

**Gizem Karaköse**

karakosegizem4@gmail.com

Faculty of Humanities

Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2542-745X>

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## **Between Minority and Diaspora: The Polish Community in Türkiye<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The Polish diaspora in Türkiye can be broadly categorized into two historical waves with distinct social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics. The first wave, known as the “old diaspora”, consisted of Polish exiles and political refugees who settled in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, particularly after the November (1830–1831) and January (1863) uprisings. Polonezköy (formerly Adampol), a village near Istanbul, remains a historical symbol of this politically motivated migration. In contrast, the “new diaspora” emerged after the 1990s, as post-Cold War Polish nationals began migrating to Türkiye for professional, academic, or personal reasons. Unlike their predecessors, this group is more globally mobile and driven by voluntary rather than political factors. This study examines the contrasting adaptation processes of these two groups, highlighting how historical context, motivation, and patterns of integration have shaped their identities and roles within Turkish societies.

**Keywords:** Polish diaspora, Polonezköy, Migration, Adaptation processes, Identity

### **Özet**

Türkiye’deki Polonya diasporası, toplumsal, kültürel ve dilsel açıdan farklılık gösteren iki tarihsel dalga çerçevesinde ele alınabilir. İlk dalga, “eski diaspora” olarak adlandırılmakta olup, 19. yüzyılda özellikle 1830–1831 Kasım ve 1863 Ocak ayaklanmalarının ardından Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’na sığınan Polonyalı sürgünler ve

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siyasi mültecilerden oluşmuştur. İstanbul yakınlarındaki Polonezköy (eski adıyla Adampol), bu siyasal saiklerle gerçekleşen göçün tarihsel bir simgesi olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir. Buna karşılık, “yeni diaspora” 1990’lardan sonra ortaya çıkmış; Soğuk Savaş’ın sona ermesiyle birlikte Polonyalıların Türkiye’ye mesleki, akademik ya da kişisel nedenlerle yönedikleri bir göç biçimi olarak şekillenmiştir. Öncekilerden farklı olarak bu grup, siyasal baskılardan ziyade gönüllü motivasyonlarla hareket eden ve daha küresel ölçekte hareket kabiliyeti bulunan bireylerden oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu iki grubun farklı uyum süreçlerini karşılaştırarak tarihsel bağlam, motivasyon ve entegrasyon kalıplarının Polonya diasporasının Türkiye toplumdaki kimlik ve rollerini nasıl biçimlendirdiğini irdelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Polonya diasporası, Polonezköy, Göç, Uyum süreçleri, Kimlik

## Introduction

Polish migration abroad is a complex and significant phenomenon for Poland, both historically and culturally. It especially evolved after the country joined the European Union in 2004. Polish migration has occurred on a notably large scale with diverse motivations and evolving patterns. Historically, Polish migration dates to the 19th century, when it was primarily directed toward Western Europe, the United States, and Canada<sup>2</sup>. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the EU enlargement in 2004, Poland experienced one of the largest migrations flows in its modern history, estimated to be around three million people<sup>3</sup>. The main destination countries included the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland<sup>4</sup>. Migration intentions among Polish citizens vary from short stays to long-term settlement, mainly influenced by job satisfaction, remittances, and experiences in both Poland and host countries<sup>5</sup>. Over time, Polish migration patterns have shifted from permanent settlement toward more

<sup>2</sup> W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, vol. 1, New York 1927.

<sup>3</sup> M. Obojska, J. Kędra, Z. Hua, *Connecting Polish families in Europe: changing dynamics in language and communication practices*, “Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development”, 42 (2021), p. 413–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1913499>; E. Goździak, *Polish Migration after the Fall of the Iron Curtain*, “International Migration”, 52 (2014), p. 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1111/IMIG.12146>.

<sup>4</sup> L. Wojnicz, *Przyczyny migracji Polaków w Unii Europejskiej po 1 maja 2004 roku*, “Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski”, 38 (3), 2016, p. 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.18276/pdp.2016.3.38-06>.

<sup>5</sup> S. Drinkwater, M. Garapich, *Migration Strategies of Polish Migrants: Do They Have Any at All?*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies”, 41 (2015), p. 1909–1931. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1027180>.

fluid or circular forms. Many Poles are now maintaining mobility between Poland and host countries<sup>6</sup>.

This pattern of circular and temporary migration has led to return migration, particularly among post-2004 migrants. However, many have remained open to re-migration due to reintegration challenges and job insecurities. Some eventually settle abroad permanently, especially after unsuccessful attempts at returning<sup>7</sup>. In this process, the networks and family strategies are important. Social networks in both Poland and abroad influence decisions regarding migration, duration of stay, and the level of community cohesion<sup>8</sup>. Migration often involves complex family arrangements, with transnational ties and reconfigured family roles. Family support and obligations shape migration experiences and settlement patterns<sup>9</sup>.

Polish migration to other EU countries has often been driven by economic motivations, as Poland has one of the highest labour expectation rates in the EU<sup>10</sup>. However, Polish migrants also move for reasons such as higher education, personal relationships, and family reunification. Unemployment and low wages in Poland, especially among youth, are among the key push factors<sup>11</sup>. Polish migration is also deeply intertwined with personal relationships, which shape migration decisions, settlement outcomes, and the lived experiences of migrants. This often results in complex transnational family arrangements and evolving social ties.

While Polish migration has traditionally been oriented westward, it has also historically extended eastward, particularly toward the Ottoman Empire and, later, the Türkiye. Unlike larger-scale labour migration to Western Europe, this movement was closely tied to the geopolitical relationship between Poland and the Ottoman Empire, which often sheltered Polish exiles and resisted recognizing the partitions of Poland. This long-standing

<sup>6</sup> J. Friberg, *The Stages of Migration. From Going Abroad to Settling Down: Post-Accession Polish Migrant Workers in Norway*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 38 (2012), p. 1589–1605. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.711055>. Goździak, Polish Migration after the Fall.

<sup>7</sup> A. White, *Polish Return and Double Return Migration*, "Europe-Asia Studies", 66, (2014), p. 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.487520>.

<sup>8</sup> L. Ryan, A. White, *Polish 'Temporary' Migration: The Formation and Significance of Social Networks*, "Europe-Asia Studies", 60 (2008), p. 1467–1502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130802362227>.

<sup>9</sup> B. Siara, R. Sales, L. Ryan, M. Tilki, *Family Strategies and Transnational Migration: Recent Polish Migrants in London*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 35 (2009), p. 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802489176>.

<sup>10</sup> Goździak, *Polish Migration after the Fall*.

<sup>11</sup> Obojska, Kędra, Hua, *Connecting Polish families in Europe*; A. White, *Young people and migration from contemporary Poland*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 13 (2010), p. 565–580. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.487520>.

political sympathy created conditions for Polish elites and refugees to view Ottoman lands as a place of asylum and strategic partnership<sup>12</sup>.

The most prominent example of this link was the political vision of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartorski and the émigré circle known as the Hôtel Lambert in Paris. After the November Uprising (1830–1831), Czartoryski and his associates developed a long-term diplomatic strategy to maintain the “Polish question” in European politics. One of the central elements of this policy was the Balkan programme, which identified the Ottoman Empire and Balkan peoples as potential allies against Russian influence<sup>13</sup>. His envoys, such as Michał Czajkowski, directly engaged with Ottoman officials and, in 1842, helped establish Adampol (Polonezköy) near Istanbul, as both a refuge for exiles and a material expression of *Hôtel Lambert’s* diplomatic project<sup>14</sup>.

Polish migration has taken many forms across different regions and historical periods. While the Hôtel Lambert’s diplomatic initiatives and the founding of Adampol symbolize the earliest political dimension of Polish settlement in Ottoman lands, the broader story of Poles in Türkiye extends far beyond. The following section examines the historical development of Polish migration to the Ottoman Empire and the Türkiye, tracing how these early exiles and later arrivals shaped a district community that oscillates between categories of a cultural minority and a diaspora.

## Historical Polish Migration and the Establishment of a Minority Community in Türkiye

The establishment of Adampol (now Polonezköy) in 1842 was one of the most enduring expressions of Polish migration to Ottoman lands. Founded under the guidance of Polish prince Adam Czartoryski and supported by

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<sup>12</sup> M. Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence: The face of the Balkan policy of the Hôtel Lambert towards national movements forming within the borders of the Ottoman Empire*, “Acta Historiae”, 31 (1), 2023, p. 17–38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.19233/AH.2023.2>; A.A. Urbanik, J. O. Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire, 1830–1876*, “The Polish Review”, 26 (3), 1981, p. 43–53.

<sup>13</sup> H. H. Hahn, *Die Diplomatie des Hôtel Lambert 1831–1847*, “Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas”, 21 (3), 1973, p. 345–374; R. A. Berry, *Czartoryski’s Hôtel Lambert and the Great Powers in the Balkans, 1832–1848*, “The International History Review”, 7, 1, (1985), p. 45–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105449>; Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

<sup>14</sup> J. Skowronek, *Sprzymierzeńcy narodów bałkańskich*, Warszawa 1983; P. Michalak, *Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasza) a polityka Hotelu Lambert*, “Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia”, 18 (2011), p. 163–177; Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

the *Hôtel Lambert*, the village was originally envisioned as a base for Polish exiles and soldiers. It quickly became both a refuge for migrants and a symbol of Polish Ottoman solidarity<sup>15</sup>.

The establishment of Adampol was closely connected to Czartoryski's broader political program, developed through the émigré circle of a political movement in France<sup>16</sup>. Czartoryski envisioned the Ottoman Empire and Balkan nations as natural allies against Russian expansion and actively sought to link the Polish cause with regional struggles for independence<sup>17</sup>. Through envoys such as Michał Czajkowski, the *Hôtel Lambert* supported Polish refugees. Also aimed to strengthen Ottoman-Polish cooperation in a shared struggle against imperial domination<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the Polish settlement near Istanbul should be seen not only as a refuge but also as a symbolic marker of this broader diplomatic strategy<sup>19</sup>.

The initial settlement included 12 people<sup>20</sup>, eventually growing to 38 as more soldiers arrived<sup>21</sup>. The village's founding purpose profoundly influenced its identity, and Polish cultural traditions remained strong in the community over generations. Beyond Polonezköy, another important reflection of Polish presence in Ottoman lands was the establishment of the Polish Minority School in Edirne, sometimes referred to as the *Polak Mektebi*. Founded in 1862 by a group of Polish Resurrectionist priests who had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire, the school became known as the "Polish School" because of its founders, rather than its students. In fact, it primarily educated Catholic Bulgarians<sup>22</sup>. While it was often referred to as a Bulgarian Catholic school, its Polish origins demonstrate that Poles were not confined to a single rural settlement but also engaged in broader Ottoman society, leaving traces in other urban centers.

Another overlooked dimension of Polish-Ottoman and Polish-Turkish relations was the employment of Polish officers, engineers, and technical experts. From the 18th century onward, Poles contributed to Ottoman military

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<sup>15</sup> Urbanik, Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire*.

<sup>16</sup> Hahn, *Die Diplomatie des Hôtel Lambert*.

<sup>17</sup> Dworski, *The Balkans as a gateway to Polish independence*.

<sup>18</sup> S. Kalembka, *Polskie zabiegi dyplomatyczne między powstaniem listopadowym a styczniowym (końiec 1831–1860)*, in: L. Bazylow (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej: 1795–1918*, Warszawa 1982, p. 231–432.

<sup>19</sup> Urbanik, Baylen, *Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire*.

<sup>20</sup> *Dom Pamięci Zofii Ryż*, Jolanta Adamska (ed.), Warszawa 2004.

<sup>21</sup> J. S. Łątka, *Adampol – Polska wieś nad Bosforem*, Kraków 1992, p. 35–36.

<sup>22</sup> F. Türk, *Edirne Bulgar Cemaati ve Polonya Azınlık Okulu 'Polak Mektep'*, "Belleten", 73, 2009, p. 705. <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2009>.

reforms, agricultural projects, and engineering works, and this pattern continued into the early Republican era. These professionals facilitated knowledge transfer and modernization, particularly in areas such as cartography, fortification, and transport infrastructure<sup>23</sup>. While individual Polish experts and professionals contributed to Ottoman modernization in diverse fields, the most enduring expression of a collective Polish identity on Ottoman soil remained centered in Polonezköy.

As Polonezköy evolved into a symbol of Polish identity abroad, its political and cultural importance increased. The Ottoman Empire's taxation policies for the non-Muslim community created tensions with the villagers, but a formal petition led to the village gaining a special administrative status. This status meant that the community was granted certain privileges as Polonezköy was incorporated into Beykoz as a *karye* (village) in 1893 with partial tax exemptions. However, further disputes emerged when villagers, rejecting their previous national affiliations, cooperated with the Austrian consulate. This move led to public expressions of Polish national identity and resistance<sup>24</sup>.

In 1911, the villagers petitioned for Ottoman citizenship and tax exemptions, citing their military service and local contributions<sup>25</sup>. During World War I, increased surveillance of foreigners revealed that 39 Polish inhabitants of the village had changed their nationalities to French or Russian. Despite such tensions, the founding of the Republic of Türkiye brought changes. The adoption of secularism and the new constitution based on equal citizenship reshaped identity and belonging in Polonezköy<sup>26</sup>.

According to Ziółkowski<sup>27</sup>, Polish remained the primary language in the village during the 1920s, when the Polish population reached around 165. The introduction of the Latin-based Turkish alphabet on November 1, 1927, marked a turning point in the linguistic and cultural identity of the village. This reform led to a faster transition from Polish to Turkish in both the written and spoken language. While earlier adaptations had already in-

<sup>23</sup> T. S. Birbudak, B. Akbaba, *II. Dünya Savaşı yıllarında Türkiye'de bulunan Polonyalılar*, "Atatürk Yolu Dergisi", 16 (62), 2018, p. 1–20. [https://doi.org/10.1501/Tite\\_0000000491](https://doi.org/10.1501/Tite_0000000491).

<sup>24</sup> H. Topaktaş, *Polonezköy (Adampol) (1842–1922) – Kuruluş, Tabiiyet Meselesi, İmar Faaliyetleri ve Sosyal Hayat*, "Belleten", 79 (284), 2015, p. 300. <https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2015.293>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>27</sup> P. Ziółkowski. *Adampol (Polonezkioj). Osada Polska w Azji Mniejszej – Zapiski historyczne*, İstanbul 1922.

troduced Turkish vocabulary into Polish<sup>28</sup>, the shift in alphabet accelerated orthographic changes.

These changes were especially visible in cemetery inscriptions, where traditional Polish spellings such as “SZ” and “Ś” were replaced by Turkish equivalents like “Ş”. The linguistic blending continued as later generations assimilated into Turkish society. Kowalski documented these changes, citing examples such as “Büyük Czarszy” instead of “Büyük Czarszy”. By the third generation, significant changes in language, identity, and culture had taken place, reflecting adaptation to the evolving Turkish context<sup>29</sup>.

Although the Polish community in Polonezköy is not officially recognized as a minority under the Treaty of Lausanne, it meets many sociocultural criteria related to religion, language, and ethnicity. Mylonas uses the term “non-core groups” to describe such communities whose status depends on political and strategic considerations<sup>30</sup>. Given Polonezköy’s size and Türkiye’s selective recognition of minorities, the Polish community remains unofficial despite its distinct cultural identity.

Polish migration to Türkiye continued during and after World War II. Polish Jews, in particular, sought refuge in Türkiye or used it as a transit country. Pre- and post-war agreements between Türkiye and Poland strengthened bilateral relations. Although Türkiye remained neutral during the war, it provided humanitarian aid and offered Poles exceptional rights, including work permits and citizenship benefits not extended to many other foreign nationals<sup>31</sup>.

During this period, a new group of Poles settled in various Turkish cities. However, their numbers were small and scattered, making it difficult to identify a cohesive diasporic identity outside the village. Most of these individuals integrated into Turkish society rather than forming separate communities. Nevertheless, these historical connections laid the groundwork for ongoing political, cultural, and human mobility between the two countries. Although the mid-20th-century Polish presence in Türkiye was limited in size and cohesion, it established a framework of familiarity and contract that did not disappear. These earlier ties, however modest, helped prepare the ground for the more dynamic exchanges that began in the 1970s, when

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<sup>28</sup> T. Kowalski, *Nieco o wplywie tureckim na język Polaków z Adampola* (reprint from “Rocznik Tatarski”), Wilno 1932.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> H. Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building: Making co-nationals, refugees, and minorities*, Cambridge 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139104005>.

<sup>31</sup> Birbudak, Akbaba, *II. Dünya Savaşı...*, p. 4–6.

migration between Poland and Türkiye acquired a mutual and structured character shaped by trade, tourism, and political change.

## Origins of the Contemporary Polish Migrant Community

Another significant wave of Polish migration began in the late 20th century, continuing historical patterns while taking on new economic, professional and personal dimensions. The years between the 1970s and to 1990s marked a further stage of this migration, during which movement between Poland and Türkiye became more reciprocal and dynamic<sup>32</sup>. This period also set the foundation for modern Polish-Turkish migration networks. While Poland was part of the Soviet bloc, Istanbul emerged as a key trade hub for Poles<sup>33</sup>, particularly in clothing, textiles, and leather goods<sup>34</sup>. During this period, personal and commercial connections were formed that continue to shape movement between Türkiye and Poland today.

Jomma<sup>35</sup> notes that the first wave from Türkiye to Poland began in the 1950s, when Kurdish individuals arrived in Polish cities as students and later settled. Andrejuk<sup>36</sup> adds that larger Turkish migration began in the 1990s and intensified after Poland joined the EU. Earlier connections date back to the “suitcase trading” era, when Turkish manufacturers and wholesalers developed ties with Polish sales markets<sup>37</sup>. These connections laid important groundwork for the later Polish movement to Türkiye. The formation of a Turkish diaspora in Poland helped to build political, cultural, economic, and social links between the two countries. This included the establishment of the Polish-Turkish Economic Chamber and bilateral agreements supporting Turkish business and entrepreneurship in Poland<sup>38</sup>. As these connec-

<sup>32</sup> M. Kırıcı, Türkiye’deki Bavul Ticareti – Gelişmeler ve Yeni Alternatifler, unpublished MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi SBE, İstanbul 2007.

<sup>33</sup> S. Yapar Saçık, Türkiye’de bavul ticaretinin dış ticaret içerisindeki yeri ve büyüme – bavul ticareti ilişkisi “Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences”, 12(4), 2013, p. 809.

<sup>34</sup> H. Bal, Geçiş Ülkelerinde Yolsuzluk ve Kayıtdışı Ekonomi: Kırgızistan Bavul Ticareti Örneği, “Manas Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi”, 5 (9), 2004, p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> F. Jomma, *Kurdowie i Kurdystan*, Gdańsk 2001.

<sup>36</sup> K. Andrejuk, *Strategizing integration in the labor market. Turkish immigrants in Poland and the new dimensions of South-to-North Migration*, “Polish Sociological Review”, 206 (2019), p. 35–54. <https://doi.org/10.26412/psr206.03>.

<sup>37</sup> K. Pędziwiatr, *Turkish Community in Poland: From Textile Vendors to Top Managers*, in: K. Kuja-wa (ed.), *Polish-Turkish Foreign Policy: 600 Years of Bilateral Relations*, Çanakkale 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Andrejuk, *Strategizing integration in the labor market*.

tions grew stronger, Turkish immigrants in Poland increasingly became involved in tourism agencies and travel-related activities.

This evolving Turkish presence in Poland significantly influenced the growth of the Polish diaspora in Türkiye, especially from the early 2000s onward. Over the past two decades, Turkish immigrants, entrepreneurs, and cultural promoters have actively encouraged Polish tourism, education and investment in Türkiye<sup>39</sup>. This interest has gradually shifted from tourism to long-term migration, including settlement, intercultural marriages, deeper socioeconomic integration, and establishment of Polish-owned businesses in Türkiye<sup>40</sup>. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, city partnerships and charter flights between Polish and Turkish cities reflect the growing strength of these ties. Individuals with cross-national connections, such as Turkish professionals promoting Poland in Türkiye and vice versa, have played a key role in shaping this modern diaspora, which contrasts sharply with the 19th-century wave of Polish settlers.

Polish tourism to Türkiye began to rise notably in the 2010s. Atasay and Wendt report that in 2015, over 350,000 Polish tourists visited Türkiye<sup>41</sup>. Of these, 2.6% came to visit friends or relatives, indicating a pattern of Polish settlement, especially in Alanya. Despite Türkiye ranking 13th among foreign destinations for Poles<sup>42</sup>, a significant portion of Polish travellers arrange their trips independently<sup>43</sup>. This aligns with the trend of visiting friends and family rather than engaging in organized travel.

The most popular destinations for Polish tourists and now for settlers are Alanya, Antalya, Istanbul, and Izmir. These cities are home to the largest concentrations of Poles living in Türkiye today. As tourism networks expand and Polish interests in Türkiye grow, the new diaspora continues to establish roots across these regions. Alanya and Antalya, in particular, attract both short-term and long-term residents thanks to their tourism

<sup>39</sup> See Hasan Çiftçi, Homepage, <https://hasanciftci.pl/index.php/en/index.html> (access: 20 V 2025), Onur Travel, Homepage, <https://onur.pl/index.html> (access: 20 V 2025).

<sup>40</sup> See Alanya Online, Homepage, <https://alanyaonline.pl/> (access: 28 V 2025), Metin Tour, Homepage, <https://metintour.pl/> (access: 28 V 2025).

<sup>41</sup> E. Atasoy, J. Wendt, *Changes in tourist traffic from Poland to Turkey on the background of other major directions of travel*, "Journal of Geography, Politics and Society" 2016, p. 39–44.

<sup>42</sup> I. Sobota-Miszczak Aslan, *Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of Polish tourists' activities in Turkey*, in: S. Laçiner, H. Palabıyık, K. Kujawa (eds.), *Polish-Turkish foreign policy: 600 years of bilateral relations*, Çanakkale 2014.

<sup>43</sup> K. Waraszko, *Turystyka kulturowa jako składnik oferty turystycznej wybranych miast i wsi Turcji*, BA thesis, Wyższa Szkoła Bankowa we Wrocławiu, Wydział Finansów i Zarządzania, Wrocław 2013.

infrastructure, warm climate and familiarity built through visits. Izmir also appeals to many with its European character, openness, and high quality of life. Istanbul stands out as an international hub, drawing global migrants with its rich economic, educational, and cultural opportunities. While Ankara receives fewer tourists, it plays a strategic role due to its status as the capital, attracting individuals working in diplomacy, NGOs, and administrative sectors. Together, these cities highlight the geographic and social diversity of the new diaspora, which spans lifestyle migration, academic exchange, professional relocation, and family reunification.

In addition to tourism and entrepreneurship, Polish migrants have also been active in professional, cultural, and diplomatic fields. Some have taken positions in Turkish universities, language schools, or international organizations, while others have worked in cooperation projects, NGOs, and cultural institutes. A number of Poles are employed in embassies, consulates, and EU-related programs, highlighting that migration today is not limited to lifestyle and family moves but also involves skilled labor and institutional collaboration. This professional dimension builds on the longer tradition of Polish experts serving in Ottoman and early Republican modernization projects, now reshaped in a contemporary context of exchange and partnership.

Evidence from community associations, voting registration and sustained family ties suggests the Polish presence in Türkiye is shifting from temporary migration toward a diaspora formation. In diaspora studies, the term typically refers to a dispersed community with sustained ties to both their homeland and host country. It is often shaped by shared identity, continuity, and transnational networks<sup>44</sup>. While the historical community of Polonezköy exemplified an enclave in the classic sense, recent migrants display elements of what Dufoix describes as an “enclaved mode” of diaspora. These diasporas form community associations and maintain cultural links through tourism businesses, intercultural marriages, and social media networks. Their presence in cities such as Alanya, Antalya, and Izmir, combined with growing settlement patterns and personal ties, suggests that a Polish diaspora is gradually emerging within Türkiye’s multicultural landscape.

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<sup>44</sup> S. Dufoix, *What is a diaspora?*, in: idem, *Diasporas*, transl. W. Rodarmor, Berkeley–Los Angeles 2008, p. 4–34.

## Social and Cultural Adaptation of Old and New Polish Migrants

The social, cultural, and linguistic adaptation processes of Polonezköy and the newly forming Polish diaspora in Türkiye differ significantly, shaped by distinct historical contexts and motivations. The settlers of Polonezköy were mostly political exiles, rebels, soldiers, and intellectuals fleeing repression in partitioned Poland<sup>45</sup>. Their migration was rooted in strong national identity and resistance, which influenced the preservation of the Polish language, Catholic traditions, and cultural memory in exile<sup>46</sup>. For many years, Polonezköy functioned as a relatively closed community, limiting adaptation with surrounding Turkish society.

Archival records and local histories indicate that these processes influenced the village's cultural, religious and ethnic identity<sup>47</sup>. Dynamics shaped the village's cultural, religious, and ethnic identity for nearly 200 years<sup>48</sup>. While good relationships with local communities and Turkish authorities evolved, key national reforms, such as the switch from Arabic to Latin script, had a direct impact on the village's linguistic adaptation. These changes are particularly visible in orthographic shifts on cemetery inscriptions and personal names. The transition from the Ottoman Empire's millet system to the secular Turkish Republic also influences the village's cultural landscape. According to local histories, a notable moment came when *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk* visited the village, reinforcing its symbolic status. Over time, villagers became Turkish citizens, which transitioned their status from refugee to official membership in the nation.

Today, the village's identity reflects this dual heritage. Many residents hold dual citizenship and continue to uphold religious practices. As documented during research visits, the local church still holds services in Polish on major religious holidays and every Saturday evening (instead of Sunday, due to the priest's responsibilities at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Istanbul). While Turkish is the primary language of daily life, Polish continues to be used in ceremonial and symbolic contexts. These practices preserve the community's Catholic and language identity, even as full fluency in Polish declines.

In contrast, my empirical findings indicate the new Polish diaspora is not driven by political necessity but by tourism, marriage, professional

<sup>45</sup> Łątka, *Adampol – Polska wieś nad Bosforem*.

<sup>46</sup> K. Dopierała, *Adampol–Polonezköy: Z dziejów Polaków w Turcji*, Poznań 1983.

<sup>47</sup> Kowalski, *Nieco o wpływie tureckim na język*

<sup>48</sup> Ziółkowski, *Adampol (Polonezkioj)*.

opportunities, and lifestyle choices. These migrants tend to take a more flexible approach to integration. In Alanya and Antalya, the Polish community has organized through groups such as Polonialanya and Polonijne Stowarzyszenie Kultury i Nauki w Antalyi. These associations support cultural, legal, and social needs while placing special emphasis on language, particularly for children. They organize Polish language classes, celebrate religious and national holidays, and host regular community events to pass Polish traditions to younger generations.

Drawing on field research, in Istanbul, the Polish community has also been historically active, through groups like Stowarzyszenie Polonii w Stambule, the Church of St. Anthony of Padua, and the Polish Consulate. However, this association has become less active due to limited support and participation. Still, Istanbul's historical ties with the Polish diaspora, cosmopolitan character, and proximity to Polonezköy make it a unique destination where multiple diaspora layers intersect, even if their reasons for settling differ from those in southern coastal regions.

As documented during research visits, Ankara is home to another active community, centered around the PolAnka association. Like its southern counterparts, this group organizes cultural, social, and linguistic activities. Many of its members work in the Polish Embassy, universities, or in public institutions, giving the group a stable and respected presence in the capital. In all cities, many individuals engage with Polish networks while also learning Turkish, building intercultural families, and navigating layered identities.

Field observations suggest the new diaspora is largely urban, digitally networked, and less tied to a single ethnic narrative. Its members often blend Polish, Turkish, and wider European influences in their daily lives. Their adaptation is marked less by resistance and more by openness, flexibility, and a strong sense of transnational belonging.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the evolution of the Polish diaspora in Türkiye by comparing the historical “old diaspora” of political exiles with the “new diaspora” shaped by modern migration dynamics. Through the lens of social, cultural, and linguistic adaptation, this study shows that the old diaspora exemplified by the village of Polonezköy was rooted in exile, national

identity, and cultural preservation. While the new diaspora is characterized by transnational mobility, intercultural relationships, and pragmatic integration. These two waves differ in their motivations, settlement patterns and how they negotiate identity and belonging within Turkish society.

By tracking this transformation from historical exile to contemporary migration, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of diaspora diversity and the changing nature of Polish migration. It also highlights Türkiye's unique role as both a place of refuge and opportunity, shaped by shifting geopolitical contexts and interpersonal ties. The comparison underscores how diasporic identity is not static but constantly redefined by social, political, and cultural forces. Further research could explore the everyday experiences of the new Polish diaspora across different Turkish cities, investigate second-generation identity formation, or compare the Polish case with other small European diasporas in Türkiye. Such work would enrich the broader discourse on diaspora studies, migration, and intercultural relations in the region.

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■ **Gizem Karaköse** is a PhD candidate in Linguistics at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland. Her research focuses on migration, diaspora, and language adaptation, with fieldwork in Türkiye and Poland. She has taught postgraduate courses, coordinated international projects, and published on migration and sociolinguistics.