

Insight Report

2030

Key Findings from the 2024 Work Permit Statistics

- In 2024, the total number of work permits issued to foreigners in Türkiye increased by 25.5% compared to the previous year, reaching an all-time high (2023: 239,835 → 2024: 300,852).
- **Nationality Breakdown:** Approximately 38.99% of the permits (117,334) were granted to Syrian nationals, followed by 10.73% (32,276) to Turkmenistan nationals, 5.74% (17,267) to Russian nationals, 5.20% (15,644) to Uzbek nationals, and 3.61% (10,869) to Kyrgyz nationals.
- **Gender Balance:** The share of women increased both proportionally (from 27.6% to 29%) and numerically (from 66,299 to 87,361) compared to 2023. This indicates a notable rise in the participation of foreign women in Türkiye's labor market.
- **Prominent Sectors:** The highest number of permits was issued in the Accommodation sector (31,785), followed by Domestic Personnel (25,165), Construction of Non-Building Structures (24,433), Wholesale Trade (18,685), and Manufacture of Wearing Apparel (13,401).
- **Annual Trend:** The number of work permits issued annually has increased approximately 6.6 times over the past 11 years, rising from 45,823 in 2013 to 300,852 in 2024.

Record-High Work Permits Issued in 2024

The total number of work permits issued to foreigners in Türkiye reached **300,852 in 2024—the highest figure recorded to date**. This represents a 25.5% increase compared to 2023. The sharp rise reflects both a growing demand for international labor in Türkiye and a significant expansion in the country's work permit issuance processes.

Foreign Work Permits : **Türkiye**

Demographic, Sectoral, and Regional
Distribution

Insight Report

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This report has been prepared based on the official 2024 work permit data to assess the regulatory framework, relevant legislation, and general trends concerning the foreign labor force in Türkiye at the demographic, regional, and sectoral levels. The study presents data analysis, legal framework reviews, and interpretive content. The information provided in the report has been compiled, analyzed, and evaluated primarily from statistics published by the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labour and Social Security, as well as current legislation and publicly available institutional reports.

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Work Permits: Annual Trends

Year	Number of Permits	Rate of Increase / Trend
2016	73,549	-
2017	87,182	18.5% ↑
2018	115,837	32.8% ↑
2019	145,232	25.3% ↑
2020	123,574	-14.9% ↓
2021	168,103	35.9% ↑
2022	212,682	26.5% ↑
2023	239,835	12.8% ↑
2024	300,852	25.5% ↑

Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Between 2016 and 2024, the number of work permits issued in Türkiye generally followed a steady upward trend. However, in 2020, the number of permits dropped by 14.9% due to restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. A notable recovery followed in 2021, with a sharp increase of 35.9%. This upward trajectory continued, culminating in a record-high of 300,852 work permits issued in 2024.

This development can be attributed both to the post-pandemic revival of economic activity and to the growing tendency of foreign nationals to seek employment in Türkiye. Annual growth rates highlight key points in this trend: 18.5% in 2017, 32.9% in 2018, and 25.4% in 2019, followed by a pandemic-related decline in 2020. The years 2021 and 2022 then saw significant rebounds of 36.0% and 26.5%, respectively. Although the growth rate slowed to 12.8% in 2023, it regained momentum in 2024, rising to 25.5%.

This consistent upward trend reflects the impact of Türkiye's digital application system and various facilitative measures, which have improved access to work authorization for both skilled and unskilled foreign labor. The stable increase in permit numbers demonstrates the country's growing capacity and responsiveness in managing foreign labor policies.

Periodical Trend Analysis: 2016–2024

2016–2019: Rising Demand, Digitalization, and Growth

During the 2016–2019 period, the work permit system in Türkiye became more accessible and functional due to the simplification of application procedures and the transition to a fully digital system. The shift to receiving applications exclusively through the e-Government (e-Devlet) platform marked a significant turning point in reducing informality and ensuring greater traceability of permit processes. This structural transformation enabled more effective management of the growing demand and contributed to the regular inclusion of foreign labor into the formal system.

In 2020, the economic contraction and reduced international labor mobility caused by the COVID-19 pandemic led to a 14.9% decrease in the number of work permits issued, falling to 123,574. However, a swift recovery began in 2021, with permit numbers increasing by 36.0% in 2021, 26.5% in 2022, and 12.8% in 2023. In 2024, the number of work permits rose by a further 25.5%, reaching 300,852—surpassing even the pre-pandemic growth trajectory.

Pandemic and Recovery Period

Syrians Under Temporary Protection^(*)

Work permits issued to Syrians under temporary protection have been one of the key factors contributing to the annual growth trend. Of the 300,852 work permits granted in 2024, 117,334—representing approximately 39%—were issued to Syrian nationals under temporary protection. This highlights Türkiye's continued efforts to both uphold its protection responsibilities and develop policies that promote the regular employment of foreign labor.

* The available data does not clearly disaggregate the work permits issued to Syrian nationals by their legal status—whether they are under temporary protection, hold residence permits, or fall under other categories. However, given that the vast majority of Syrians residing in Türkiye are under temporary protection, it is assessed that a substantial portion of these permits were likely granted to individuals within this status.

Nationality Breakdown: Top 6 Nationalities

Nationality	Number of Permits	Share (%)
 Syria	117,334	39
 Turkmenistan	32,276	10.7
 Russia	17,267	5.8
 Uzbekistan	15,644	5.2
 Kyrgyzstan	10,869	3.7
 Iran	10,466	3.4
Others	96,996	32.2

Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Of the 300,852 work permits issued in 2024, 117,334—or approximately 39%—were granted to Syrian nationals. This figure serves as an important indicator of the level of labor market participation among Syrians residing in Türkiye. Syrians were followed by Turkmenistan nationals, who received 32,276 permits, accounting for 10.7% of the total. This distribution may reflect not only the geographical and cultural proximity between the respective countries and Türkiye, but also the labor demand emerging in specific sectors.

Labor Dynamics
in the Context of
War

The regional mobility triggered by the Russia–Ukraine war has also been reflected in Türkiye’s foreign labor statistics. In 2024, Türkiye issued work permits to 17,267 Russian and 3,464 Ukrainian nationals. These figures represent a slight decrease compared to 2023 (Russia: 17,785; Ukraine: 3,368). This change can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the uncertainties caused by the ongoing conflict, the dynamics of bilateral relations, local labor market needs, and differences in administrative procedures.

Within the framework of its international obligations and national legislation, Türkiye continues to regulate the access of foreign nationals from various countries to its labor market. While the current legal provisions allow foreigners who meet certain criteria to participate in the workforce, the scope of this access may vary depending on the applicant’s legal status and evolving conditions shaped by administrative practices. In this context, Türkiye maintains its position as one of the primary destination countries in the region.

Context and
Opportunities

Sectoral Concentration: Top 5 Sectors

Sector	Number of Permits	Share(%)
Accommodation	31,785	10.6
Domestic Workers	25,165	8.4
Construction of Non-Building Structures	24,433	8.1
Wholesale Trade	18,685	6.2
Manufacture of Wearing Apparel	13,401	4.5
Others	187,383	62.2

Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Dominance of the Service Sector

There is a significant demand for foreign labor in the accommodation and domestic care services sectors. The revival of the tourism industry, along with a growing societal need for home-based care and support services, has led to increased employment of international workers in these areas. In particular, in major cities and touristic regions, the role of foreign workers in the labor force has become more prominent, as they contribute to sustaining the quality of services.

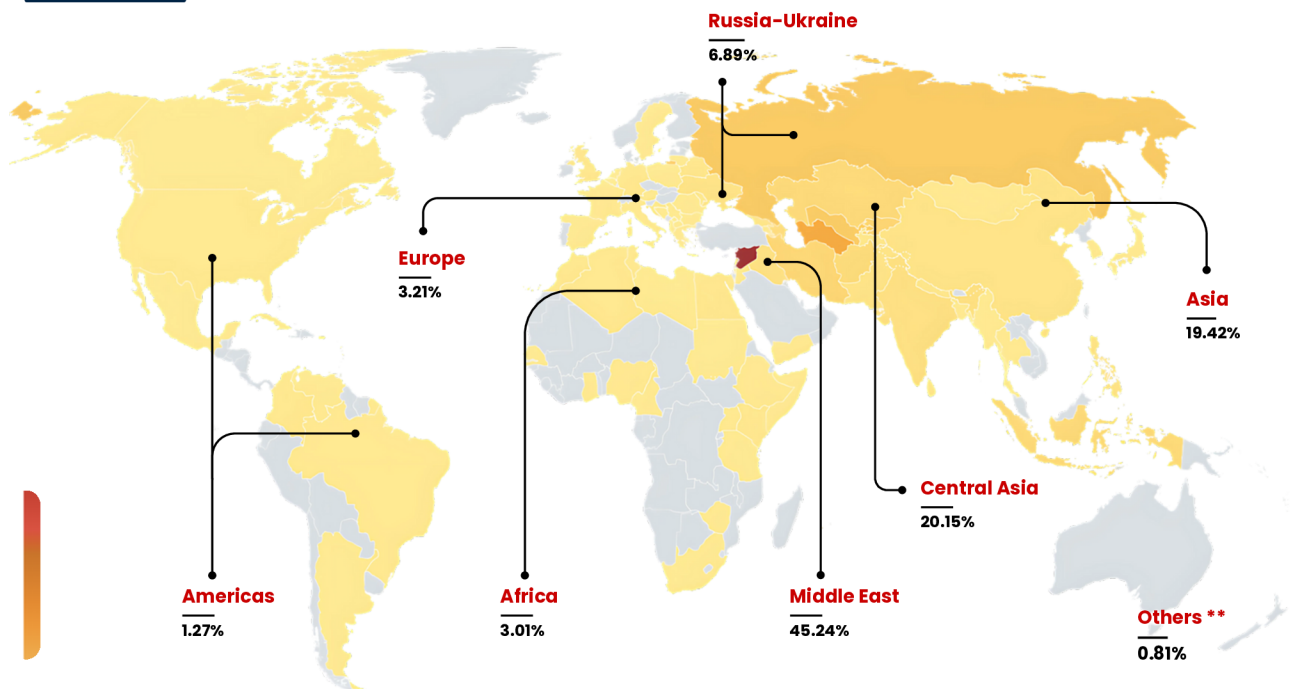
The acceleration of infrastructure projects and increased capacity in the manufacturing industry have sustained the demand for foreign labor in non-building construction and production-oriented sectors. These sectors require both skilled and unskilled labor, and employment levels have remained relatively stable. This trend highlights the role of foreign labor in supporting economic growth processes.

Continuity in Construction and Manufacturing

Diversifying Opportunities

The demand for foreign labor in sectors such as finance, education, healthcare, information technology, and logistics reflects the multi-sectoral structure of the Turkish economy. This trend indicates a potential increase in work permit applications for foreign workers in specialized fields and emerging service models in the coming period.

Regional Distribution: Global Overview ^(*)



Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

**Indicates the share categorized as "Other" in the data.

Impact of Middle East–Driven Labor Mobility and Protection Statuses

Foreign labor mobility toward Türkiye is shaped by factors such as geographical proximity, regional interaction, and ongoing crises. Applications from neighboring countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Iran stand out among the most prominent, influenced by the legal status of applicants as well as prevailing regional and economic conditions.

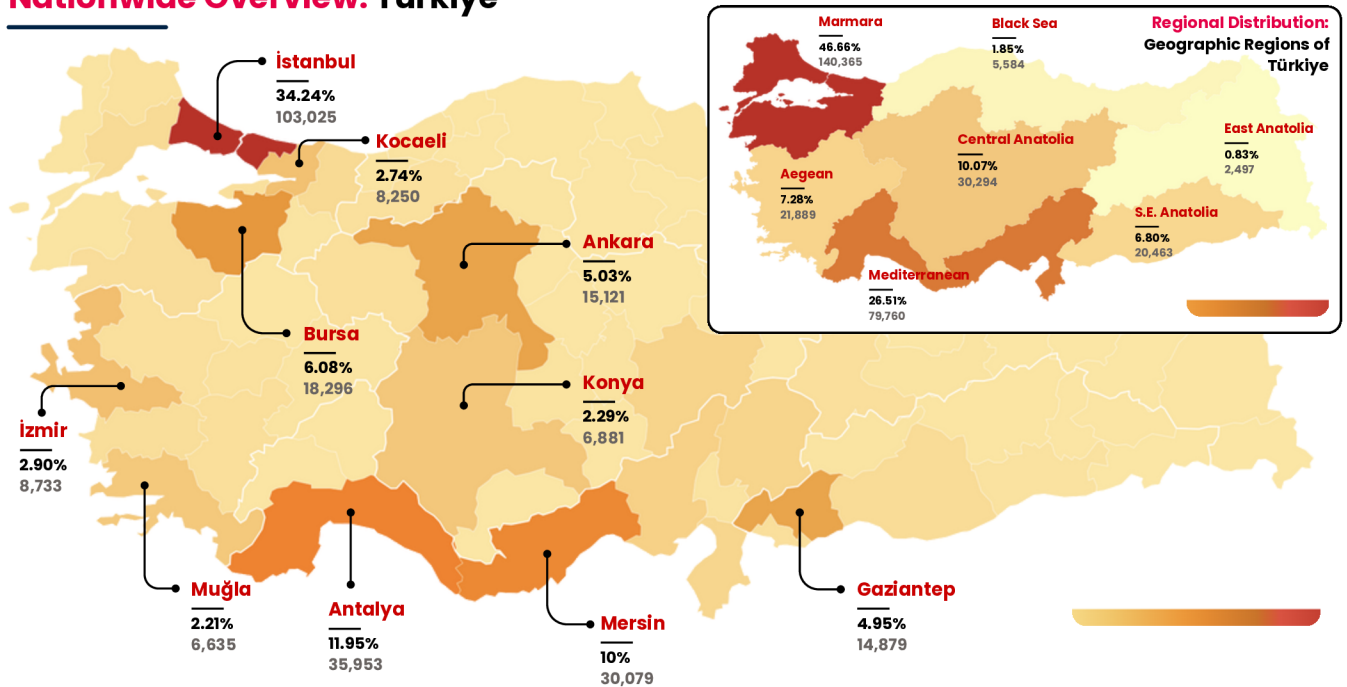
Ongoing economic ties and patterns of human mobility between Türkiye and Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan play a significant role in the employment of nationals from these countries, particularly in service and domestic support sectors. Similarly, foreign nationals from South Asian countries are predominantly employed in sectors such as accommodation, cleaning, and caregiving services.

Asia's Divided Landscape

Global Diversity and Skilled Employment

Foreign labor originating from Europe and the Americas is predominantly employed in skilled sectors such as engineering, academia, healthcare, and technology. This reflects the sectoral and regional diversity of the foreign workforce in Türkiye.

*The information presented here is based on the author's own observations and analyses and does not reflect the official views of any institution or individual.

Nationwide Overview: Türkiye^(*)

Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Marmara Region Takes the Lead

As of 2024, Istanbul recorded the highest number of work permits issued, positioning the Marmara Region well ahead of others. With 103,025 permits—accounting for 34.24% of the national total—Istanbul reflects both its economic appeal and the high demand for labor. Other industrial hubs in the region, such as Kocaeli, Bursa, Sakarya, and Tekirdağ, also stand out with notable numbers of work permits. This distribution highlights both the economic dynamism of the Marmara Region and the continued demand for foreign labor.

The Mediterranean and Southeastern Anatolia regions—home to cities such as Antalya, Mersin, Muğla, Adana, and Gaziantep—also stand out with a significant number of work permits issued. High demand for seasonal labor, particularly in tourism and agriculture, makes these regions attractive to foreign workers. In the Aegean Region, cities like İzmir, Aydın, and Manisa come to the fore, reflecting the region's diverse employment opportunities in agriculture, industry, and services.

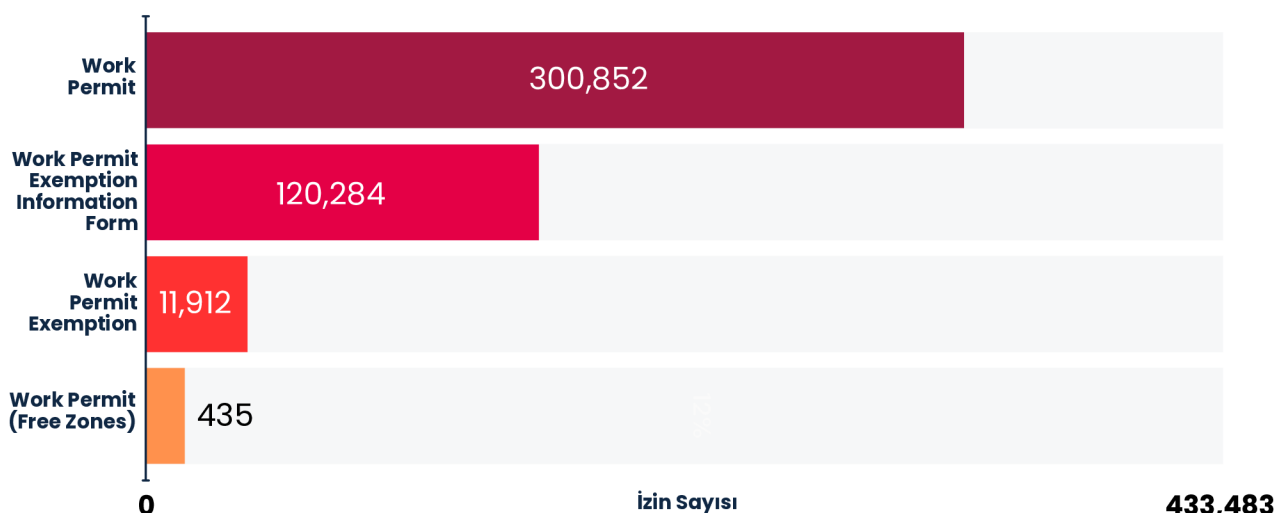
Southern and Aegean Regions Provide Balance

Central Anatolia Keeps Pace, While Eastern and Black Sea Regions Remain Reserved

The Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, and Black Sea regions hold relatively lower shares in the overall distribution of work permits. This is largely attributed to the concentration of industry, tourism, and service sectors in the western and southern coastal provinces. However, provinces such as Ankara, Kayseri, and Konya stand out within their respective regions by recording higher numbers of work permits, indicating that foreign labor is finding employment opportunities at the local level.

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Number of Permits by Type of Work Authorization



Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Supporting Formal Employment

There was a significant increase in the number of documents issued under the "Exemption Information Form" related to work permit exemptions. **This rise is considered a result of the regulatory amendment that came into effect on 15 October 2024, which extended the scope of this practice to include individuals under Temporary Protection and holders of Humanitarian Residence Permits.⁽¹⁾** The objective of this amendment was to prevent informal employment and to promote formal labor market access for individuals under protection statuses. Through the "Work Permit Exemption Information Form" issued to eligible individuals by the competent Ministry, a total of 120,284 people legally obtained the right to work in 2024.

Work permit exemption procedures are also available for foreigners who are not under any protection status. In 2024, a total of **11,912** individuals who met the necessary conditions and were approved by the Ministry were granted work permit exemptions. For foreigners intending to work in free zones, a separate evaluation process is applied. Within this scope, **435** individuals were issued work permits in 2024.

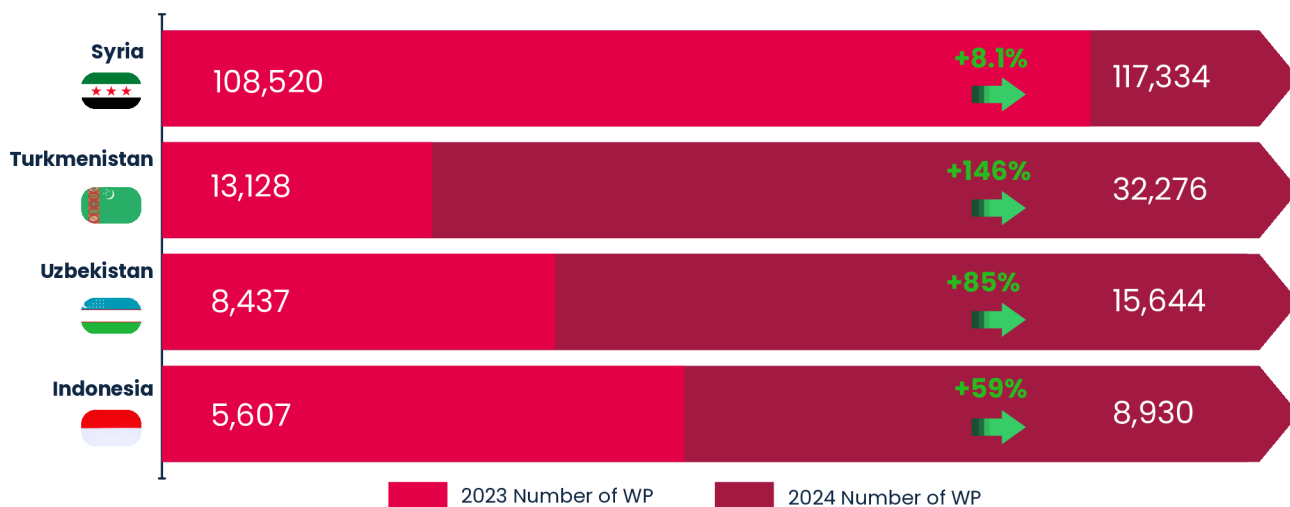
Other Foreign Nationals and Free Zone Permits

Total Number of Foreign Nationals Granted Work Authorization

When all types of permits and exemptions are considered together, the total number of foreigners who were legally authorized by the Ministry to work in Türkiye in 2024 was recorded as **433,483**. This figure reflects the scope and level of access of Türkiye's efforts to ensure the regular and formal employment of foreign labor.

⁽¹⁾ Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Regulation Amending the Implementing Regulation of the International Labour Force Law, Official Gazette, 15 October 2024, No. 32693, RN: 20241015-1. Available online: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/10/20241015-1.htm>

Nationality-Based Increase in Work Permit Applications: Key Highlights



Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security | DGILF

Syrians Remain the Largest Group

In 2024, Syrian nationals continued to represent the largest group, with **117,334** work permits issued—an 8.1% increase compared to the previous year. This growth is linked not only to the increasing labor market participation of Syrians who have resided in Türkiye for many years, but also to the overall size of the registered Syrian population in the country.

In 2024, the number of work permits issued to Turkmenistan nationals rose sharply by **146%**, reaching **32,276**. This notable increase is considered to be linked to the growing labor demand in the service and domestic care sectors, as well as the influence of existing social networks among Turkmen individuals in Türkiye.

Notable Increase from Turkmenistan

Labor Mobility from Central Asia and Neighboring Countries

In 2024, work permits issued to nationals of Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan—as well as to citizens of Afghanistan and Azerbaijan—increased by rates ranging from **25%** to **85%**. These rises are seen as indicators of significant labor mobility and growing interest among these nationalities in participating in Türkiye's labor market.

Conclusion

Work permit data in Türkiye reflects both the contribution of foreign labor to the national economy and the emerging regional and sectoral needs within the labor market. Analyses from the 2023–2024 period reveal notable increases in work permits issued to nationals of **Syria, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan**. In particular, the upward trend among nationals from Central Asian countries serves as an important indicator for understanding the influence of regional employment policies and the direction of migration flows.

A review of provincial distribution shows a clear concentration in major cities such as **Istanbul, Antalya, Mersin, Bursa, and Ankara**. In contrast, the relatively low number of permits issued in the Eastern Anatolia and Black Sea regions can be attributed to the concentration of service, tourism, and manufacturing sectors in the western and southern coastal provinces.

In light of these findings, monitoring nationality-based trends, updating regional labor force planning, localizing social cohesion policies, and developing more coordinated support mechanisms with the private sector are all essential for the effective management of foreign labor. Furthermore, this data provides a strategic basis for field observations, labor gap analyses, and the design of targeted programs for specific groups—such as women, youth, and individuals under protection.

Despite the migration flows driven by regional crises in recent years, **Türkiye remains committed to implementing policies that promote the regular and formal employment of foreign labor**. Regulations facilitating labor market access for individuals under protection, alongside policies aimed at attracting skilled foreign workers, serve both humanitarian obligations and economic development goals. Digital application systems and facilitative procedures have enabled individuals from a wide range of nationalities to obtain legal access to employment. This approach reflects Türkiye's continued efforts to promote formal employment and its policy preference in support of integration processes.

In the coming period, grounding foreign labor practices in data-driven analysis will be key to developing inclusive, human-centered, and sustainable employment policies. Strengthening institutional capacity in this area will further support effective implementation and long-term impact.

References

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- Implementing Regulation of Law No. 6735
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- Regulation on the Employment of Foreigners Applying for and Benefiting from International Protection
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- Work Permit Statistics for Foreigners – 2023
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The sources referenced in this study are cited solely for the purpose of providing data. The information presented has been drawn from relevant legislation and publicly available sources; however, the interpretations and analyses reflect the author's own assessments. Therefore, the data and content included herein should not be considered as official views, decisions, or policies. For official use, it is recommended to consult the most current and original sources provided by the relevant institutions.

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