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**The role of migration-specific and migration-relevant policies in
migrant decision-making in transit**

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The Role of Migration-Specific and Migration-Relevant Policies in Migrant Decision-Making in Transit

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of migration-specific and migration-relevant policies in migrant decision-making factors for onwards migration or stay in Greece and Turkey. In this paper we distinguish migration-specific policies from migration-relevant policies in transit and destination countries, and in each case distinguish favourable policies from adverse policies. We test this categorisation through an original survey of 1,056 migrants in Greece and Turkey from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria collected in 2015. The results indicate that, in transit countries, the policies that most strongly influence migrants' decision-making are adverse migration-specific and migration-relevant policies. By contrast, in destination countries favourable migration-specific policies appear to be more important than migration-relevant policies there in determining the choice of destination.

Keywords: migration policies, transit migration, irregular migration, Greece, Turkey
JEL Codes: D01, F22, F66

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Executive summary

1. This paper assesses the role of policies in both transit and destination countries in influencing the decisions by migrants whether to move onwards and, if so, where to. It is based on data extracted from a 2015 survey of transit migrants from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria in Greece and Turkey, which identified the range of factors influencing migrant decision-making. Among these factors, policies were only one and often not the most significant.
2. The existing literature is scant and somewhat contradictory regarding the role of policies in influencing the migration decision. It has tended to focus on the choice of destinations by migrants leaving their country of origin, and is divided on the extent to which migrants specifically choose their destination, how much they know about policies in intended destinations, the accuracy of the information they have, and how important their perceptions of these policies may be in shaping their decisions. There has been far less research on the decision by migrants in transit, or on the significance of policies in transit countries. This gap has been partially filled by Occasional Paper 21 in this series.
3. This paper distinguishes migration-specific policies from migration-relevant policies in transit and destination countries, and in each case distinguishes favourable policies from adverse policies. Migration-specific policies aim to have a direct impact on migration. Migration-relevant policies do not have a specific migration aim, but can also have clear impacts on migration. In transit countries, favourable migration-specific policies include, for example, the availability of protection visas, and favourable migration-relevant policies might include policies that promote democracy and multiculturalism. Adverse migration-specific policies include restrictions on work, and adverse migration-relevant policies might include austerity measures. In destination countries, favourable migration-specific policies include access to the asylum system, and adverse migration-specific policies might include detention. Favourable migration-relevant policies include a strong social welfare system, and adverse migration-relevant policies include such measures as restrictions on the labour market.
4. Results varied across Greece and Turkey, and across the nationality groups surveyed. On the whole the most significant favourable migration-specific policy that motivated transit migrants to consider staying was access to legal status. The most significant adverse migration-specific policy that motivated them towards moving on was the threat of deportation. Access to work (whether legally or illegally) was the most important favourable migration-relevant policy, and overall austerity (and related rising unemployment rates) was the most important adverse migration-relevant policy.
5. In terms of the choice of a potential destination country, the most favourable migration-specific policies concerned acceptance rates and rights for asylum seekers, and the most favourable migration-relevant policies access to healthcare, education and language training along with a more general sense of democracy and freedom.
6. In summary, the results in this paper indicate that, in transit countries, the policies that most strongly influence migrants' decision-making are adverse migration-specific and migration-relevant policies. By contrast, in destination countries favourable migration-specific policies appear to be more important than migration-relevant policies there in determining the choice of destination.

7. Acknowledging the methodological and analytical limitations of this study, it yields four main policy implications:
- In the study countries, many policies – whether migration-specific or migration-relevant-, favourable or adverse – have a limited influence on the migration decision and, where they do, interact with other variables. Such a conclusion may not apply in other contexts.
 - The distinction between migration-specific and migration-relevant policies, while somewhat arbitrary, is important. In different contexts both sets of policies influence the decision-making of migrants in transit. In the case of the decision whether or not to move onwards, migration-relevant policies in transit countries are more important than migration-specific policies there. In other words, migration levers are not exclusively in the realm of migration policy-making.
 - The distinction between favourable and adverse policies is equally important. In this study, favourable migration-specific policies in destination countries appeared more influential than adverse policies in the choice of an intended destination. While positive policies in destination countries may potentially attract onward migration, there is no evidence here of the corollary that adverse policies may deter onward migration.
 - Without overestimating the influence of policies, it is clear that they may significantly influence decisions and therefore need to be communicated effectively. The respondents in this study did not necessarily have accurate information about policies, even those of the country where they were currently residing, and in some cases indicated that their decisions were clearly based on misinformation.
8. Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the case studies of Greece and Turkey in 2015 may be atypical of migration decision-making in other parts of the world. The sudden and massive inflow of migrants and asylum seekers, the inconsistency and dynamism of policies both in transit and potential destinations and the politicisation of the crisis, are all likely to have impacted on the links between policy and migrant decision-making, for example by generating a momentum that is hard for policy directly to disrupt.

1. Introduction

A question of growing relevance for migration policy is how policies in both transit and destination countries shape individuals' migration decisions regarding their routes and destination choices. Previous research from over a decade ago has indicated that asylum seekers have limited knowledge of migration-related policies, such as asylum processes, in destination countries (Havinga and Bockner, 1999; Gilbert and Koser, 2006). Changes in information technology and the increasing use of migrant smugglers are among the reasons why more recent research suggests that migrants do increasingly have knowledge of relevant policies in destination countries that inform their decisions, especially on destination choices (McAuliffe, 2016). Even more recently, research attention has turned to the role of policies in transit countries in influencing migration decisions (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016). This paper draws on existing research and the findings of a recent extensive survey among transit migrants in Greece and Turkey in 2015 to assess how transit and destination state policies influence migrants decision-making, including whether or not to migrate onwards or stay, and their destination choice.

In particular this paper builds on a previous paper 'Understanding Irregular Migrants' Decision-making Factors in Transit' to further assess the role of policies in migrants' decision-making. The previous paper examined migrants decision-making factors in transit based on a holistic model accounting for: conditions in the intended destination country, origin and transit countries, individual and social factors, and policies. As a follow-up to this research this paper focuses in further depth on the role of policies in this decision, recognising from the outset that migration decision-making is multifaceted and influenced by an entire array of factors.

This paper has two overarching goals: the first is to provide an analysis of the policy incentives and disincentives that existed in mid-2015 in Turkey and Greece, and their impact on migrant decision-making in relation to onward migration. The second goal is to examine migrants' perceptions of policy incentives and disincentives in destination countries and how these perceptions impact on their decision-making and destination choices.

The methodology for this paper includes a literature review on the role of policies in shaping migration flows, an examination of migration policies in Turkey to Greece, and further analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data from the *Understanding Irregular Migrants' Decision-making Factors in Transit* study. This study included the collection of 1,056 surveys with migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Syria (only included in Greece) in mid-2015 in Athens and Istanbul. As will be discussed in the paper, at the time of the fieldwork Greece's northern borders were closed and were only opened later in August 2015 after the research had been collected. In addition to the surveys, 60 follow-up interviews were conducted with migrants from this survey. The mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative methods allow for a comprehensive understanding of decision-making.

It is important to stress that the basis for this paper is migrants' perceptions of policies and how these perceptions shape their decisions. Migrants' perceptions of policies may be factual, somewhat factual, and at times completely misguided. We do not aim to assess the degree of accuracy of their perceptions, but to further understand how their perceptions, whatever these may be, influence their decisions while in transit countries.

For the purposes of this paper we use the term transit country quite broadly to apply to our case studies of Greece and Turkey. It is recognised that both of these countries are countries of immigration,

emigration, and transit. We use the term 'migrant' as a general description of mobile individuals that does not reflect their legal status.

Following this introduction, this paper is divided into four sections. The first provides an overview of the relationship between policies and migration and presents the policy categorisation used in this paper. This is followed by an introduction to the migration policies and case studies of Greece and Turkey. The next section presents the results using the field data to examine the role of policies in migrants' decision-making factors. The final section provides a discussion and conclusion.

2. The Relationship between Policies and Migration

Over the last two decades there has been a rising interest in migration policies. However, despite this interest there is a lack of consensus regarding defining, categorising, and evaluating migration-related policies (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). Perhaps the first distinction that is important to make is between policies with a migration intention and migration-relevant policies (Vezzoli, 2015). That is, both policies that are intended to have a migration consequence and policies not intended to have a migration consequence can have impacts on immigration and emigration flows (de Haas and Vezzoli, 2011).

Migration policies can be defined as "rules (i.e., laws, regulations, and measures) that national states define and implement with the (often only implicitly stated) objective of affecting the volume, origin, direction, and internal composition of immigration flows" (Czaika and de Haas, 2013: 489). Although this definition focuses on immigration flows, migration policies can have both an immigration and emigration objective (de Haas and Vezzoli, 2011). Migration policies themselves can be categorised in different ways. Skeldon (2007) highlights four categorisations of migration policies as: 1) immigration and emigration; 2) humanitarian; 3) integration and assimilation; and 4) migration and development. As Skeldon notes, these categorisations are clearly overlapping.

In regards to irregular migration a distinction can be made between the two categories of external and internal policies that aim to combat irregular migration (Broders and Engbersen, 2007; Triandafyllidou, 2015b). External policies are those directed at migrants currently outside the borders of the state, which includes: border controls, readmission agreements, and policies such as the recent European Union (EU)-Turkey deal (Broders and Engbersen, 2007; Triandafyllidou, 2015b). Internal controls focus on irregular migrants within the borders of the state, which includes: policies of deterrence and expulsion including employer sanctions, exclusion from public services, police surveillance, detention and incarceration (Broders and Engbersen, 2007; Triandafyllidou, 2015b). Further, Triandafyllidou (2015b) argues that irregular migration control policies can be considered as either 'gate-keeping' or 'fencing'. Gate-keeping refers to restricting access to the state and its institutions, which is primarily done through paper controls (Triandafyllidou, 2015b). Fencing, on the other hand, seeks to actively target irregular migrants for the intended goal of expulsion (Triandafyllidou, 2015b). This includes both detecting people in hiding already in the state and trying to deter or stop migrants in other countries entry to the state (Triandafyllidou, 2015b). States often use a combination of these policies to different degrees in an effort to prevent irregular migration.

It is well recognised that these forms of irregular migration control policies may have unintended consequences such as: increasing the use of people smugglers and making migration for asylum seekers and irregular migrants more dangerous. However, it is unclear the extent to which such policies deter

migrants, in particular in the European context. Further, there is a frequent assumption that if migrants are aware of the risks of migration (often resulting from such policies) they will choose not to migrate (Carling and Hernandez Carretero, 2008). Research in Senegal, in contrast, has demonstrated that migrants who are aware of the dangers still choose risky migrations, because they have few realistic alternatives (Carling and Hernandez Carretero, 2008). Alternatively, Pickering et al. (2016) found that irregular migrants in Indonesia changed their migration destination choices when informed of the “route to Australia (by boat) being ‘closed’, the risks associated with the boat journey and learning of tow-backs and legal channels for onward migration through UNHCR” (4). In this study the policies of the Government of Australia acted as a deterrent for seeking onwards migration to Australia (Pickering et al., 2016).

A central argument for over the past decade has been that migration, and in particular irregular migration policies in the European context, have not been effective (Castles, 2004; Cornelius et al. 2004; Düvell 2005; Boswell, 2007), as demonstrated by a continual increase in irregular migrant arrivals in Europe. De Haas and Czaika (2013) in contrast argue that in fact policies have actually had significant impacts on immigration and the “controversy reflects conceptual confusion about what constitutes migration policy effectiveness” (488). Policy effectiveness should be understood within a conceptual framework that examines the public policy discourse, migration policies on paper, implementation, and then migration outcomes (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). In this paper, we do not address the issue of policy effectiveness as this paper is focused on migrants’ perceptions of policies and how these perceptions influence their decision-making.

Policies may have an impact on how migrants determine their destination choices, however the evidence on this is relatively scant and to some extent contradictory. There is a popular view that asylum seekers and irregular migrants make well-informed decisions regarding their destination choices based on the welfare, residency, and protection policies there. However, there is limited evidence to support this position. This contrasts with findings from previous academic research that has demonstrated that asylum seekers in Europe generally had little or no knowledge regarding policies in their destination countries and often did not make decisions regarding their destination choices (Havinga and Bockner, 1999; Gilbert & Koser, 2006). It is recognised that this research is now slightly dated and the situation has changed over the past decade. More recent research demonstrates that asylum seekers are making more informed decisions regarding their destination choices. (Dimitraidi, 2015; Kuschminder and Siegel, 2016; Pickering et al., 2016), however, the accuracy of their information and how it is used in their decision is not always clear.

In order to examine the role of policies in migrant decision-making we use a categorisation of policies as shown in Table 1 that broadly reflects the existing literature. This categorisation will be used to differentiate policies, recognising the arbitrariness of the distinctions at times, between migration-specific and migration-relevant policies and in both transit and destination countries. Both distinctions are broadly valid in this case study, which may be more fluid in other settings. Finally the table distinguishes the intended adverse or favourable effects of these policies from the perspective of migrants.

In some cases favourable policies are simply the flipside of unfavourable policies, for example regarding protection visas, the right to work, and opportunities for regularisation. In some cases they are specific, for example in the case of transit countries opportunities for resettlement as well. Adverse migration-specific policies in transit countries include no protection status and no right to work for migrants and their families. These also may apply in destination countries, where additional adverse migration-specific

policies would include border patrols to restrict entry, return provisions and readmission agreements, detention and incarceration of irregular migrants.

Migration-relevant policies are also categorised as favourable and adverse. Favourable migration-relevant policies in both transit and destination countries include the ability of migrants (including irregular or regularised) to work, democracy, social protection benefits, access to education, access to health care, and language accessibility. These policies may have a clear migration impact in terms of determining accessibility of which migrant groups to the policies, however the policies themselves are not designed with a migration intention, but an intention to provide services to the citizens of the country. Adverse migration-relevant policies in both the transit and destination country context include austerity measures that cut social care subsidies, employer sanctions and employer raids. Although employer sanctions and raids are intended to protect citizens, from an irregular migrant perspective without the right to work these types of policies are unfavourable for their situation.

Table 1: Categorisation of Migration and Migration-relevant Policies

	Favourable Migration-Specific Policy	Adverse Migration-Specific Policy	Favourable Migration-Relevant Policy	Adverse Migration-Relevant policy
Transit Country	Protection visas (asylum or temporary protection status), right to work, opportunity for resettlement, regularisation	No protection status, no right to work for migrants	Ability to work, democracy, social protection benefits, access to education, access to health care, language accessibility	Austerity measures that cut social care subsidies, undemocratic policies, employer sanctions and employment raids
Destination Country	Protection visas (asylum or temporary protection status), right to work, opportunities for regularisation	Border patrols to restrict entry, Information campaigns to prevent movement, return provisions and readmission agreements, detention and incarceration of irregular migrants	Ability to work, democracy, social protection benefits, access to education, access to health care, language accessibility	Austerity measures that cut social care subsidies, employer sanctions and employment raids

Conceptually, Table 1 provides an overview of the various types of policies that can influence migrants' decisions whether to stay in a transit country, migrate onwards, their intended destination choice, or the decision to return. For this paper we do not have sufficient empirical data to assess the potential impact of all the policies distinguished here, and we try to compensate for this through the use of secondary data sources.

3. Greece and Turkey: A Brief History of Migration Flows and Policies

Greece and Turkey have been at the heart of the European migration crisis with Turkey being the primary sending point for migrants and Greece the frontline of entry to the EU. As of June 2016, Turkey hosted 2.7 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2016a) and approximately 229,000 refugees from other countries

including Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2016b). In 2015, 852,000 migrants arrived in Greece and as of 1 June 2016 157,119 people had arrived in Greece this year (IOM, 2016a, IOM, 2016b). The number of arrivals to Greece by sea significantly decreased in April and May 2016 as a deal between the EU and Turkey, which allows for the return of migrants without a valid asylum claim, formally came into effect on 20 March 2016. .

Irregular migration from Turkey to Greece has been a prominent policy issue in the EU for nearly two decades, with a raft of policies implemented in response to rising numbers. This section has two purposes: first it will provide a high level overview of the flows from Turkey to Greece and the policy response; and second, this section will examine the current policy environment in Turkey and Greece as transit countries.

3.1 Irregular Migration from Turkey to Greece

Since the 1990s, Turkey has experienced a migration transformation with the emergence of new forms of migration, including transit migration, irregular migrant labour, and asylum seekers and refugees (Vukašinović, 2011). Precise statistics on the number of irregular migrants in Turkey (as in all countries more generally) are difficult to obtain, but detection statistics have at least provided an indication of these flows. In 2000, flows of detected irregular migrants in Turkey were as high as 94,000 (İçduygu, 2011).

After decreasing between 2004 and 2006, irregular flows between Turkey and Greece rose again and UNHCR estimated they were at around 100,000 in 2011, with the land route between Turkey and Greece being the main crossing point from Asia to Europe (İçduygu, 2011). In a highly controversial decision challenged by the EU, the Prime Minister of Greece decided in early 2011 to build a 12.5km fence at the main crossing point from Turkey to Greece on the Evros River (completed in 2012). In addition, under Operation Aspida and with the completion of the fence, in summer 2012 Greece sent 1,800 troops to control the border with Turkey . In Turkey, EU funding was used to open detention centres and a small number of raids occurred on the coast (Düvell, 2013). While flows across Greece's land border decreased significantly, sea arrivals from Turkey to Greece began to increase from 2012-2014, with unprecedented arrivals occurring in 2015.

Through the recent history of irregular migration from Turkey to Greece, readmission has also been a central component of migration management policy and deterrence. In 2002, Greece and Turkey signed a readmission agreement permitting the return of irregular migrants transiting through Turkey to Greece to be sent back to Turkey. Based on this agreement, from 2002-2010 a reported 65,300 individuals were flagged by Greece for readmission to Turkey. However, only 10,124 of these individuals were accepted by Turkey for readmission and reports indicate that only 2,425 of these accepted individuals were actually sent by Greece and readmitted to Turkey (İçduygu, 2011). It is clear that there are problems with the implementation of the Readmission Protocol between Greece and Turkey (Triandafyllidou, 2013). Triandafyllidou (2013) finds that Turkey only appears to accept the return of third country nationals for which it shares a direct border (ie: Georgia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia) and that second, Turkey delays response to readmission requests, which then exhausts the time-limit in the Readmission Protocol so that readmission is no longer possible. Although readmission exists between Greece and Turkey, in practice there is a large gap in implementation.

In 2012, after several years of negotiation, Turkey signed a readmission agreement with the EU that came into effect in 2014. No figures have been found regarding the number of people readmitted under the EU-Turkey readmission agreement. One of the critical differences between these earlier resettlement

policies and the current controversial EU-Turkey proposal is that now the EU is paying Turkey to receive back refugees, and also directly linking readmission with resettlement.

This short overview illustrates that irregular migration from Turkey to Greece has been a pertinent issue over the past two decades with a number of policies implemented in an effort to curb the irregular migrant flows. It is evident from the unprecedented flows in 2015 that these controls did not stop the flows, although they do appear to have changed the primary access route from land to sea, making the migration journey more dangerous, although no less desirable.

3.2 Migration Policies in Greece and Turkey

Greece and Turkey have substantially different migration policies. In terms of asylum seekers and refugees, Greece is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, and is thereby obliged to accept asylum claims from citizens of all countries in the world. Turkey, on the other hand, is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees with a geographical limitation to citizens of European countries. In 2013 the Turkish Parliament adopted the country's first migration law, termed the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, which came into force in April 2014 (Kilberg, 2014). This law provided a status of 'subsidiary protection' or temporary protection for migrants fleeing certain countries. Since coming into force, this law has been applied to migrants from Syria and Iraq (but not Afghans or Pakistanis) in Turkey. The implication of this law is that arrivals from Syria and Iraq can immediately receive this status without going through refugee status determination procedures (Ineli-Ciger, 2015). However it also means that migrants with temporary protection cannot necessarily acquire refugee status or naturalisation over the long-term (Ineli-Ciger, 2015). With temporary protection status, migrants have access to free health care and children can be enrolled in school. They do not have permission to work with this status and need to apply for a labour permission in order to have the right to work. The implementation of these rights in Turkey has been challenging as the mass influx of Syrians has overwhelmed already crowded local schools. At the end of the 2015/16 school year it was reported that 310,000 Syrian children were in school in Turkey, compared to a target of 450,000 (Watkins, 2016).

UNHCR also processes asylum claims in Turkey and provides resettlement places for the most vulnerable refugees. In principle, UNHCR accepts asylum claims from all nationalities, but in 2013 stopped processing claims from Afghan migrants in Turkey due to capacity issues. UNHCR still registers Afghans, which provides them protection from being deported or detained, but does not give them the option to be considered for resettlement (Dimitraidi, 2015). This status does not give them access to health, education, nor employment. However, NGOs do seek to assist migrants in need of health care and provide them with funds to access health services, but these funds must be applied for and sought out by the migrant. Migrants from the other country of origin groups considered in this study can apply for asylum with UNHCR in Turkey. The challenge faced by respondents in Turkey was long wait times with UNHCR for interviews. Further, if being considered for asylum with UNHCR, asylum seekers are distributed to different locations in Turkey where they have to report to the local police every two to four weeks.

Prior to 2013, asylum claims were processed by the police in Greece and the procedure was reported to be very lengthy. As an example, some respondents in this study who had registered under the previous system had been asylum seekers in Greece without a final decision for over 12 years. This is most likely an extreme case and not the norm. A new fast-track procedure was implemented in 2013; however, it was only applied to new arrivals. The new asylum processing made it much easier for asylum seekers to

apply for asylum and processing was also much faster than in the old system (Triandafyllidou, 2015a). Challenges have arisen such as not always having interpreters available (Triandafyllidou, 2015a). Further, during the fieldwork for this study in Greece in July 2015, the asylum services were closed because of staffing shortages, meaning that people could not apply for asylum in Greece. In addition, Greece continues to have a backlog of asylum cases from the old asylum system that have yet to be resolved (Triandafyllidou, 2015a). More recently in the context of the EU-Turkey deal the Greek parliament has just passed new legislation to process asylum claims within seven days at hot spot points of entry. The Greek asylum services were also overwhelmed in Spring 2016 with the closure of the northern Greek border. Although the policies in Greece for asylum and legal protection are strong, their implementation has been a challenge.

Within EU-Turkey relations, ‘migration diplomacy’ has been a central tenet of discussions and reform for Turkey’s accession to the European Union (İçduygu, 2011). Since 2000, Turkey has worked to modify its migration policy and bring it in line with EU requirements. A key aspect of this negotiation is that Turkey must become a full signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It is argued that Turkey has left this as a central bargaining tool for the final agreement on accession to the EU (İçduygu and Yüksek, 2012).

Greece and the EU have actively worked to reduce irregular migration from Turkey to Greece since 2011, often in cooperation with Turkey; and onwards into Europe through deterrence policies, including building the fence, increased border controls, and readmission agreements. Table 2 provides an overview of the migration and migration-relevant policies in Turkey and Greece based on the migration policy categorisation in Table 1. Several of these policies will be discussed in terms of migrants’ perceptions in the next section.

Table 2: Migration Policy Categorisation as Applied to Turkey and Greece

	Favourable Migration-Specific Policy	Adverse Migration-Specific Policy	Favourable Migration-Relevant Policy	Adverse Migration-Relevant Policy
Turkey	temporary protection (includes access to education and health care), UNHCR resettlement	no asylum opportunities for non-Europeans, no regularisation opportunities, no right to work without labour permission, detention, readmission agreements	official policies that promote democracy	employer raids for detecting unauthorised workers
Greece	1951 UN Convention signatory, opportunities for access to employment, education, health care, and regularisation for accepted refugees	fence and border controls along Evros River and Greece-Turkey border, lack of social protection for asylum seekers and refugees, readmission agreement with Turkey, detention for irregular migrants	democracy, access to education and health services if accepted as refugee	austerity measures, employer sanctions for abusing employment regulations

4. Methodology, Data, and Analysis

The methodology for this study was based on, first, a comprehensive literature review; second, a questionnaire administered using a migrant-to-migrant approach; and third, qualitative interviews with selected questionnaire respondents to gain further insight into the complexities of migrant decision-making. The target group for this study included migrants from these five countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria. Syrians in Turkey were not able to be interviewed as completing the required approval process (as directed by the Turkish government) was not feasible within the given timeframe for this project.

The questionnaire was tested prior to being administered through a migrant-to-migrant approach. This involved the training of migrants by the research team on recruitment, informed consent and ethics, and the questionnaire, in order to administer the survey themselves in native languages with other migrants. As there is no census available of the irregular migrant population in each country it was not possible to use random sampling. Instead the research team used multiple points of entry to find respondents. Entry points included: approaching migrants on the street (Greece=226, Turkey=115); referrals through a limited number of migrant organisations (Greece=29, Turkey=14); and networks developed in the field (Greece=25, Turkey=187). From these entry points, snowball sampling was used to find further respondents (Greece=249, Turkey=213). After surveys were completed, survey checking was conducted on an ongoing basis. Approximately one in every three respondents interviewed was called to check the survey results. If there were any discrepancies between the information collected during the survey and the checking, this was recorded. An assessment was then made regarding each individual discrepancy and in some cases the original data was used, in others revised data was used, and if the data was deemed unreliable it was discarded (one case). Table 3 shows the number of surveys collected in each country and by country of origin.

Table 3: Survey data collection

	Greece	Turkey	Total
Afghanistan	167	208	375
Iran	60	79	138
Iraq	41	96	136
Pakistan	117	146	263
Syria	144	0	144
Total	529	529	1058

The final method used in this study was follow-up in-depth interviews with selected survey respondents. The main selection criteria were employment (we interviewed a mix of employed and unemployed respondents); and complexity of case (where the survey was not optimal for capturing the individual's full story). We sought a balance of the countries of origin, and included women. Table 4 shows the number of qualitative interviews collected in each country and by country of origin. All interviews were translated and transcribed into English and coded for analysis.

Table 4: Interviews Conducted by country of origin

	Greece	Turkey	Total
Afghanistan	7	8	15
Iran	6	6	12
Iraq	2	7	9
Pakistan	4	9	13
Syria	11	0	11
Total	30	30	60

The analysis in this paper is based on descriptive statistics.

A key limitation of this study is that the results are a snapshot, representing the decision-making process of migrants at one moment in time. Research has demonstrated that decision-making factors in migration are fluid processes that can change over time and space (Schapendonk, 2012; Wissink, Düvell and van Eerdewijk, 2013). This study can therefore only be interpreted as respondents' intentions at the moment of interview and not their long-term strategy, recognising clearly that their decisions may change. Another limitation is a gender bias, as 92 percent of respondents accessed by this methodology were men.

5. The Role of Policies in Migrants' Decision-making

This section utilises the data collected through the *Understanding Irregular Migrants Decision-making Factors in Transit* project to understand how policies have shaped migrants' decisions regarding staying in transit countries or seeking to migrate onwards. It is important to again note that within this study the decision whether to stay in the transit country or migrate onwards was assessed within a holistic model of factors including conditions in the origin, transit, and intended destination country, individual and social factors, and policy incentives and disincentives. The most frequently cited factors in this study were perceived conditions in the destination country (99%), individual factors and aspirations (99%), and third most frequently cited were policy incentives and disincentives (97%) (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016). The role of policy incentives and disincentives are further examined here. As there were so few of the respondents planned to go home at the time of the survey, this option is not analysed here.

5.1 The Role of Policies in the Decision Whether to Migrate Onwards

Through the case studies of Greece and Turkey this section examines how policies in transit countries influence migrants' decision to stay in the current country or migrate onwards. This section first examines favourable and adverse migration-specific policies and second favourable and adverse migration-relevant policies.

5.1.1 Favourable and Adverse Migration-Specific Policies

In terms of favourable migration-specific policies, opportunities for legal status emerged as a significant for migrant decision-making. The ability to apply for asylum and the opportunity of naturalisation if the claim is accepted, were important favourable policies in Greece. Forty-three per cent of the respondents in this study in Greece had legal status, whether a refugee or temporary protection status. This proportion did vary by country of origin group with Syrians being the most likely to have legal status (62%), followed by Afghans (54%), Iraqis (47%), Iranians (30%), and Pakistanis (10%). One reason for this is a much lower positive acceptance rate for asylum and temporary protection for Pakistanis as compared to the other country of origin groups (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016).

In Turkey, the opportunity to apply for temporary protection for Syrians and Iraqis can be viewed as a favourable migration policy, combined with the access to health care and education that is provided. At the time of the fieldwork in Turkey, Iraqis had recently been added as a group eligible for temporary protection in Turkey and therefore only one per cent of respondents from Iraq had this status. The majority of Afghan (77%) and Pakistani (87%) respondents were irregular migrants, whereas Iraqi (54%) and Iranian (52%) respondents were most frequently awaiting finalisation of an asylum request to UNHCR.

For respondents who stated at this time that they planned to stay in Greece or Turkey, the policies that were cited as influencing their decision to stay are shown in Table 5. First, one favourable migration-specific policy addressed is in the transit country is 'waiting for the results of my asylum claim' (as stated in the questionnaire), which was cited more frequently as being an important factor in deciding to stay in Greece (47%) than in Turkey (33%).

Table 5: Policies cited by Respondents Planning to Stay in Greece/ Turkey

		Greece		Turkey		Total	
n		129		181		310	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Favourable Migration Policy- Transit Country	I am waiting for the results of my asylum claim	60	47	60	33	120	39
Adverse Migration Policy- Destination Country	Fear being returned to Greece/Turkey	43	33	29	16	72	23

Second, Table 5 shows how policies to deter migration from destination countries impacted the decision of the respondents to stay. Greece, supported by the EU, has strong external migration control policies (detailed in section 3.1) to deter irregular migration from Turkey to Greece including a readmission agreement. The European Court of Justice ruled in 2011 that asylum seekers could not be returned to Greece under Dublin II due to inadequate conditions in Greece. In total only 23 per cent of respondents cited 'fear being returned to Greece/Turkey' as a reason to stay in Greece/Turkey. This was higher in Greece (33%) than in Turkey (16%), which is logical as discussed previously in this paper the readmission agreement between Greece and Turkey is rarely implemented. In regards to fearing being returned to Greece in the qualitative interviews, respondents frequently reported that they had attempted to migrate onwards but were returned by police in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to Greece or Bulgaria and Greece to Turkey. At this time Greece and FYROM had strong cooperation on return. It is important to again state that the fieldwork for this study took place before the opening (and

subsequent closing) of the Balkan route from northern Greece. At the time of the fieldwork migrating beyond Greece was quite difficult.

Further, there are also adverse elements to what can be viewed as a favourable migration-specific policy. For example, temporary protection holders in Turkey are not automatically permitted to work (they have to obtain separate permission to do so). There is a lack of official information regarding how often labour permissions are requested and granted. Informally it was suggested that the vast majority of temporary protection holders work without this permission. Without labour permission, temporary protection holders have no workplace rights including in the case of accident or injury.

In Greece, protection visas have to be continually renewed for those who applied under the old asylum system. Respondents reported that this led to regular anxiety: “I have always this insecurity that I am not sure if they will be renewable [asylum papers] after five years” (Afghan, male). This insecurity was also a reason that the participant considered migrating onwards from Greece, although he had been there for over ten years.

Table 6 shows perceptions of adverse migration-specific policies in the transit country reported by respondents wanting to migrate onwards. By adverse migration-specific policies we are referring to statements that can be considered as seeking to prevent or limit settlement in the transit country. Examples of these types of policies are provided in tables 1 and 2. In Turkey, the most commonly cited factor was ‘resettlement wait times are too long’. This view was strongly expressed by several of the qualitative interview respondents. One participant stated:

“I’m waiting for UNHCR to find a solution for me but no one has done anything so far...I gave them my phone number and they called me once and asked “Are you [respondent’s name]? We will be calling you soon”. And they never did. It’s been two years and they haven’t done one thing.” (Iraqi, male).

Table 6: Adverse transit country migration-specific policies cited by respondents seeking to migrate onwards

		Greece		Turkey		Total	
n		390		309		699	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Adverse Migration Policy- Transit Country	My asylum case is not being processed	79	20	77	25	156	22
	The situation in Greece/Turkey is hostile (i.e.: more crackdowns by police)	256	66	107	35	363	52
	Resettlement wait times are too long	-	-	183	59	183	-

There were clear misperceptions among respondents who applied to UNHCR that they would receive resettlement to a third country. Decisions to migrate onwards were influenced by the realisation that resettlement was not going to happen.

In terms of asylum claims not being processed, this was slightly more commonly reported in Turkey (25%) than Greece (20%). In Turkey this frustration of the slow asylum process is targeted towards UNHCR who is responsible for asylum claims in Turkey. As noted above, there is a lot of frustration with UNHCR in Turkey.

5.1.2 Favourable and Adverse Migration-Relevant Policies

Favourable migration-relevant policies include opportunities for migrants to work with permission and language training accessibility and adverse migration-relevant policies include austerity measures, undemocratic policies, and employer sanctions and raids. These policies are the results of various factors including international conventions and laws and different national and local contexts. It is not the purpose of this paper to examine the origins or differences between such policies, but to take the policies as they are and address how these migration-relevant policies do or do not inform migrants' decision-making.

With regards to employment, 55 per cent of respondents were employed in Turkey as compared to 32 per cent in Greece. Nearly all of these respondents were working without permission in Turkey. This suggests a tolerance for illegal work in Turkey and illustrates a lack of compliance with laws against employing irregular migrants. The official policy in Turkey is that employers can be fined for employing migrants without legal permission to work. Stakeholder interviews in Turkey suggested that this rarely occurs and no records were found on the frequency of police workplace raids or employer fines for hiring irregular migrants.

In Greece, it is unclear if it is more difficult to find jobs for those without permission to work, or if the difficult economic situation has resulted in fewer job opportunities for migrants. At the time of fieldwork Greece had been through several years of austerity measures and was facing a national referendum to leave the Euro. Several respondents spoke in the interviews about the economic challenges in Greece and lack of jobs, which were cited as the two key reasons for leaving Greece.

The economic crisis in Greece has had several other impacts on asylum seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants besides a lack of employment opportunities. For example, according to the Greek Refugee Council, in 2014 there were only 1,160 asylum reception places in all of Greece. After leaving the islands (most frequent first arrival point), asylum seekers and refugees in Greece have no support for accommodation or other services. Several live in 'irregular hostels' which are rooms rented out to several migrants with a mattress to sleep on for a cheap price (perhaps €3 per night). Others live on the street. The lack of support services was cited as a central reason that migrants, even including those with refugee status in Greece, seek to migrate onwards.

Of the respondents in this study seeking to migrate onwards, 17 per cent in Greece and 15 per cent in Turkey, cited living on the streets as a reason influencing this decision. Several respondents in both the qualitative interviews struggled for their survival in Greece and Turkey, and this was confirmed by fieldworkers conducting the survey. NGOs in both countries are not able to meet demands due to the large numbers and lack of funding.

5.2 The Role of Policies in Determining Destination Choices

As discussed in Section 2, the policies of destination countries may be expected to have an impact on the destination choices of migrants in transit countries. Clearly, people only migrate if they expect better conditions in the destination country (de Haas, 2014). Policies regarding asylum seeker treatment, integration, welfare and education all influence the perception of a better life.

The data in this section is based solely on the respondents who sought to migrate onwards from Greece and Turkey (Greece n=390, Turkey n= 309). Seven policies have been included in Table 7 and Table 8, which shows the percentage of respondents who stated that the particular policy influenced their choice

of destination. These policies are divided into three favourable migration-specific policies and four favourable migration-relevant policies. We do not have data on the influence of adverse migration-specific or migration-relevant policies. In both tables the category of 'Other countries' is highly represented by Canada (71% in Greece and 58% in Turkey).

All three favourable migration-specific policies were more highly cited by respondents in Greece than in Turkey. In both countries the perception that there were good opportunities to become a citizen or resident in the intended destination was the most highly cited (96% in Greece, 84% in Turkey). In Greece, both asylum seeker treatment (91%) and asylum seeker acceptance rates (86%) were highly cited by respondents. One respondent in Greece who was planning to migrate to the Netherlands stated the reason as "Because I asked, and people say that Holland gives you an asylum claim faster" (Iraqi, male). When probed further regarding how he made this decision the respondent stated: "When I left Kurdistan my intention was to go to any European country and live there. Then I met with people in Turkey and here [in Greece] and asked them, and they said that Holland is good". It was further clarified that the advice for the Netherlands came from other migrants of Syrian and Iraqi origin and not from migrant smugglers. In this case, it is clear that the asylum process is an important part of the decision in selecting the destination in Europe.

The two policies regarding asylum acceptance rates and asylum seeker treatment varied considerably in Turkey across the country of origin groups, which was not the case in Greece, where there was little variation across the country of origin groups. Asylum seeker acceptance rates were cited by 91 per cent of Afghans, 80 per cent of Iraqis, 75 per cent of Iranians and only 48 per cent of Pakistanis. Asylum seeker treatment was cited by 95 per cent of Iraqis, 90 per cent of Afghans, 88 per cent of Iranians, and 52 per cent of Pakistanis. Both of these policies were considerably less important for Pakistanis in selecting their destination choices. This is presumably because Pakistanis are aware that they have a lower likelihood to receive asylum when considering asylum positive response rates by nationality within the EU. The top three destination countries of choice for Pakistanis in Turkey were Germany (28%), Greece (27%), and Italy (13%), of which neither Greece nor Italy were top destination choices for the other country of origin groups.

It is evident from Table 7 that the responses for Greece are substantially lower than any of the other categories of destination choices. Eighty-one per cent of respondents who selected Greece as their target destination were Pakistanis. The responses for Greece are thus quite unique and reflect a long history of Pakistani labour migration to Greece (Marouf, 2015). One of the Pakistani respondents interviewed in Turkey said that he wanted to go to Greece because one of his cousins lived there and would help him find a "proper" job in Greece. A second Pakistani respondent interviewed in Turkey said he wanted to go to Greece because:

"As compared to Turkey, the life there [in Greece] will be very good...You can easily get a passport there, ID card and a job. On the whole, Greece is a very good country. They have more respect for a human." (Pakistani, male)

This respondent said that he had received information about Greece from Pakistani friends. It is clear these impressions of life in Greece were not always shared by migrants in Greece. One of the Pakistani interview respondents in Greece was actually planning to go to Italy to try to receive documents, and then after he had received the documents to return to Greece where he was part of a community and had a job. This plan was based on the fact that he could not receive documents in Greece and clearly believed it was easier to obtain them in Italy.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data illustrate that within the country of origin groups in this study Pakistanis differ significantly from the other country of origin groups. In Turkey the Pakistani respondents report that their main motivation for migration was for labour purposes (58%). In Greece, this was much lower at 30 per cent, with 49 per cent reporting security and political reasons as their main reason for migration. It is possible that there is such a discrepancy between Pakistanis in Greece and Turkey, however, research conducted by Marouf (2015) has demonstrated that Pakistanis in Greece use the asylum process as a means to receive documents to stay in the country. It is possible that the quantitative results in Greece reflect this.

Four favourable migration-relevant policies were examined consisting of: 'my intended destination has good social assistance/ health policies', 'democracy and freedom', 'language', and 'education opportunities'. We have included language training and education opportunities as the policies regarding national language and language acquisition vary across Europe as well as the policies for educational opportunities for refugees and the costs of education.

Table 7: Policy Relevant Decision-making Factors for Destination Countries by Destinations Greece Respondents (in percentages)¹

	DE	SE	UK	NO, DK, FI	NL, CH, BE, AT	FR, IT, ES	No Planned Dest/ EU	Other	Total
n	118	49	29	66	59	19	36	14	390
<i>Favourable Migration-specific Policy</i>									
My intended destination has high acceptance rates of asylum seekers	91	94	83	86	83	74	69	100	86
My intended destination has good asylum seeker treatment	93	96	90	91	90	74	83	100	91
My intended destination has good opportunities to become a citizen/resident	97	96	100	95	97	100	89	100	96
<i>Favourable Migration-relevant Policy</i>									
My intended destination has good social assistance/health policies	87	96	90	91	88	68	92	93	89
Democracy and Freedom	94	88	100	95	95	100	89	100	94
Language	10	2	59	14	10	16	17	50	16
Education Opportunities	58	84	55	71	53	26	67	79	63

¹ Country abbreviations are: DE=Germany, SE=Sweden, UK=United Kingdom, NO=Norway, DK=Denmark, FI=Finland, NL=Netherlands, CH=Switzerland, BE=Belgium, AT=Austria, FR=France, IT=Italy, ES=Spain

Table 8: Policy Relevant Decision-making Factors for Destination Countries by Destinations Turkey Respondents (in percentages)

	DE	SE	AU	GR	UK	NO, DK, FI	NL, CH, BE, AT	FR, IT, ES	No Planned Dest/ EU	Other	Total
n	73	28	27	26	18	7	33	19	47	31	309
<i>Favourable Migration-specific Policy</i>											
My intended destination has high acceptance rates of asylum seekers	81	96	74	31	67	71	82	63	81	77	75
My intended destination has good asylum seeker treatment	82	93	93	38	89	86	88	74	85	81	81
My intended destination has good opportunities to become a citizen/resident	86	96	93	38	94	86	94	74	89	81	84
<i>Favourable Migration-relevant Policy</i>											
My intended destination has good social assistance/health policies	81	93	96	35	94	86	97	63	87	90	83
Democracy and Freedom	63	86	96	23	94	71	76	32	85	90	72
Language	8	32	44	8	67	29	15	5	26	48	25
Education Opportunities	63	93	82	8	78	71	70	21	70	74	64

In Greece, the most commonly cited policy was ‘democracy and freedom’ (94%), followed by ‘good social assistance and health policies’ (89%). It is unclear why ‘democracy and freedom’ was so highly ranked in Greece as compared to Turkey (72%). In both Greece and Turkey, health policies were a major concern for the respondents, who reported having to pay for health care. A Syrian woman interviewed in Greece stated that she received care at a private children’s hospital in Athens for her child, but that it was very difficult as they had to borrow a lot of money from friends to pay for it.

In both countries language was most commonly cited as a decision-making factor for the destination choice for respondents aiming to migrate to the UK. This was also cited by 44 per cent of respondents in Turkey seeking to migrate to Australia and in both countries in the ‘Other’ category, which is highly represented by Canada.

In both Turkey and Greece, respondents who stated ‘education opportunities’ were important were most likely intending to migrate to Sweden. A qualitative respondent from Afghanistan in Turkey said that he wanted to go to Sweden “because the education opportunities are good”. Sweden integrates refugee children into local schools and offers vocational training programmes, and free higher education (as is offered to all nationals) to accepted asylum seekers who meet the requirements.

6. Conclusions

This paper has examined the role of policies including both migration-specific and migration-relevant favourable and adverse policies in influencing the decision by migrants in transit whether to move on, and if so where. The paper is based on an analysis of migrants' perceptions. There are two main conclusions.

First, the results in this paper indicate that transit country policies most strongly influencing migrants' decision-making factors are adverse migration-specific policies and migration-relevant policies. One potential reason for this is that migrants are already living in the transit countries meaning that they are currently experiencing the migration-relevant policies, versus having an ideal perception of the intended destination country. These findings follow from the overall findings of Occasional Paper 21, but isolate the role of policies in determining these decisions. Although both Greece and Turkey offer fairly favourable migration-specific protection policies, both countries have found it difficult to meet demand, which has led to significant delays and frustration. The favourable migration-specific protection policies significance for decision-making is offset by the adverse migration-specific policies of not being able to work or having permission to work or access health care (for the majority of migrants included in this study), and migration-relevant policies such as austerity measures in Greece in particular. It is striking that even migrants with refugee status in Greece, still want to migrate onwards (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016). This highlights that even favourable migration-specific policies cannot overcome adverse migration-relevant policies in transit. The result may be that a country intended as a destination country becomes one of transit.

In contrast, secondly, favourable migration-specific policies in destination countries appear more important than migration-relevant policies in determining the choice of destination. Virtually all the respondents in this study chose destination countries that they perceived as having favourable asylum and naturalisation policies. This highlights that these are important factors being considered in migrants' decisions regarding their destination choices. It should be noted that the methodology used in this study did not include addressing the reasons why migrants did not want to go to other destinations.

These conclusions in turn lend themselves to some initial policy implications, acknowledging the methodological and analytical limitations of this study.

First, it is worth reiterating that overall policies – whether migration-specific or migration-relevant-, favourable or adverse, may have a limited influence on the migration decision, and where they do they interact with other variables. In other words policy adjustments alone may be unlikely to determine or change a decision.

Second, the distinction between migration-specific and migration-relevant policies, while somewhat arbitrary, is important. As demonstrated here, in different contexts both influence the decision-making of migrants in transit, and in the case of the decision whether or not to move onwards, migration-relevant policies in transit countries are more important than migration-specific policies. In other words, **migration levers are not exclusively in the realm of migration policy-making**. If the policy imperative for potential destination countries is to reduce onward migration from transit countries, their policy interventions should focus as much on migration-relevant issues – such as rights and access to healthcare and labour market – as on migration-specific policies such as the nature of the asylum system.

Third, the distinction between favourable and adverse policies, again somewhat arbitrary, is equally important. In this study, favourable migration-specific policies in destination countries appeared more

influential than adverse policies in the choice of an intended destination. While positive policies in destination countries may potentially attract onward migration, in this study there is no evidence of the corollary that adverse policies may deter onward migration. In contrast, while there is evidence here that adverse migration-specific policies in transit countries may spur the decision to move onwards, there is no evidence that favourable migration policies are a deterrent to onward movement.

Fourth, without overestimating the influence of policies, it is clear that they may significantly influence decisions and therefore need to be communicated effectively. As stressed throughout this paper, the respondents to this study did not necessarily have accurate information about policies, even those of the country where they were residing, and in some cases indicated decisions were clearly based on misinformation.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the case studies of Greece and Turkey may be atypical of migration decision-making in other parts of the world. The sudden and massive inflow of migrants and asylum seekers, the inconsistency and dynamism of policies both in transit and potential destinations, and the politicisation of the current crisis, are all likely to have impacted the links between policy and migrant decision-making.

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