compelling migrants to return home once their work permits have expired, in itself a tacit recognition that many undocumented migrants in the UK have simply overstayed their visas – see next subsection).

Secondly, low-skilled migration is seen as more problematic than skilled migration. Public concern, for instance, focuses on the negative effect of low-skilled migrants on the wage and unemployment levels of the native-born workforce. In policy terms, low-skilled migrants from outside the EEA are much less likely to be allowed to be joined by close family members or settle more permanently than more skilled migrants. They are subject to quota-limited schemes, and, in light of recent government proposals, could in the future only come from countries with which the UK has first established a returns agreement to ensure migrants do not overstay their visas. Integration into UK society, for most non-EEA low-skilled migrants, is not an option in the long term.

The majority of low-skilled migration routes into the UK for non-EEA migrant workers (e.g. the Au Pairs and Working Holidaymakers schemes)⁹ are for temporary stays only and place emphasis on return. Other more high-profile schemes to recruit non-EEA migrant workers in low-skilled

⁹ Au pairs (aged 17 to 27) come for a maximum of 2 years, live with an English-speaking family, and must come from one of eleven European (non-EU) countries (see Newcombe 2004). Working holidaymakers (aged 17 to 30) are from Commonwealth countries, and are permitted to work for no longer than twelve months of their 2-year stay. Domestic workers in private households, however, are able to extend their stay, and, after four years' continuous employment as a domestic worker, can apply to remain indefinitely in the UK.

occupations – the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) for students and the Sectors-Based Scheme (SBS) for work in the hospitality (e.g. restaurant staff, cleaners, chefs) and food-processing sectors – operate on a quota basis¹⁰ and restrict lengths of stay to 6 and 12 months respectively. Both of these are to be phased out over time. This is in light of the accession of eight (the so-called A8) new member states from Central and Eastern Europe to the EU, and in anticipation of Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU. The UK was one of the few countries, along with Sweden and Ireland, to allow A8 citizens free access to the labour market.¹¹ The latest figures on the number of A8 workers who have registered for work in the UK (nearly 330,000 from May 2004 to the end of 2005)¹² outnumber by far most other legal inflows of migrants except international student migration. Only 15% of these registered workers are based in London, illustrating the growing presence of migrants outside of the capital in more rural locations (TUC 2004).

Prior to EU enlargement in May 2004, many A8 nationals had been recruited under both schemes, but particularly for work in the hospitality sector. This sector as a result ceased operating as a recruiting sector last year. There are concerns, though, that phasing out these low-skilled migration schemes for non-EEA workers is premature on two counts. Firstly, the government's own review of the SBS found that no A8 nationals prior to EU enlargement, for example, had been recruited in the 'ethnic cuisine' sector (Home Office 2005c). The reason for this was simply because job advertisements by Indian restaurants invariably required that potential applicants speak Bengali (reflecting the prominence of Bangladeshis in the Indian restaurant trade). The SBS review criticised this requirement as overly restrictive, but illustrates where policy objectives can appear at odds with employer needs. Employers were equally likely to accuse the government of being restrictive especially since a 20 per cent quota was subsequently introduced to prevent any single national group from predominating in one subsector (in this instance, Bangladeshis in 'ethnic cuisine').

¹⁰ SAWS quotas were 25,000 in 2004, but were reduced to 16,250 in 2005. Current proposals are for the scheme to be phased out by the end of 2010. SBS quotas were originally 10,000 for both hospitality and food processing. With the closure of the hospitality route, only 6,000 work permits can be issued for food processing.

¹¹ A8 nationals must, however, register on the 'Worker Registration Scheme' (WRS) within one month of finding work. Employers have been accused of trying to prevent their workers from registering presumably as a way to exert control over their employees.

¹² This is a cumulative total of registrations. A number of migrants will, of course, have subsequently returned home. Migrants are mainly from Poland, followed by Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia and the Czech Republic. In 2001, there were just over 60,000 Polish-born British residents, but by the end of 2005 more than 197,000 had registered for work in the UK (a legal requirement imposed on all A8 nationals as a condition of their employment). Other A8 migrants are mainly from Lithuania (12.8%), Slovakia (10.6%), Latvia (6.5%) and the Czech Republic (5.7%).

Secondly, it is by no means certain that A8 nationals will continue to work in low-skilled occupations: no longer are they subject to any legal restrictions on their choice of employment, nor are there any limits on the length of their stay in the UK or restrictions on them being joined by family members.¹³ The preliminary findings from recent research on the impact of EU accession on low-wage migrants in the UK are illustrative (Anderson *et al.* 2006). This ongoing research looks at migrant workers in the agriculture, construction, hospitality and au-pair sectors. Interviews with A8 nationals found that a good number, although by no means all, had changed from more elementary occupations to more skilled posts 6-8 months after EU enlargement. Employer interviews revealed how some A8 nationals generally had higher expectations in terms of their pay and working conditions, especially those employed in food-processing and agriculture. In contrast, many non-EU nationals interviewed (from Ukraine and Bulgaria) felt that EU enlargement had made it harder for them to find work and to keep their jobs, although some employers emphasised a preference for non-EU workers. Agricultural employers felt it was much easier to retain workers recruited through the SAWS scheme since A8 nationals were now more likely to change jobs (Anderson *et al.* 2006: 80-81). A significant proportion (30 per cent) of non-EU nationals also believed conditions at work had deteriorated (Anderson *et al.* 2006: 56) – a worrying development given the initially difficult nature of their work.¹⁴

This outline of the UK's evolving system of 'managed migration' has touched upon some examples of how policy is translated into daily practice. It is debatable whether policy always squares with either employers' needs or migrants' interests, and, more contentiously, with the UK's pledges on overseas development. Given the present experience of low-skilled migration schemes, Ruhs and Chang (2004) are right to highlight the need to promote the 'core rights' of labour migrants. Exploitation by employers or labour agencies has been widely reported (Shakhno 2004; TUC 2004), from migrant workers being charged unauthorised fees by recruitment agents to find them work (a practice which is illegal in the UK), to rates of pay being less than promised. Although migrants are permitted to seek alternative work within their designated occupation or sector, it may prove difficult for labour migrants on low-skilled schemes such as SAWS or SBS to change employer. Their (often crowded and substandard) accommodation is regularly provided by employers as well as their transport to work, whilst it is not unknown for employers to seize and withhold their

¹³ The vast majority of A8 migrants to the UK have been young (83% aged 18-34) and without any dependents (only 3% have had dependents under the age of 17 with them) (Home Office *et al.* 2006). Anecdotal evidence, however, indicates that some have recently been joined by family members (see Whewell 2006).

¹⁴ The authors point out that other factors besides EU enlargement – e.g. length of stay, increase in the UK's legal minimum wage – should be taken into account in the analysis of the situation of migrant workers in the UK.

passports. Any attempts to make migration ‘development-friendly’ would have to start by addressing these immediate concerns, not to mention the exorbitant fees that potential migrants sometimes pay to agents before leaving their home country (Barber *et al.* 2005).

Exploitation of migrants in the UK is most prevalent where workers are unaware of their rights or face barriers to enforcing them, where they have incurred debts to finance the initial migration, and where their legal status restricts their freedom of employment.¹⁵ Although there are cases of more skilled migrants such as nurses being exploited, for example when employers refuse to recognise their overseas nursing qualifications and pay them as ‘care assistants’ (Anderson and Rogaly 2005: 34-35), it is in low-skilled sectors where exploitative practices are most apparent. These sectors rely on migrant workers precisely because they can be employed on a casual basis, will accept the precarious and unpleasant nature of the work (at least in the short-term), and will comply to employer demands, unlike most native workers or more settled immigrants.¹⁶ These characteristics of the workforce are requisite for the efficient functioning, at least in the UK’s more labour-intensive sectors, of what has become a highly flexible and competitive labour market. In the food industry, for instance, the dominant position of the major supermarkets means that suppliers need to keep up with their ever-changing demands. Farmers must be able to ‘hire and fire’ workers at short notice in order to respond to the demands made on them by supermarkets, and rely on employment agencies to supply the required labour without delay. Gangmasters, who specialise in flexible and cheap labour in the agricultural and horticultural sectors, often fill this market niche (Lawrence 2004: 35-37). One gangmaster will either supply all the workers to the farmer, or subcontract part of the work to a second gangmaster who will provide any additional labour required. Each link in the subcontracting chain will take his or her cut with the effect that the migrant worker will invariably be paid very little. The relationship between employer and worker will as a result be quite ambiguous and susceptible to abusive practices, whilst reputable firms may often find themselves unwittingly employing irregular migrants (Anderson and Rogaly 2005: 32-33).

Deregulation in the 1980s has allowed companies to subcontract a wide range of work to labour agencies (e.g. cleaning, security, construction, and hospitality work). Indeed, the construction industry today has no large companies, with all work being provided by labour contractors (RSA

¹⁵ Experience has shown, however, that a more secure immigration status does not necessarily prevent migrant workers from being exploited. Exploitation of A8 nationals continues, as well as of Portuguese and Greek migrants, all of whom as EU citizens benefit from free access to all the UK labour market (see Lawrence 2005).

¹⁶ Although the closure of the majority of coal mines in the 1980s meant that many former miners sought temporary work in agriculture (Anderson and Rogaly 2005: 28-29).

2005: 9). The widespread practice of subcontracting has made migrant construction workers, the majority of whom work as labourers, a fairly invisible part of the industry. Another contributing factor to this is the fact that many arrive on 'self-employed' visas since it is not possible to obtain a permit for work in construction, nor does any low-skilled migration scheme exist for this type of work. Similarly, migrants working in contract cleaning tend to either be on student or business visas. Others will have been granted settlement rights in the UK, or be working without any formal documentation (Anderson and Rogaly 2005: 27-28).

Whilst general migration policy may stipulate the procedures and rules to regulate the employment of migrant workers, formal recruitment and entry policies are implemented through the process of subcontracting by a range of labour-market actors. The lack of clarity in employer-employee relations (e.g. in terms of responsibility for health and safety) can lead to labour migrants being exploited and abused. Whether or not legal migrant workers take advantage of UK employment law to deal with problems relating to wages, working conditions or discrimination at work, it should be borne in mind that they do, at least in principle, have recourse to domestic law, unlike migrants working without a legal status. Whereas it is unlikely that temporary labour migrants will do so out of fear that their contract will be terminated and they will lose their right to work in the UK (Barber *et al.* 2005: 10), migrants who benefit from a permanent right to remain in the UK are in theory in a better position to go through what can be a lengthy process.

Encouragingly, there is some evidence that A8 nationals are beginning to report instances of employer exploitation and abuse to unions (TUC 2004). In this sense, EU enlargement gave a greater level of security to up to 70,000 A8 nationals estimated to have been working without documentation in the UK prior to May 2004. This, with the exception of the small-scale domestic worker regularisation programme in the late 1990s (Anderson 1999), constitutes the only recent example of an 'amnesty' for irregular migrants in the UK.

Irregular migrants

The system of 'managed migration' has failed in its pledge to reduce the flows of irregular migrants into the UK, and to protect the most vulnerable from exploitative and often dangerous practices (RSA 2005). In February 2004, the north-west of England was the scene of tragedy when 23 Chinese cocklepickers drowned in the rapidly rising waters in Morecambe Bay. The workers had been smuggled into the UK and were working illegally. The tragedy brought pressure to bear on the

government to enact the 2004 Gangmasters' Act, which is a compulsory licensing scheme for labour providers who operate in the agriculture, shellfish gathering and associated processing and packaging sectors. The Act seeks to ensure that gangmasters conform to health and safety regulations, and pay their workers the national minimum wage. It remains too early to speculate on whether this has improved conditions for migrant workers in these sectors.

Whilst it is known that the Chinese cocklepickers were unable to read the notices in English warning of the dangers of working in the bay, it is far from certain that they would have heeded the warnings. Anderson and Rogaly (2005: 50) point out, in their own research on forced labour and migration to the UK, that a 'climate of insecurity and fear' is common in the informal economy. Irregular migrants often fear the repercussions from employers if they were to ask for improved working conditions or better wages. They also fear making themselves known to the UK authorities with the risk that they will then face deportation, possibly back to a country where they owe money to the smugglers who originally financed their migration. Anderson and Rogaly (2005: 58) continue:

'[The] conflation of immigration control and employment protection has created an unfortunate situation in which the enforcement of immigration controls and the protection of migrant workers against exploitation have come to be seen as the two sides of a single coin'

It is therefore not surprising that migrants are reluctant to make use of the European Convention on Human Rights, enacted in English law in 1998 as the Human Rights' Act, to assert their rights against forced labour abuses. Nor do many take advantage of UK legislation which makes trafficking in prostitution¹⁷ and trafficking people for exploitation¹⁸ into new criminal offences. More generally, only 17 employers between 1998 and 2004 were prosecuted under Section 8 of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act, which (as amended by Section 147 of the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act) makes it an offence to employ workers who do not have the legal entitlement to work in the position in question (Anderson and Rogaly 2005: 8). This small number does not simply suggest a degree of laxity on the part of the UK immigration authorities. It has often proved difficult to prosecute employers who can claim, justifiably or not, that they had innocently employed 'illegal' workers from employment agencies. In this case, the agencies would

¹⁷ See the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act.

¹⁸ See the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act.

be liable since they are responsible for checking the validity of workers' documentation. The fluid nature of employment patterns also makes enforcement difficult as low-skilled workers are often employed on a short-term basis and move locations to where their labour is required.

Without any large-scale regularisation programmes in the UK, the number of irregular migrants is simply based on estimates from border apprehensions, internal arrests and the number of visa applicants (Levinson 2005: 28) – the latter presumably in order to gauge the level of abuse. Official estimates of irregular migrants give a figure of up to half a million, although it is not precisely clear how this is reached. Irregular migrants include a range of categories from those who overstay their visas or have entered the country clandestinely, to immigrants who violate the conditions of their stay or asylum-seekers who have exhausted their rights of appeal. Whilst some residents may have no legal status in the UK, others who are legally resident may occasionally break the conditions of their stay – students, for instance, who sometimes work more than the permitted 20 hours during term-time.

Implementing the government's so-called 'firm-but-fair'¹⁹ approach to migration has proved both difficult and controversial, particularly where irregular migrants are concerned. The approach has encouraged a false dichotomy to emerge between 'wanted' and 'unwanted' migrants that fails to bring any nuance to debates about the costs and benefits of migration to the UK (Geddes 2005). Immigration status is not static, but changes to fit new political realities (e.g. the fall of the Berlin Wall or EU enlargement) or according to personal circumstances (e.g. when families break up or migrants apply for citizenship) (Ruhs and Anderson 2006). Neither does the 'firm-but-fair' approach offer any ethical guidance on the issue of irregular migrants who risk deportation if they report employer abuse to the UK authorities. Recent attempts to step up the number of foreign nationals being deported has seen the government try to circumvent its own Human Rights Act, not to mention its largely defunct 'ethical foreign policy', by agreeing memoranda of understanding with countries renowned for human rights' abuses. These memoranda are 'diplomatic assurances' from – so far – Jordan, Lebanon and Libya that deportees from the UK will not be subjected to mistreatment upon return (Human Rights Watch 2006).²⁰

¹⁹ The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act brought into law the stated aim of making the system 'fairer, faster and firmer'.

²⁰ At the same time, the UK government has overseen the release of foreign prisoners, some of whom were convicted of serious offences, without deportation being considered. To make matters worse for the government, some 'illegal immigrants' have also recently been found working as contract cleaners in the Immigration and Nationality Directorate buildings.

Asylum-seekers

Deporting failed asylum-seekers has proved equally difficult and even more controversial, especially when it has involved families and children. Indeed, some asylum-seeker families have as a result been allowed to stay if they have been in the UK for four or more years (35,855 people, including dependents, in 2004). Successive government legislation on immigration and asylum, though, has mainly aimed to tighten controls on asylum-seeking in an effort to distinguish between 'genuine' and 'bogus' applicants. The use of detention of the latter, including some children under the age of 5, is intended as a way to speed up their removal from the UK, but has been criticised widely by NGOs. The official aim of deporting more asylum-seekers than the number arriving in the UK has to date proved elusive. A court ruling last year, for example, prohibited Zimbabwean asylum-seekers from being deported back to their troubled country. This ruling, however, has recently been overturned.

The rise in asylum claims from the late 1990s to a peak in 2002 of 84,130 (103,100 if we include dependents) brought a degree of urgency to resolving the growing backlog of applications.²¹ Rights of appeal have been limited and 'fast-track' procedures introduced for applicants who originate from a list of countries designated 'safe' or who have travelled through 'safe third countries'. The choice of the UK as destination, not least when migrants fail to claim asylum in neighbouring European countries, is seen by some as *prima facie* evidence of a 'bogus' claim (Thomson 2003). Similarly, there is an assumption that people in need of asylum should claim it 'as soon as reasonably practicable'. This policy has resulted in some asylum-seekers being left without access to any financial or housing state support, thus adding to the number working in the informal economy with little or no state protection.

Additional measures have been taken, in light of the difficulties in removing more settled asylum-seekers, to postpone integration into the wider host society until the resolution of asylum claims. Asylum-seekers are not permitted to work. Nor do they, unless accommodated by relatives or friends, have any say in where they live in the UK. The policy to disperse asylum-seekers away from London and the South East has sometimes thrown the most vulnerable into hostile environments. Proposals to house asylum-seekers in self-contained accommodation centres

²¹ The main countries of origin were Iraq, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Somalia and China. The latest figures show applicants continue to arrive from four of those countries (minus Iraq), and include nationals from Eritrea and Iran. The six countries made up more than half the total number of claims for the first quarter of 2006.

similarly met with fierce resistance from local communities, and were subsequently shelved (Hubbard 2005).

The majority of asylum claims are refused on the initial hearing (81 per cent in 2005/06). Successful appeals against the original decision have routinely been around 20 per cent, a figure that suggests that asylum evidence is interpreted differently by individual case-workers. Recommendations include improving the quality assurance of these decisions, establishing specialist training and making country information more up-to-date (Sriskandarajah and Hopwood Road 2005). Since August 2005, people granted refugee status are no longer entitled to settle permanently, instead being given limited leave to remain for five years. After this, they can apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR). Those who do not qualify for refugee status, but cannot be returned home, are granted either 'humanitarian protection' or 'discretionary leave' – both are temporary statuses (up to five and three years respectively), but allow full access to the labour market and the main welfare provisions during the period of protection.

Turks in the United Kingdom: an 'invisible' population

Turks in the UK, more often referred to as the Turkish-speaking population, are a group that has been poorly and only sporadically researched. The relatively small size of Turkish-speaking communities, compared to the much larger ethnic minority groups originating from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent, has certainly contributed to what is seen as their 'invisibility' within multicultural Britain. In certain locales, for example Stoke Newington and other areas of Inner North London, Turkish immigrants are highly visible in the urban social landscape. The focus on 'race' as a signifier of difference between white and non-white UK residents has left little room to consider issues affecting ethnic minority groups which do not fit into this dichotomised model, such as Turkish-speaking residents (Enneli *et al.* 2005). Mehmet Ali (1985), for instance, has often referred to Turkish-speaking communities in the UK as a 'silenced minority' due to the rising number of racial attacks on them which have gone largely unreported. Another contributing factor to their 'invisibility' in the UK context is the perception that they are a highly self-sufficient group, for example because many find employment in the 'ethnic' labour market. These strong kinship and social networks, however, disguise many of the social problems faced by large sections of the Turkish-speaking population, a significant number of whom live in some of the most deprived areas

in London. The population is disproportionately engaged in low-wage employment, whilst many of the Turkish-speaking youth leave education with few qualifications. Another concern is the poor level of English amongst many first-generation immigrants.

The migration of Turkish speakers to the UK displays distinct historical patterns and trajectories, having arrived at different times and for a range of reasons. Three immigrant groups make up the Turkish-speaking population: Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks and Kurdish Turks. *Turkish Cypriots*, estimated to number 120,000 in the UK,²² were the first of the three groups to immigrate with arrivals peaking in 1960 and 1961. These years coincided with the withdrawal of British troops from the island (as a formal British colony), the loss of well-paid jobs tied to the British presence there, as well as opportunities in 1960s' London for small-scale entrepreneurs. Turkish Cypriots arrived mainly with their families, intending to settle in the UK, and emphasised their affinity with the 'British way of life' as a pragmatic attempt to be accepted (Robins and Aksoy 2001: 690). They were assisted by earlier Greek-Cypriot migrants in finding housing and employment – predominantly in the textile industry and in hotels and restaurants in London. Unlike the growing tensions back in Cyprus between the Greek and Turkish communities, it appears that their relations in the UK were relatively cordial because of their (albeit unequal) dependence on one another (Ladbury 1977). Over time, the Turkish Cypriots would become more self-sufficient as a group by establishing their own businesses (such as textile factories, retail and wholesale shops), whilst a significant number of Turkish-Cypriot women worked from home as dressmakers – a skill they had learned back in Cyprus.

Mainland Turks, estimated to number 80,000 today in the UK, arrived from the early 1970s, first as single men, then later in the decade joined by their wives and children. The military coup in Turkey in 1980 brought a subsequent wave of Turkish immigrants to the UK, many via Germany in 1984. Compared to Turkish migrants in other European countries, there has been very little research on mainland Turks in the UK. Mehmet Ali (2001) suggests the characteristics of migrants to the UK in the 1970s and 1980s were quite different. Many of the 1970s' cohort were originally from rural areas in Turkey whereas a significant proportion of immigrants from Turkey in the 1980s were

²² This, and subsequent, estimates are for the total British- and foreign-born Turkish-speaking population. The 2001 census, based on country of birth, shows much smaller numbers but does not distinguish between different ethnic groups born in the same country. Cypriot-born (Greek and Turkish) migrants numbered 77,000; Turkish-born 54,000.

intellectuals, including students, and highly-educated professionals. It is likely that both cohorts received support from the Turkish Cypriots living in London (Enneli *et al.* 2005).

The most recent addition to the Turkish-speaking population in the UK is political refugees from south-eastern Turkey who fled after being displaced by the conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and government forces. The *Turkish Kurds*, estimated at 50,000 (most of whom again live in London), arrived spontaneously from the late 1980s in unexpectedly high numbers (4,650 claimed asylum in 1989). The response of the UK government of the time, which suggested that many of those seeking asylum were in fact 'economic migrants', was to impose visa requirements on all Turkish nationals coming to the UK. In the following years, only a minority would be granted refugee status, but many Turkish Kurds would continue to arrive from the Marash and Sivas areas of Turkey through the process of chain migration. The lack of infrastructures in place to deal with these spontaneous arrivals from Turkey meant that authorities in the UK were caught unprepared, and had, as a result, to rely on voluntary community organisations and churches in London to take care of the refugees' immediate housing and welfare needs (Wahlbeck 1999: 72-74, 156-159). Like the Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks before them, Kurdish refugees from Turkey built on already existing networks of support to help them settle in the UK, although many found it more difficult find steady employment and save money. This was partly due to the less favourable economic conditions they faced in the early 1990s, by which time the UK's textile industry had declined significantly – a sector which had, over previous decades, provided employment for many in the Turkish-speaking communities. It is also due, especially amongst Kurdish women, to their lack of education or training, and poor English-language skills. Unlike Turkish-Cypriot women, neither do they have a tradition of dressmaking, nor do they have the opportunity to learn skills such as using a sewing machine though training at work as much of the work is carried out at home and paid on piece rates (Enneli 2002).

All three groups belonging to the Turkish-speaking population in the UK mainly live and work in North London, particularly in the areas of Hackney and Haringey. With the decline of the country's textile industry, employment is principally in small retail shops (such as coffee and kebab houses) where the growing level of competition has tightened margins with the effect that the work is increasingly casual, low-paid and subject to long hours. These businesses are usually family-run ventures – often having been bought with relatives or friends – which, alongside other more

recently acquired shops such as estate agents, hairdressers and florists, serve the needs of what appears to be fairly tightly-knit Turkish-speaking communities. Whilst intermarriage between the three Turkish-speaking groups is not unknown, interethnic relations tend to be confined to the public sphere (i.e. at work or at school). The Kurdish community tends to keep to itself, particularly through membership of associations which, though not exclusively, often have a strong political engagement with the 'Kurdish cause'. Unlike Turkish Cypriots whose migration to the UK represented a break from the homeland, the Kurdish people's political exile from Turkey has granted them a freedom in London (as elsewhere in the wider Kurdish diaspora) to express their claim for recognition of the Kurdish identity. *Newroz* – an ancient spring celebration for Kurds and Persians which until 2000 was banned in Turkey – became an intensely political occasion during the 1990s because of its explicit celebration of the Kurdish identity and culture. The Kurdish television station MED-TV, which was broadcast from the UK and closed down in 2000 by the British authorities due to breaches of impartiality and claims that it incited people to commit criminal acts, provided another channel to highlight the Kurdish struggle for national recognition. It also highlighted how diaspora politics has the potential to escalate into what became a sensitive diplomatic issue between the UK and Turkey. Furthermore, since the enactment of the 2000 Terrorism Act in the UK, the PKK has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the UK government. Turkish Kurds who claim asylum in the UK stating persecution due to membership of, or even association with, the PKK could risk imprisonment under the Terrorism Act.

Wahlbeck (1999: 170) interestingly notes, in his observations of the *Newroz* festival, that no banners carried calls to 'fight unemployment among [Kurdish] refugees' or 'fight racism in the neighbourhood'. These more prosaic, but significant, concerns are common to Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks and Kurdish Turks alike, although in varying degrees. Kurdish men are more likely to be unemployed (not least because, as asylum-seekers, they are not entitled to work). Meanwhile, the growing resentment amongst sections of the UK population towards refugees has also meant that some Kurdish pupils in school have been reluctant to identify themselves as refugees out of fear that they would be bullied (Enneli *et al.* 2005). High rates of Kurdish pupils are excluded from schools, whilst many members of the Turkish-speaking communities in general do not feel their education in the UK was a good experience, and as a result end up regularly missing school lessons. As Enneli *et al.* (2005: 13) explain in their ongoing research on young Turks and Kurds in London, schools can be an 'alienating environment' for many due to the lack of teacher support for, or understanding of, the specific needs of Turkish-speaking pupils, most obviously Kurdish children

who have specific emotional and linguistic needs. Also, Turkish-speaking pupils often come from backgrounds where their parents, due to poor English-language skills, are unable to engage with the English school system or support their children's learning at home. The research, however, points out that this picture of educational disenchantment and failure, and the consequent growth in what is referred to as 'a destructive peer culture' of Turkish or Kurdish gang groups, tends to conceal the achievements of other Turkish-speaking students. These achievements have allowed some members of the community to enter professions such as law, accountancy and teaching, although they tend to then move away from the more deprived areas of London. Two of the common indicators of social deprivation, for example, are the number of people in rented social housing and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. In Haringey, 30% of its Turkish-speaking residents live in rented social housing whilst nearly eight out of ten Kurdish pupils (aged 15-16) had free school meals, compared to 65 per cent of mainland Turks and half of Turkish Cypriots – the average for the area being 40 per cent (Enneli *et al.* 2005: 10). Another issue, which affects the Turkish Cypriot community especially, is the growing number of elderly who find themselves socially isolated (due to changes to traditional family care structures), and therefore unable to access public services because of ill-health and poor levels of English.

On the other hand, the Turkish-speaking communities appear to have escaped any specific targeting under the general phenomenon of islamophobia. The tragedies of 9/11 and 7/7 have tended to focus the attention of the anti-terrorism campaigners on citizens of Arab countries and South Asia, including, in Britain, British-born second-generation members of these ethnic groups.

Conclusions

This overview of 'Turkish' migration to the UK highlights how UK policy, not to mention the absence of policies, towards Turkish-speaking migrants and their children has affected their life-chances here. The lack of official structures in place to cope with the arrival of Kurdish political refugees in the late 1980s serves as an illustration of how policy actors have relied on kinship and other more formal support networks within the Turkish-speaking communities to deal with social issues. However, there is no guarantee that community support mechanisms will always exist (as some elderly Turkish Cypriots are experiencing), or that these will work in the 'best interests' of those they ostensibly aim to help. Enneli (2002), for instance, found that many young Turkish-

speaking pupils, especially Kurdish and mainland Turks, carried out work experience as part of their school placement within the Turkish ethnic economy, for example in small shops owned by their parents or relatives and where they would have already frequently worked. The opportunity to gain work experience outside of the community labour market is in this way lost to many pupils.

There is also a lack of awareness within schools, compared to more 'visible' ethnic minority groups, of the disadvantages faced by Turkish-speaking youth. Enneli *et al.* (2005) recommend that more Turkish-speaking teachers are employed, and that help is better directed towards the Turkish-speaking population to help young people in their transition from school to the workplace. Parents, too often left unaware of how their children's education is progressing, need to be included in this process.

Of particular concern are Kurdish migrants who appear as the most disadvantaged group within the Turkish-speaking communities. A significant number are unemployed, unable to speak English well, and (according to the government's NEET categorisation) **Not in Education, Employment or Training**. UK asylum policy has, arguably, not served them well. Only a minority obtain refugee status, with the result that many are left unable to work and support their families. When they cannot find housing through kinship or community support networks, the current policy to disperse asylum-seekers has, on one occasion, resulted in the murder of a Kurdish man who had been housed in a poor Glasgow estate. Although it is suggested that Kurdish associations have generally been successful in both politically mobilising the Kurdish diaspora *and* dealing with their day-to-day welfare issues (Griffiths 2002), there remain some Turkish Kurds in the UK (especially women who do not often take part in public life) who are not involved in the associations, and may not be able to access the resources available (Wahlbeck 1999: 116-121, 162-163). It is also unclear, given the resumption of hostilities between the Kurdish PKK and the Turkish authorities, how asylum-seekers who indicate empathy with the PKK will obtain asylum in the UK given that the group is now listed as a terrorist organisation. Since the turn of the century, more than 10,000 people from Turkey (both Kurds and Turks) have sought asylum in the UK, although refusal rates are very high. Many may have remained without official permission, and added to the number of irregular migrants in the UK (but with no prospect of any large-scale regularisation, any figures would be highly speculative). The current trend in UK policy to restrict low-skilled migration to mainly EEA nationals, and with Turkey's future membership of the EU in the balance, and in reality still a long way off, there are

few opportunities for Turks without the requisite skills to migrate legally to the UK besides seeking asylum or through family reunion.

On a final note, it is to be hoped that the government's current policies to regenerate the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK will highlight the particular needs of the Turkish-speaking communities in London. The government's Social Exclusion Unit, launched in 1997, aims to bring about 'neighbourhood renewal' over the next two decades by focusing on communities living in areas where unemployment, crime, health and education are issues of concern. Future research will seek to understand whether the outcomes of such a scheme match the policy rhetoric.

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