

# Turkey: Growth and Expansion of the Third Sector

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Turkish imaginary towards the Mediterranean culture is strongly influenced by the country's geographical position, and its rich history of cultural diversity. The authors draw upon the Anna Lindh/Gallup Survey findings to highlight how Euro-Med relations and exchanges have increased in recent years, also thanks to the growth of Turkey's voluntary and community sector. Drawing on complementary polling evidence, the authors also highlight the expectations of Turkish citizens for on-going improvements in the future.

When asked about the countries associated with the Mediterranean region, 30% of Turkish respondents in 2009 and 50% in 2012 mentioned Turkey. Such an answer could be effected by the country's geographical position. At the same time, one of the reasons for the 20% increase could be Turkey's economic growth and power in the region, when many Mediterranean countries are living through an economic crisis.

## Perceptions of the Mediterranean region

In the Turkish imaginary Mediterranean culture combines a diverse and heterogeneous set of elements that have been derived from the cross-fertilisation of the Byzantine, Ottoman, European, Middle Eastern and Arab traditions. However, in recent years, conflicts in the Middle East have increased people's sense of insecurity and instability stimulating aspirations to emigrate to the northern shore. However, this trend is not wide-spread among Turkish people who state that if they could start a new life they would do it either in their own country

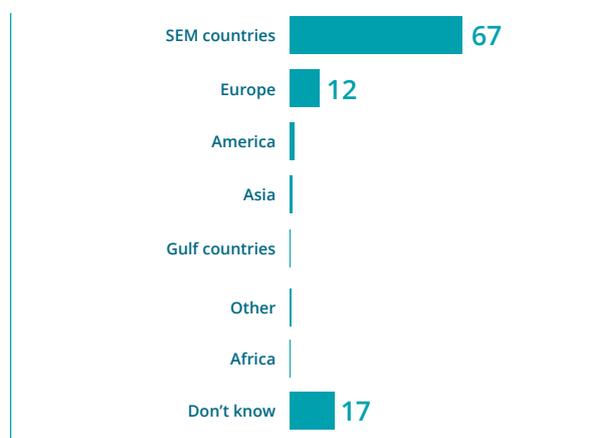
or in one of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries. This rate increased by 5% compared to the previous period, keeping Europe as a second desired destination. (Chart 28.1)

Despite the various levels of cooperation between Turkey and Europe, only 2% of Turkish respondents met people from European countries and this might be due to the strict requirements for visas to Europe, a chief grievance for many young Turks who feel discriminated in their freedom of movement. This reality clashes with the number of outbound trips forecast to reach 16 million in 2016, increasing by a compound annual growth rate of 8% in line with the expected growth in consumer expenditure, and thus leisure and recreation. Between 2009 and 2012, Turks and Europeans met mainly for business or work, through tourism, by living in the same neighbourhood, or by chatting on the internet, and the rate of business or work-related interaction rose from 15% to 43% in 2012.

## Social satisfaction and expectations for the future

Today, Turkish women are bank managers, doctors, lawyers, judges, journalists, pilots, diplomats, police officers, army officers. However, the participation rate of Turkish women in the work force is 30,1 % less than half of the EU average, and the number of women in the Turkish Parliament today is much smaller than in 1937, when the number of female parliamentarians amounted to 18 - 19% of the total MPs. Meanwhile, the number of crimes committed against women is on the rise, as is the number of girls forced into marriage at a young age (all this despite the positive developments in the legislation on violence against women). In recent years, changes have been applied to Turkey's penal code, which now foresees life sentences for honour crimes, regardless of whether they were committed by a minor or not.

**Chart 28.1**  
Preferred places to start a new life for Turks



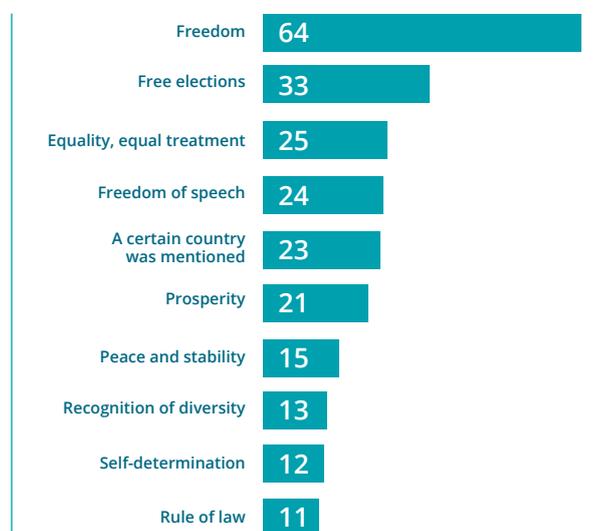
**Survey Question:** If you could start a new life, in which country of the world would you start it? **Base:** % of all respondents (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

When asked about personal life satisfaction, 62% of respondents consider their life better today than 5 years ago and are confident that it will improve even more in the next 5 years. Negative outlooks constitute around 32% of the answers. According to the Life Satisfaction Survey conducted by Turkstat in 2012, the percentage of individuals in Turkey declaring happiness was 61%, compared to 62,1% in 2011, with 9,9% of individuals declaring unhappiness in 2011 and 10,2% in 2012 (with a slight drop of happiness among the female population). On average, a growing level of education, brings about an increase in people’s perception of happiness, registering positive results for 60% of primary school graduates happy in 2012 compared to 67,4% of higher education graduates. According to the Survey, family life and being healthy are the values that made individuals most happy. The overall satisfaction from public services, social security, education, transportation and judicial services increased between 2011 and 2012.

### Expansion of the third sector and openness to diversity

For Turks, democracy denotes freedom, free elections, equality, equal treatment and freedom of speech, a stable country, prosperity, peace and stability, recognition of diversity, self-determination, and the rule of law, a definition limited to its formal aspects and which takes no direct account of considerations of respect for civic, human and minority rights. (Chart 28.2) It has, however, the advantage of being both unambiguous

**Chart 28.2**  
Words that come to mind when thinking about democracy in Turkey



**Survey Question:** When somebody is using the word DEMOCRACY, what are the words that come to your mind? (what do you think they are referring to?) **Base:** % of all respondents; % of the 10 most frequent mentions are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

and measurable, and offers a chance for securing and maintaining those other rights. An explanation of the relative success of democracy in Turkey, could be traced back to the Islamic and Ottoman heritage that might well have been conducive, in favourable circumstances, to the functioning of free institutions and respect for human rights. There are still issues that need to be resolved to improve democracy in the realm of the freedom of thought, freedom of demonstration, restrictions on the media etc., but some other initiatives have been launched in favour of democracy, as is the case of a conflict resolution and peace building initiative with Kurdish people. This is reflected by the Poll results, which show that Turkish people believe that people from different cultural, political or religious backgrounds should have the same rights or opportunity to participate in public life, even if they consider that diversity constitutes a threat to the stability of society.

Throughout history, the Abkhaz, Armenian, Bulgarian, Azerbaijani, Greek, Jewish, Kurdish, Laz , Pomak, Romani and Zazas ethnic and religious groups lived together respecting one another.

Over the past twenty years, Turkey’s third sector has taken on a heightened momentum of growth and expansion and civil society organizations (CSO) have taken on a new role as a critical element in an emerging democratic society. The number of emerging CSOs continues to grow and these operate with increasing sophistication. Although there exist various models of engagement, such as platforms and initiatives, the legal framework only recognizes associations and foundations as CSO legal entities. According to data from January 2014, there are 99.029 associations and 4.734 Foundations in Turkey. Civic engagement has a narrow yet deep nature in Turkey, where different social groups and regions only participate to varying degrees in civil society activities. As such, despite going through an era of transition and expansion, the civil society movement in Turkey has remained detached from the strive of a large portion of the population. Regional comparisons reveal differences in the extent of civic engagement, where urban and developed centres enjoy a more vibrant civic life.

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