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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

12 June 2015

TUR105166.E

Turkey: Information on the Nufus Huviyet Cuzdani [Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Nüfus Cüzdanı] and any other document used in Turkey for identification purposes (2012-May 2015)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. National Identity Documents in Turkey

1.1 Paper-based National Identity Document

1.1.1 Overview

According to the US Social Security Administration, "[t]he Nüfus Cüzdanı, Nüfus Huviyet Cüzdanı or Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Nüfus Cüzdanı is an identification document carried by all Turkish citizens" and at present, "a laminated pocket-sized form" is used (US n.d.). According to sources, the paper-based national identity card is the main form of identification used in Turkey (Berber et al. Nov. 2007, 13; Cavlin Bozbeyoglu 2011, 65). Sources indicate that possessing a national ID card is mandatory (ibid.; Director 4 May 2015; Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a sessional lecturer specializing in Turkish politics at the Department of Political Science at McMaster University stated that an identification card is required in order to work, access health and social services, register to vote, access Turkish courts, obtain a passport or driver's license, register for school and university, own property and/or a vehicle, and to obtain phone, internet, and home utilities (ibid.).

According to a 2007 report [1] produced for the European Commission's Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens (IDABC) Programme [2], the "current design of the paper-based card dates back to 1989" (Berber et al. Nov. 2007, 13). An article by Dr. Alanur Cavlin Bozbeyoglu, an associated professor at Hacettepe University's Institute of Population Studies with research that focuses on social demography and population studies in Turkey and Central Asia (Cavlin Bozbeyoglu n.d), states that the information contained on the national ID card includes an individual's "name, surname, gender, date of birth, place of birth, name of mother and father, marital status, religion, place of family registration, and previous surname" (2011, 70). A 2009 presentation document produced by the National Research Institute of Electronics and Cryptology within the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK UEKAE), indicates that the paper-based national ID card is two-sided and contains the individual's "Turkish Republic Identity Number (TRIN), family and birth information, some registry information, ... picture [and the] seal of [the] issuing officer and his signature" (Turkey Dec. 2009, 5). Sources state that the card is pink for women and blue for men (Anadolu Agency 10 Nov. 2014; Cavlin Bozbeyoglu 2011, 70).

According to a progress report on Turkey by the European Commission, the paper-based identity cards "are not, physically, very secure documents and are relatively easy to falsify" (EU 20 Oct. 2014, 5). The same source further states that the likelihood of false identity cards being used in administrative procedures such as issuing a passport "is negligible ... due to the existence of a solid and reliable civil registry system in Turkey, in

which all citizens are registered and given an identification number" (ibid.). Sources state that the Central Civil Registration System (MERNIS) is a centrally-administrated system where changes in civil status are "registered electronically in real time over a secure network" by "civil registration offices spread throughout the country" (Berber et al. 2007, 13; Turkey 17 Feb. 2009). The same sources note that MERNIS is responsible for the assignment of an Identity Number to Turkish citizens (ibid.; Berber et al. 2007, 13).

For further information on the security features of the paper-based identity card, see Response to Information Request TUR104875.

Samples of two paper-based Turkish Nüfus Cüzdanı national identity cards, as found on Keesing Reference Systems, are attached to this Response (Attachment 1).

1.1.2 Issuance of the Paper-based Identity Card

The 2009 presentation document prepared by TÜBİTAK UEKAE states that the Turkish Civil Registration office is responsible for issuing ID cards, as it has done for "more than 100 years" and they have "more than 900 card issuing offices" around the country (Turkey Dec. 2009, 16). The Sessional Lecturer similarly stated that the paper-based ID cards can be obtained from the "General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality offices in Turkey" and that there are "[o]ffices located in each town ... [with] 966 offices across the country" (7 May 2015). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the Information Technology Law Research Center at Istanbul Bilgi University likewise stated that the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality is responsible for the "design, production, application, personalization [and] delivery" of the paper-based ID cards (Director 4 May 2015). The Director explained that when a card is being issued, the individual applies directly to "the nearest Civil Registration Office ... [where] the civil servant directly prints the new ID document ... and issues [the card] to the citizen within 10 minutes" (ibid.).

According to a 2010 report by the International Commission on Civil Status (ICCS), a European intergovernmental organization that promotes "international cooperation in civil-status matters" (ICCS Mar. 2014), the "civil-status department" in Turkey is responsible for receiving the "birth declaration" and the subsequent registration in the family register (ibid. Oct. 2010, 21-22). The same source further notes that upon establishing the Turkish nationality of the child, a national identity card will be issued (ibid., 22).

Sources indicate that for a newborn, an identity card should be issued shortly after their birth (Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015; Director 4 May 2015), specifically "within one month" after the child is born (ibid.). According to the Sessional Lecturer, the child's birth certificate is required in order to obtain an ID card (Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015). He further stated that the paper-based ID card must be updated with a photograph after the age of 15 (ibid.).

According to the Director, the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality is responsible for procedures for when the card is lost or stolen and that individuals that have lost their ID card are to bring other ID documents with them and the "civil servant in the registration office [will] ask some questions ... generated from the MERNIS system" to confirm identity (4 May 2015).

1.1.3 Challenges in Obtaining Paper-based ID Cards

According to Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu, while registration of a child's birth is "compulsory" within one month of birth, statistics from a 2008 Demographic and Health Survey show that 6 percent of children under age 5 are not registered, and 7.4 percent of female children, 14 percent of Kurdish children, 11.2 percent of children from "the lower rank of wealth," 13.6 percent of children with mothers who are "illiterate or not institutionally educated," as well as 12.6 percent of children who live in the "Middle East of Turkey" are "more likely to be unregistered" (Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu 2011, 76). The same source further states that based on these statistics, it is arguable that "the offspring of ... disadvantaged social and economic groups are also at a disadvantage in obtaining formal citizenship rights, as a consequence of being unevenly unregistered" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Sessional Lecturer stated that though there may be rare cases where individuals face obstacles in obtaining an ID card, there are "no systematic barriers in issuing and obtaining ID cards," including, to his knowledge, for "minority groups" (Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015). The source noted however that factors such as living in a remote area or extreme weather conditions may postpone the ability to obtain an ID card for a newborn (ibid.). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Electronic Identity Cards

1.2.1 Overview

Sources indicate that the Turkish government has been developing electronic identification cards to replace the current paper-based ID cards (International Law Office 20 Jan. 2015; Cavlin Bozbeyoglu 2011, 74; Anadolu Agency 10 Nov. 2014). Sources indicate that the cards will possess biometric security features through the use of fingerprint and palm print data (ibid.; *JTW* 21 Feb. 2015; Turkey n.d.). According to International Law Office, a "multifaceted online resource for senior international corporate counsel that publishes updates on global legal developments" as well as a newsletter on legal issues (International Law Office n.d.), the ID will only contain "static personal information and biometrics," which will be used "only for identification and authentication purposes" (ibid. 20 Jan. 2015). According to Cavlin Bozbeyoglu, in addition to the biometric info, cards include a photograph, electronic chips that contain the individual's identification number, and a PIN code (password) (2011, 65).

Samples of two electronic Turkish national identity cards, including one from the Republic of Turkey and one from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, as found on the TÜBITAK UEKAE website, are attached to this Response (Attachment 2).

1.2.2 Timeline for Issuance of New Electronic ID Cards

Sources vary in their account of when electronic cards will be replacing the paper-based identity cards (*Today's Zaman* 19 Nov. 2012; Anadolu Agency 10 Nov. 2014; Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015). The 2007 report produced for the IDABC program states that the pilot program was to be "followed by a country-wide implementation by 2010" (Berber et al. Nov. 2007, 16). In contrast, *Today's Zaman*, an English-language daily in Turkey, reported in 2012 that "the Interior Ministry plans to renew all ID cards, starting in 2013" and that the renewal of all ID cards across the country is expected to be completed "within three to four years" (19 Nov. 2012). A 2013 report on a meeting of national civil registration organizations in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states, summarizing information provided by a Turkish representative during the meeting, notes that distribution of the new cards was supposed to begin in late 2013 and was predicted to take three years to reach the whole population (SESRIC Apr. 2013, para. 33).

Anadolu Agency, a state-run press agency in Turkey (AFP n.d.), reported in November 2014 that "Turkey is set to introduce new biometric identity cards in December [2014]," and that by the end of 2014, "almost two million people are expected to receive their new ID cards," and that the "distribution process will be finished in three years" (10 Nov. 2014).

According to International Law Office, the electronic ID card pilot program in the province of Bolu finished in December 2014 and "25 million national eIDs are expected to be delivered to Turkish citizens under the Council of Ministers' Annual plan for 2015" (20 Jan. 2015). In March, *Today's Zaman* reported that in 2012, 222,000 new ID cards were distributed in Bolu, the "first phase of the project to replace the current ID cards of all Turkish citizens," noting however, that "more than three years have passed and the new... cards have still not been distributed across Turkey" (29 Mar. 2015).

According to the Director, "smart card based ID cards" were supposed to have been issued at the beginning of 2015 (4 May 2015). The *Journal of Turkish Weekly (JTW)*, an English-language news source that focuses on international politics (*JTW* n.d.), reports that Turkey was to start to issue the new ID cards before the general election in June 2015 (*JTW* 21 Feb. 2015). In contrast, the Sessional Lecturer stated that "[t]he expected date for the distribution of biometric/e-cards is the end of 2015 or at the beginning of 2016, but it is still uncertain" (7 May 2015).

According to the Director, "all the infrastructure is installed" and more than 960 Civil Registration Offices have "new enrolment equipment" for the new ID cards (Director 4 May 2015). The same source further explained that a law that will enable the government to collect biometric information of citizens "has been sent to parliament from [the] Ministry of Interior," but that consideration of the law has been postponed to November 2015 (ibid.). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2.3 Acquiring the Electronic ID Card

According to Cavlin Bozbeyoglu, during the pilot program in the province of Bolu, residents went to the provincial office of "Population and Citizenship Affairs" to replace their paper-based ID cards with new electronic cards (2011, 72). Anadolu Agency similarly states that the "new General Directorate on Population and Citizenship Affairs" would be responsible for distributing the electronic cards (10 Nov. 2014). The Sessional Lecturer noted that the agency responsible for distributing the new electronic ID cards is the General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality (7 May 2015).

According to Cavlin Bozbeyoglu, the process to replace paper-based national ID cards with electronic ID cards in Bolu province was as follows:

[t]he list of prospective cardholders [was] based on the list of the addressed-based registration system in Bolu ... During this process, the paper-based ID cards of residents of Bolu [were] replaced by the electronic ID cards ... fingerprints and finger vein[s] of the card owner are first scanned and installed on the card and then the card owner is asked to create a 6-digit password. (2011, 72)

The Director explained that the steps in the issuance of an electronic card are similar to those for paper-based ID cards, with two differences: 1) for the new electronic ID card, "fingerprint information" is to be provided to the state; and 2) the new cards will be "personalized at the Ankara ... National Personalization Center" and then sent by mail to the address of the applicant (4 May 2015).

According to the Sessional Lecturer, in order to replace a paper-based ID card with a biometric card, an appointment should be arranged with the General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality through their website or by calling "a free phone number" and that fingerprint and "vascular prints" will be taken before issuing the biometric card (Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015). The same source noted that two "biometric" photos of the applicant must also be submitted as well as a fee and that the new electronic ID cards have a validity period of 10 years (ibid). The Sessional Lecturer also stated that the presentation of a newborn's birth certificate will be enough for that child to be issued an electronic ID card (ibid.). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Further information about the procedure to obtain an electronic or biometric ID card could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Other Identity Documents

Sources indicate that passports and drivers licenses can be used as a form of national ID and that a copy of an individual's national ID card is required for obtaining a passport or driver's license (Sessional Lecturer 7 May 2015; Cavlin Bozbeyoglu 2011, 65). Article 36 of the Turkish Citizenship Law (Law No. 5901) provides the following:

(2) The official papers and documents mentioned below shall constitute valid evidence that the person concerned is a Turkish citizen, until the contrary is established.

- a. Certificate of birth
- b. Identification certificates
- c. Passport or documents, which can substitute a passport (Turkey 2009, Art. 36(2)).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The report was produced by Dr. Leyla Keser Berber, Trugrul Sevim, Nurdan Cavdaroglu, and Erdem Akyazili, all of whom, at the time of writing, were affiliated with the Information Technology Law Research Center at Istanbul Bilgi University (Berber et al. Nov. 2007, 2).

[2] According to the IDABC website, the IDABC program used "the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies" to "encourage and support the delivery of cross-border public sector services to citizens and enterprises in Europe," "improve efficiency and collaboration between European public administrations," and "contribute to making Europe an attractive place to live, work and invest" (EU n.d.). The program ended in 2009 (ibid.).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response: Turkey – General Directorate on Population and Citizenship Affairs, TÜBİTAK UEKAE, Turkish Embassy in Ottawa.

Attempts to contact the following were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: associate professor, Institute of Population Studies, Hacettepe University; Turkey – Embassy of Turkey in Ottawa, General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality, Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey – National Research Institute of Electronics and Cryptology (TÜBİTAK UEKAE).

Internet sites, including: BBC; ecoi.net; Factiva; *Hurriyet Daily News*; Turkish Press; Turkey – Interior Ministry; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Department of State.

Attachments

1. Turkey. N.d. "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Nüfus Cüzdanı." <<http://www.documentchecker.com/>> [Accessed 8 June 2015]

2. Turkey. N.d. Turkish Republic Identity Card. <<http://uekae.bilgem.tubitak.gov.tr/en/urunler/national-identity-card-tr-nc-identity-card>> [Accessed 4 May 2015]

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