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Humanities and Social Sciences Communications

Article in Press

https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-026-07884-8

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Received: 5 January 2026

Accepted: 30 May 2026

Cite this article as: Tanrıkulu, F., Eti, S., Yüksel, S. *et al.* A behavior-sensitive multi-criteria framework for policy evaluation: evidence from the EU–Türkiye migration deal. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* (2026). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-026-07884-8

Faik Tanrıkulu, Serkan Eti, Serhat Yüksel & Hasan Dinçer

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A Behavior-Sensitive Multi-Criteria Framework for Policy Evaluation: Evidence from the EU– Türkiye Migration Deal

Abstract

This study evaluates the eight-year performance of the EU–Türkiye Consensus. It employs a multi-criterion, behavior-based decision model to address uncertainties surrounding its future. The core problem is that the Consensus has been examined in a fragmented manner across legal, political, diplomatic, and humanitarian dimensions. As a result, there is no comprehensive scientific framework to identify the most sustainable strategic option. Existing literature focuses on isolated issues such as legal legitimacy, human rights concerns, or the EU's externalization policies, yet lacks an integrated, criteria-based and expert-driven assessment. To fill this gap, the study aims to determine the most appropriate future strategy, assess the relative importance of key criteria, and offer evidence-based recommendations. It introduces an innovative hybrid model combining the Siemense network, IDOCRIW, RAM, RATGOS, and BLFS—an uncommon integration in the field. The Siemense network objectively determines expert weights; BLFS reduces subjectivity by incorporating experts' leadership tendencies; and IDOCRIW captures multidimensional information through entropy–CILOS integration. Findings show that the most influential criteria are the EU's commitment fulfillment level (.191) and political cost (.117). Among strategic alternatives, updating the Consensus (5.186) emerges as the most appropriate option. These results indicate that instead of dismantling the current framework or establishing a new externalization mechanism, a revised and more balanced version of the Consensus—strengthening commitments and enhancing burden sharing—offers a more rational and sustainable policy direction. Overall, the study contributes to the literature by providing both a novel methodological model and actionable insights for policymakers.

Keywords: Migration diplomacy; EU–Türkiye Statement; Multi-criteria decision-making; Fuzzy decision models; Externalization policies

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1. Introduction

The Syrian civil war, which erupted in 2011, has evolved into a multifaceted humanitarian and geopolitical crisis with profound consequences for the Middle East, Türkiye, and the European Union (EU). Initially, European actors perceived the conflict as regional. However, the prolonged war and mass displacement quickly transformed it into a global issue. The EU became a key actor and recipient region in what is now considered the largest migration movement since World War II. According to Eurostat (2016), 1,255,600 asylum applications were filed in EU countries in that year alone. Refugees originated from various conflict-affected regions, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and Kosovo. However, the majority were Syrians fleeing violence, persecution, and the collapse of basic services. Between 2015 and October 2017, 996,204 Syrian nationals applied for asylum in 27 EU countries, with Germany and Sweden receiving 64% of those applications (UNHCR, 2024). This demographic influx exposed fundamental limitations of the EU's Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and catalysed a series of institutional crises. The Dublin Regulation, which places primary responsibility for asylum processing on the first country of arrival, generated resentment among coastal states like Italy and Greece, who faced disproportionate burdens (Nicolosi, 2016). In some cases, overwhelmed countries circumvented EU protocols by allowing secondary movement without registration. This led to a breakdown in EU solidarity and a surge in intra-European tensions. Meanwhile, the humanitarian toll of the crisis continued to rise. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2023) reported that over 22,500 migrants had died or gone missing in Mediterranean crossings since 2014. These tragedies contributed to polarizing narratives in European politics: while some political actors called for humanitarian responsibility and open borders, others particularly far-right movements framed migration as a threat to national identity and security. These dynamics placed extraordinary pressure on the Schengen Area, whose foundational principle of internal border-free movement faced its most severe test since its inception in 1985 (BBC, 2016). Several countries reintroduced border controls or threatened EU exit, highlighting the fragility of European integration in times of crisis. In response to these challenges, EU leaders sought to externalize migration governance by negotiating with third countries. Türkiye hosting over 3.5 million Syrian refugees emerged as a pivotal partner. Despite a historically complex relationship marked by political tensions, frozen accession talks, and normative disagreements, the urgency of the crisis pushed the two actors toward a temporary convergence of interests. On March 18, 2016, the EU and Türkiye signed a Joint Statement aiming to "break the business model of smugglers and offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk" (Council of the EU, 2016). The agreement stipulated that all irregular migrants arriving in Greece via Türkiye after March 20 would be returned. For each returnee, the EU pledged to

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resettle one Syrian refugee directly from Türkiye. Additionally, the EU committed to €6 billion in financial assistance for refugee support in Türkiye, acceleration of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens, revitalization of customs union modernization, and reactivation of EU accession negotiations (Helme, 2021). While the Statement succeeded in reducing irregular crossings in the short term, it also sparked intense legal, political, and normative debates. Critics questioned the deal's compatibility with international refugee law and fundamental rights frameworks. Moreover, the reliance on conditionality and bilateral bargaining signalled a shift away from universalist principles in EU migration governance toward pragmatic, interest-based diplomacy. This paper investigates the EU–Türkiye Statement as a strategic tool of migration diplomacy, with a focus on its legal and normative implications. The central research question guiding this study is as follows: How does the March 18 Statement function as an external governance instrument in EU migration policy, and what are its broader consequences for international law, human rights, and EU–Türkiye relations? Rather than focusing on the empirical outcomes of the deal, this study explores how the Statement reflects deeper transformations in the EU's approach to asylum and border control. It aims to contribute to the critical literature on externalization, conditionality, and the instrumentalization of migration in global politics.

This study aims to develop and apply an integrated, behavior sensitive multi criteria decision making framework to evaluate the eight-year performance of the EU Türkiye migration arrangement and to identify the most appropriate strategic direction for its future. The purpose of the study is to provide a clear and evidence-based basis for policy decisions by determining which strategic scenario offers the most sustainable outcome under current regional migration dynamics. To achieve this objective, the analysis combines expert weighting, criteria weighting, and scenario ranking within a single methodological structure. In the first stage, the assessments of ten experts are weighted through the Siamese network approach. In the second stage, ten key criteria that capture the political, legal, humanitarian, and diplomatic dimensions of the arrangement are weighted using the IDOCRIW method. In the third stage, five strategic alternatives are ranked with the RAM method, and the robustness of the ranking is tested through a comparative application of the RATGOS method. In addition, Behavioral Leadership Fuzzy Sets are integrated into the model to reflect psychological and leadership-based differences in expert evaluations. Within this framework, the study addresses the following core question: which strategic option provides the most balanced and sustainable outcome for the future of the EU Türkiye migration framework? To answer this question, the study also examines the relative importance of the evaluation criteria, the effect of behavioral differences among experts on the rankings, and the consistency of results across RAM and RATGOS. In this way, the study strengthens the analytical clarity

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of the research design and offers a structured roadmap for future policy formulation. In this study, two related but distinct terms are used to describe the EU–Türkiye migration arrangement. The term "EU–Türkiye Statement" refers specifically to the official agreement signed on March 18, 2016. In contrast, the term "EU–Türkiye Consensus" is employed as a broader conceptual framework that captures the evolving and ongoing political, diplomatic, and strategic cooperation between the parties beyond the original document. While the Statement constitutes the legal and institutional basis of the arrangement, the Consensus reflects its dynamic implementation, subsequent negotiations, and long-term policy orientation. To avoid confusion, this distinction is maintained consistently throughout the manuscript.

This study introduces a significant methodological innovation by assessing the success of the EU–Türkiye Agreement using a multi-criteria, behavior-based decision model. The model integrates the Siemense network, IDOCRIW, RAM, RATGOS, and BLFS approaches. Furthermore, by ranking policy scenarios with a comparative and data-driven approach, it introduces a new analytical framework focused on strategic decision-making to the literature on migration management and EU–Türkiye relations. The proposed model offers significant methodological advantages over previously developed decision-making frameworks in various aspects. (1) The Siemense network technique used in the process of determining expert weights in the model systematically addresses the often-overlooked problem of "determining expert weights" by objectively integrating the demographic, professional, and experience characteristics of experts into the model. Given that a large portion of the literature treats experts as equal or weightings are based entirely on subjective preferences, the Siemense network-based weighting increases both the methodological robustness of the model and strengthens the balance in the decision-making process. (2) The Behavioral Leadership Fuzzy Sets (BLFS) approach developed in this study is a significant improvement on existing fuzzy sets in the literature. Thanks to these new sets, experts' leadership profiles—for example, authoritarian, innovative, and transformational tendencies—can be systematically incorporated into the decision-making process, thus minimizing the subjective variations frequently criticized in expert opinions. BLFS offers a unique contribution to the literature as the first structural approach to incorporate not only the numerical but also the behavioral dimensions of expert opinions into the model. (3) The IDOCRIW technique used in criterion weighting provides a significant methodological advantage to the model due to its suitability for the nature of the evaluation structure. While traditional criterion weighting methods often rely solely on one-dimensional metrics such as entropy, grouping coefficients, or comfort indices, IDOCRIW, thanks to its hybrid structure that integrates these different metrics, captures the diversity of information among criteria and more consistently reduces uncertainty in the evaluation space. Therefore, IDOCRIW's performance is significantly superior to other methods in

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multidimensional policy analyses with high complexity, including political, legal, and humanitarian components, such as the EU-Türkiye Consensus. These three elements demonstrate that the proposed model offers a more advanced framework than existing approaches. It improves expert-based objectivity, incorporates behavioral depth, and strengthens methodological integrity in criteria weighting.

At its core, this study is structured into four main components. First, it examines the legal, political, and diplomatic context of the EU–Türkiye Statement through the lens of migration diplomacy theory. Second, it introduces the proposed multi-criteria decision-making framework, detailing the Siemense network, BLFS, IDOCRIW, and RAM–RATGOS methods. Third, the analysis section applies this integrated model to evaluate expert assessments, determine criterion weights, and rank strategic alternatives for the future of the Statement. Finally, the study concludes by discussing the policy implications of the findings and offering evidence-based recommendations for a more sustainable and coherent EU–Türkiye migration governance framework.

Solidarity in Crisis: Challenges of Refugee Redistribution and Merkel's Open-Door Policy in the EU

Countries along the Balkan route, including Serbia, Slovenia, and Austria, warned the EU that they would close their borders to refugees. At the same time, similar reactions began to intensify among other member states. Serbia's Foreign Minister at the time, Ivica Dacic, stated, "We feel the lack of a common policy in the EU, and we no longer have the capacity to take in refugees." These countries criticized the EU for failing to equally share the burden and responsibilities of migration (Die Presse, 2016). Due to a lack of coordination, some countries adopted threatening rhetoric. Before an EU leaders' summit, several Central and Eastern European countries criticized Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door policy, stating they were unwilling to bear responsibility for people invited by Germany. In response, Merkel argued that "it was unacceptable for Italy, Greece, and Hungary not to fulfill their obligations and that opening their borders was inappropriate." She also emphasized that all migrants arriving from the Balkans who did not need protection should be sent back immediately (Akrap, 2015). French Prime Minister Manuel Valls also stated before the EU summit that "France would not accept more refugees" (Srf, 2016). According to the UN, approximately 2,000 asylum seekers were crossing from Türkiye to Greece daily by boat. Merkel aimed to distribute some of the refugees arriving in Türkiye from Syria among EU countries, at least in the medium term (UNHCR, 2015). Meanwhile, Türkiye, which hosted the highest number of refugees, aimed to improve border control to prevent irregular migration toward the EU. Through the March 18 statement between Türkiye and the EU, Merkel successfully reduced irregular migration. However, she was unable to implement her desired refugee redistribution policy among member states on the EU front.

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Countries such as Poland, Hungary, and several others opposed redistribution plans and refused to accept significant numbers of refugees (Cillán, 2020). Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door policy faced harsh criticism, particularly from Central and Eastern European countries. These nations openly expressed their unwillingness to take responsibility for refugees invited by Germany. Merkel, in turn, criticized Italy, Greece, and Hungary for failing to fulfill their obligations. However, Merkel's policies failed to achieve consensus across the EU and weakened unity in addressing the migration crisis. Resistance from EU countries to refugee redistribution undermined efforts to develop collective solutions to the migration crisis. The refusal of countries like Poland and Hungary to accept significant numbers of refugees damaged the EU's principles of solidarity and burden-sharing. Although Merkel succeeded in reducing irregular migration through the March 18 Statement, the lack of progress in cooperation and responsibility-sharing among EU countries highlighted fundamental weaknesses in the EU's migration policies.

Initially, the idea of equally distributing refugees among member states garnered broad support within the EU. Germany, France, Greece, and Italy advocated for distributing refugees across countries, but other member states were less receptive to the plan. In particular, Eastern European countries resisted refugee acceptance, citing concerns about national sovereignty and security, which strained the spirit of solidarity within the EU. The EU proposed an emergency plan to temporarily distribute "persons in need of protection" among member states according to a quota system. By the end of June 2015, the European Council agreed to distribute 60,000 refugees among member states. This number represented only a tenth of all asylum applications received across the EU in 2014. However, it remained unclear which countries would grant asylum to how many refugees (Council of the European Union, 2015). Most asylum seekers were from Syria and Eritrea, with 40,000 located in Italy and Greece. These countries were expected to benefit from a reduction in pressures due to these plans. Additionally, 20,000 displaced persons from camps near the Syrian border were to be brought to Europe. Since interior ministers could not agree on a mandatory quota, each country was expected to voluntarily decide how many refugees it would accept. In another initiative discussed at an informal meeting in Brussels, EU interior ministers committed to accepting a total of 54,760 individuals (EU Council, 2015). Of the 40,000 asylum seekers in Italy and Greece, only 32,256 were redistributed among member states. As outlined in the European Council's decisions in late June, there were plans for the "so-called resettlement" of 20,000 displaced persons "undoubtedly in need of international protection." The Council decided to accept more people than initially planned, increasing the figure to 22,500 (Council of the European Union, 2015).

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As anti-immigration rhetoric grew significantly in both European countries and Türkiye, public opinion began to exert pressure on political parties and governments. Naturally, Türkiye, which faced the highest influx of migration, frequently emphasized in international forums that EU countries should share the migration burden. However, it was evident that Türkiye found decision-making easier than EU member states. The EU struggled with shared policies for irregular migration and varied perspectives among countries, which delayed decisions. While some member states declared their willingness to accept refugees, countries such as Poland and Hungary adopted negative stances toward refugee acceptance. Amid ongoing debates between member states, the EU temporarily suspended the Dublin Regulation (Göroğlu, 2015).

The disagreements among EU member states demonstrated once again how difficult it was to establish a European quota system for refugee distribution. Consequently, debates about the controversial Dublin system, which binds refugees to the first country of entry into Europe, persisted. The existing EU system created unequal burdens on individual states. Former Chancellor Merkel criticized the Dublin Regulation in an interview with ARD, stating it no longer reflected "the conditions we previously had" (Vasil'ev, 2021). The Dublin Regulation applies only in emergencies. According to relevant authorities, of the approximately 27,000 asylum seekers Germany was required to transfer to other European countries in 2014, only 4,772 were deported (Göroğlu, 2015). Although the idea of equally distributing refugees among member states initially garnered widespread support, the resistance of Eastern European countries and concerns over national sovereignty made this plan difficult to implement. The quota plan for 60,000 refugees established in 2015 relied on voluntary commitments and saw limited implementation. Efforts to alleviate the pressures on countries like Greece and Italy exposed the lack of solidarity among member states and differing approaches to the migration crisis.

These developments highlight two critical dimensions that directly inform the analytical framework of this study. First, the persistent failure to establish a common redistribution mechanism reflects structural weaknesses in the level of solidarity within the EU, which emerges as a key evaluation criterion in the proposed model. Second, the political tensions generated by divergent national responses and rising anti-immigration sentiment illustrate the increasing political cost associated with migration governance. By linking these dynamics to measurable criteria, the study moves beyond descriptive analysis and integrates these structural challenges into a systematic decision-making framework.

The EU-Türkiye Statement: Navigating Legal Controversies and Democratic Challenges in Migration Management

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Faced with reasonable expectations of accessing the EU through safe and legal channels, a record number of people risked their lives on irregular journeys by land or sea. In 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded over 1 million irregular migrants arriving in Europe by sea, with approximately 850,000 of these arrivals through the Greek islands. This represented nearly a fivefold increase compared to the total of 219,000 recorded the previous year. The IOM also reported that 3,771 migrants and refugees died attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2015, including 805 fatalities along the Eastern Mediterranean route. This made 2015 the deadliest year for migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe. In comparison, 3,279 deaths were recorded in 2014, with an estimated total of over 5,350 migrant deaths globally in 2015 (Akdoğan, M., 2018). Similarly, many migrants from North Africa lost their lives while attempting to cross the Mediterranean, particularly when overcrowded boats capsized near Libyan waters. Seventy-seven percent of the fatalities occurred along the Central Mediterranean route, predominantly used by smugglers operating from Libya. This accounted for 97% of migrant deaths recorded on this route in 2014. The then-IOM Director General William Lacy Swing described the record-high number of deaths among desperate migrants and refugees as “shocking and unacceptable.” He urged the international community to take immediate action to address this crisis, stating, “Desperate migrants and refugees should not be dying in record numbers this year—it is shocking and unforgivable” (IOM, 2016). The March 18, 2016 EU-Türkiye Statement remains a subject of ongoing debate from various perspectives. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the statement, it is essential to examine the pre-agreement conditions, political climate, and processes. Türkiye, on one hand, hosted a significant number of refugees and, on the other, served as a transit route for Syrians seeking asylum in Europe. By 2015, the number of refugees residing in Türkiye had approached 2.7 million. European countries facing similar waves of mass migration experienced a dramatic increase in inflows, especially following German Chancellor Merkel's decision to swiftly open Germany's borders to refugees. By October 2015, the number of irregular migrants crossing from Türkiye to Greek islands had surged to 7,000 daily, rendering the migration flows unmanageable for the affected countries. In response to the escalating irregular migration, initial negotiations between the EU and Türkiye began on November 29 with the adoption of the "Joint Action Plan on Migration." However, these negotiations failed to reduce the number of irregular crossings. Consequently, the parties signed the March 18, 2016 EU-Türkiye Summit Declaration, aimed at "preventing migrant deaths in the Aegean, dismantling human smuggling networks, and replacing irregular migration with legal migration pathways." The measures sought to make this route a deterrent for human smugglers and irregular migrants (Charles de Marcilly, 2016). The former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, remarked, "The biggest problem we currently face

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is that many promises are made, but very few are kept," calling on EU member states to fulfill their commitments regarding the refugee crisis. Similarly, he renewed calls for increased personnel capacities and additional financial resources at the EU's external borders (Tageblatt, 2016). At the EU summit, heads of state and government decided that the EU border protection agency Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) needed more personnel to better secure the external borders of the Schengen area. This decision was reiterated at the summit to address the challenges at the Schengen zone's external borders (Tagesspiegel, 2015). Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Türkiye has provided temporary protection to millions of Syrians displaced from their homes. This decision was made in line with Türkiye's international humanitarian responsibilities and regional security policies. By providing temporary protection to Syrian refugees, Türkiye fulfilled its obligations as a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention, taking a significant step toward ensuring international protection (UNHCR, 2021). Türkiye's migration policy is rooted in a longstanding tradition of humanitarian aid, dating back to the Ottoman Empire, and continued through the Republic's history, hosting various waves of migration. The legal and historical impacts of the temporary protection status highlight Türkiye's enduring tradition of accepting migrants (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2024). The legal foundation for the implementation of temporary protection in Türkiye is based on the Law on Foreigners and International Protection enacted in 2013. This law established Türkiye's legal framework for asylum seekers and migrants, providing protection for Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2021). Additionally, Türkiye's status as a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention holds the country internationally accountable for offering protection to asylum seekers. However, this implementation sometimes encounters shortcomings, such as the employment of Syrian refugees in informal sectors at low wages (Amnesty International, 2016). These challenges highlight the need for improving Türkiye's existing legal framework. Several key factors have accelerated the movement of Syrian refugees from Türkiye to Europe. Firstly, Syrians sought better living conditions and security in Europe, which motivated them to choose this route. This trend, coupled with the shortcomings in border security policies of EU countries, contributed to the rapid increase in irregular migration (Terry, 2021). In 2015, the EU faced a significant influx of asylum seekers traveling from Türkiye to the Greek islands, prompting Türkiye and the EU to sign an statement on March 18, 2016. The statement aimed to control irregular migration; however, its implementation continues to face numerous challenges (European Commission, 2021). On December 16, 2013, a readmission statement between Türkiye and the EU was signed and approved by a Turkish Cabinet decision on August 2, 2014. According to Article 24(2) of the statement, Türkiye and EU member states were obligated to readmit their own nationals starting October 1, 2014. However, Article 24(3) stipulated that the statement would apply to

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third-country nationals and stateless people three years after its ratification. This meant that the effective date for the readmission of third-country nationals was set for October 1, 2017 (Official Gazette, 2014). The implementation date of the readmission statement, initially planned for October 1, 2017, led both the EU and Türkiye to consider revising their plans due to the increasing influx of asylum seekers. Following high-level discussions, the two actors enhanced their cooperation in addressing the migration crisis, resulting in the development of the EU-Türkiye Joint Action Plan on November 29, 2015 (European Commission, 2015). The adopted action plan officially moved the implementation date of the readmission statement from October 1, 2017, to June 1, 2016. However, this change faced criticism due to procedural issues. The Joint Readmission Committee, through decision 2/2016, amended the statement's timeline, which required legislation to be drafted and approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). Critics noted that no protocol to amend the readmission statement was established between Türkiye and the EU to formally authorize this change. Additionally, Article 19 of the statement states that the Joint Readmission Committee lacks the authority to modify the statement text, yet it unilaterally advanced the implementation date. These procedural discrepancies have raised ongoing debates about the legal validity of the statement (Ekşi, 2016). The application of the readmission statement to third-country nationals officially began on June 1, 2016. Separately, on December 15, 2015, the European Commission introduced a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme for refugees living in Türkiye (Corrao, 2019). Indeed, EU institutions informed the court in their submissions that they were not parties to the statement. In this context, the ECJ's ruling on the March 18 statement supports this perspective, questioning its legal validity and nature. Moreover, there are evaluations suggesting that the EU specifically chose this method to avoid judicial scrutiny (Hasip, 2021). The implementation of the Readmission statement in 2016 is considered a turning point in combating irregular migration. However, legal disputes between the EU and Türkiye regarding the implementation date have emerged during this process. Criticism of the statement 's expedited timeline highlights the weaknesses in its legal foundation. The EU-Türkiye statement has intensified criticisms that the EU avoids democratic processes and legal scrutiny in its actions. The European Court of Justice's assessment of this statement and the ongoing debates about its legal nature have brought the EU's democratic legitimacy crisis into sharp focus.

The EU-Türkiye Migration Statement: Externalization Policies, Legal Challenges, and the Crisis of Trust in Relations

Since the onset of the civil war in Syria, Türkiye has adopted an open-door policy for refugees. Millions of displaced individuals fleeing the conflict were granted temporary protection. However, as uncertainty and conflict in Syria deepened, the increasing number of refugees strained Türkiye's migration

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management capacity. Consequently, Türkiye tightened security and border controls along its eastern borders starting in 2016. With the Assad regime maintaining power with the support of certain countries, hope for the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland was rekindled. From the signing of the 2016 EU-Türkiye statement until May 2022, the number of Syrians residing in Türkiye increased by approximately one million, reaching 3.7 million. (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2024) Through the EU-Türkiye statement, Europe shifted a significant portion of its migration management responsibilities to Türkiye. This statement also marked one of the first instances where the EU acted as a bloc to address migration. Historically, European countries handled migration through individual labor statements. Similarly, in response to the migration waves triggered by the Arab Spring, member states pursued separate policies. However, the EU-Türkiye statement represented one of the rare, comprehensive negotiations where all 28 member states adopted a unified policy. Furthermore, the statement inspired European migration diplomacy under EU auspices. Following the 18 March statement, European migration management began to take shape around externalization policies, as exemplified by the 2017 Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding. Under this statement, the Italian government and the EU provided the Libyan Coast Guard with boats, equipment, and training to patrol Libyan waters and deter smugglers from picking up migrants in the Mediterranean. In 2017 alone, approximately 20,000 individuals were intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard and returned to detention centers in Libya. (AP News, 2020) Within this framework, the EU and Türkiye decided in March 2016 to collaborate in combating human smuggling and offering migrants safer alternatives to prevent them from risking their lives. Additionally, while migration was the primary focus of the statement, it also aimed to deepen cooperation and revive negotiations between the EU and Türkiye.

The provisions of the statement reached on March 18, 2016, are as follows:

- Return of irregular migrants: As of March 20, 2016, irregular migrants attempting to cross from Türkiye to the Greek islands were to be returned to Türkiye. (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2021)
- 1-for-1 swap: For every Syrian refugee returned to Türkiye, another Syrian would be resettled from Türkiye to EU countries.
- Prevention of irregular migration: Türkiye was to prevent irregular migrants from reaching Europe via land or sea routes.

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- Voluntary humanitarian admission: Once the number of irregular migrants declined, a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme would be initiated.
- Visa liberalization for Turkish citizens: The process to lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens traveling to EU countries was to be accelerated, contingent upon Türkiye fulfilling remaining conditions.
- Financial assistance for Syrian refugees in Türkiye: Initial financial assistance of €3 billion was to be provided, with another €3 billion to follow by the end of 2018.
- Updating the Customs Union: The existing Customs Union between the EU and Türkiye was to be modernized.
- Revival of accession negotiations: Efforts were to be made to revive Türkiye's EU accession process, including opening Chapter 33 during the Netherlands' EU Council Presidency and accelerating the preparation and opening of other chapters.
- Cooperation on humanitarian conditions in Syria: The EU and Türkiye would enhance cooperation to improve the humanitarian conditions of Syrians living in Syria. (EU, 2016)

The primary objective of the March 18, 2016, statement between the European Council and Türkiye was to curb irregular migration. According to the statement, asylum seekers reaching the Greek islands from Türkiye could be returned to Türkiye if their asylum applications were rejected. (European Parliament, 2019) Following the statement, there was an expectation in Türkiye that stalled EU-Türkiye negotiations would be revitalized and that visa liberalization would be implemented. Over time, Europe has provided financial support for Syrians in Türkiye. However, the lack of progress on other aspects of the statement has led to disappointment in Turkish public opinion. The EU-Türkiye Statement has been regarded as a concrete example of the EU's externalization policies in migration management. It is considered a significant turning point for Europe's migration diplomacy and for deepening cooperation with Türkiye. However, the failure to deliver on promises such as financial aid and visa liberalization has contributed to a loss of trust in EU-Türkiye relations.

EU-Türkiye Migration Statement: Externalization Strategy, Humanitarian Challenges, and Political Tensions

The EU aims to address its refugee crisis by pursuing an externalization policy. In this context, Türkiye holds a strategic position at the crossroads of East-West and North-South migration corridors. Türkiye

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plays a critical role in managing the influx of refugees heading toward EU countries. Effective border management in Türkiye and sustainable cooperation are of paramount importance to the EU. Since 2015, the number of migrants attempting to cross into Europe via illegal routes has increased rapidly. During this period, the EU faced an influx of refugees via the Mediterranean and Aegean routes and felt the need to develop an institutional policy. In this scope, the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism was activated. (UNHCR, 2021) In addition to its cooperation with Libya, the EU has recently taken significant steps in migration management with countries like Tunisia and Albania. Tunisia plays a strategic role in preventing irregular migration toward Europe. In 2020, the Tunisian government entered into statements with the EU to limit migrant crossings to Europe. Under these statements, Tunisia accepted the return of migrants and collaborated with Frontex to prevent sea crossings. (European Commission, 2020) Albania, on the other hand, serves as a transit country along the Western Balkans route and maintains close cooperation with the EU. Albania has entered into various statements with the EU regarding migration flow control and border security and has participated in operational collaborations to prevent migrant crossings to Europe. In 2020, Albania became a key part of the EU's strategy in the Western Balkans and continued to provide support in addressing migration challenges. (EU Council, 2021) Collaboration with these countries has become a crucial part of the EU's strategies to limit migration flows and control irregular migration agreement with Tunisia and Albania complement the cooperation with Libya and aim to alleviate migration pressure along Europe's southern borders. Following this mechanism, the EU has increasingly prioritized the externalization of its migration and asylum policies. In this context, the European Commission introduced the EU Migration and Asylum Pact in 2020. The text highlights the EU's security-focused and externalization-oriented approach. It emphasizes strengthening the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and enhancing border security. Additionally, the pact appears to prioritize support for return processes over the integration of migrants. (European Commission, 2020). This declaration emerged during an unprecedented influx of refugees arriving in Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes. Similarly, Greece's inability to manage asylum processes effectively, combined with insufficient or delayed financial support from the EU, has exacerbated the situation. Delays in the EU's fulfillment of its commitments to support Syrian refugees in Türkiye have also contributed to the challenges. Moreover, the closure of borders by the Republic of North Macedonia and the failure of states to meet their commitments to relocate refugees from Greece have been significant sources of problems. (Council of Europe, 2016). The EU-Türkiye statement brought renewed attention to past migration cooperation statements between Morocco and Spain. Madrid convinced the EU to allocate €140 million for measures such as speedboats and personnel

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to enforce Morocco's migration controls. Subsequently, the number of people arriving in Spain by sea in 2019 was halved compared to the previous year. Similar to the EU-Türkiye statement, these statements have been criticized by human rights groups, which argue that such deals are ways for states to bypass their international humanitarian obligations. These arrangements are seen as making Europe complicit in the exploitation of migrants in other countries. For instance, Human Rights Watch stated in 2019 that Italy shared responsibility for abuses committed against migrants in Libya. (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Following the signing of the EU-Türkiye statement, the United Kingdom voted in June 2016 to leave the EU. Concerns about migration at least partially fueled Euroscepticism, impacting domestic and international politics in Greece, the Netherlands, and other European countries. Amid these developments, the European Commission continued efforts to revise migration policies. In September 2020, the European Commission unveiled the Migration and Asylum Pact, aimed at reforming the EU migration management system. The pact focuses on greater responsibility-sharing, faster migration and asylum procedures, and stronger solidarity among member states for refugee resettlement. The pact also proposes reforms to the Common European Asylum System and strengthens the European Asylum Support Office. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has significantly expanded since the migration surges of 2015–16. (European Commission, 2020). Meanwhile, the number of asylum applications fell from 600,000 in the second half of 2016 to 250,000 in the second half of 2020, likely influenced by the global slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Terry, 2021).

On February 29, 2020, following the killing of 34 Turkish soldiers in Idlib by the Assad regime, Türkiye announced that it would relax measures for irregular migrants in the country and open its borders. The decision was justified by Ankara as a response to Europe's failure to provide the expected support for Syrian refugees and efforts to create a safe zone. Türkiye declared that border controls would cease and that the borders would remain permanently open. This announcement heightened concerns in European public opinion, with accusations that Türkiye was using migration as a weapon. During this period, Greece engaged in harsh pushbacks against refugees on land and sea, leading to severe humanitarian crises, trauma, and violations. While some refugees managed to cross the border, others perished on the way. (Euronews, 2020). In 2020, tensions between the EU and Türkiye began to ease following discussions between European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. These talks led to certain adjustments and the reactivation of stalled processes. Both parties expressed their commitment to continuing the EU-Türkiye Statement after the dramatic events at the border, and Türkiye once again increased border security. Subsequently, the final installment of the €6 billion aid pledged to Türkiye began to be disbursed. Despite all the challenges, the EU-Türkiye Statement has

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become a blueprint for Europe's strategy to externalize migration management to its neighbors. (European Union, 2020)

The EU-Türkiye Statement has faced criticism from human rights organizations for shifting Europe's humanitarian protection responsibilities onto Türkiye to curb migration flows. Nonetheless, some view the statement as successful in certain aspects. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel praised the Statement for its effectiveness in preventing irregular arrivals and suggested that it could serve as a model statement. Similarly, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell stated, "In the future, a similar kind of statement might be necessary." Turkish statement Deputy Foreign Minister Faruk Kaymakcı also emphasized the importance of the statement, adding, "The renewal of this statement is a necessity and in the interests of all parties." (Infomigrants, 2021; Gercek, 2021) The EU-Türkiye Statement stands as a significant example of Europe's efforts to externalize its migration policies. This statement has brought both successes and challenges for both Türkiye and the EU. On the EU side, the statement resulted in a significant reduction in irregular migration, strengthened border controls, and largely delegated migration management to neighboring countries. However, this externalization strategy has faced substantial humanitarian, legal, and political criticism. Issues such as human rights violations, pushbacks, and the traumatic conditions faced by asylum seekers have raised debates about the long-term impacts of the statement. On Türkiye's side, while the financial support provided for Syrian refugees and international cooperation have been significant steps in alleviating the burden of migration management, the failure to fully deliver on commitments has caused public disappointment. Türkiye's expectation for the EU to fulfill political promises such as visa liberalization and the updating of the Customs Union has perpetuated tensions between the parties. Additionally, Türkiye's decision to open its borders and use migration as a bargaining tool has sparked debates on the international stage. In this context, the sustainability and long-term effects of the EU-Türkiye Statement depend not only on curbing migration flows but also on upholding human rights, adhering to international law, and restoring mutual trust between the parties. Both the EU and Türkiye need to fulfill their commitments and develop a more inclusive, human-centered approach to enhance the statement's success. This would serve as a critical step toward deepening cooperation between the parties and improving migration management processes.

EU-Türkiye Migration Statement: Readmission Statement, Border Security, and Mutual Accusations

One of the debated provisions of the EU-Türkiye March 18 Statement was the readmission clause. According to the statement, the return of asylum seekers who set foot on Greek islands to Türkiye was

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conditional on compliance with international law. Italy and Greece were the primary entry points for migrants into Europe. In 2015, over 861,000 people arrived in Greece. Although this number dropped to 36,000 a year after the statement's signing, it later rose again to approximately 75,000. In the Aegean Sea, which separates Türkiye and Greece, the number of dead or missing migrants was 441 in 2016, decreasing to 102 by 2020. However, between 2014 and January 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported an estimated total of 24,144 migrants who were either missing or dead while attempting to reach the EU via different routes in the Central, Eastern, and Southern Mediterranean. Among these, 1,919 deaths were presumed to have occurred on the route from Türkiye to Greece. On the other hand, Frontex regularly shares data on the number of migrants reaching Europe via irregular routes. According to reports, 2,283 people entered the EU from Türkiye between January and March 2022. Following the statement, the EU increased its asylum services personnel and provided financial support to both asylum seekers and Greece. (UNHCR, 2024)

The number of irregular arrivals decreased significantly after the 2016 Statement, the EU-Türkiye Statement is not solely responsible for the dramatic drop in overall arrivals. Countries in the Western Balkans also closed access to migrants and blocked land routes to Europe. Nevertheless, the EU-Türkiye Statement became the most visible symbol of joint efforts to limit migration. Türkiye has criticized the EU for failing to meet the fundamental elements of the statement. Between 2016 and 2019, the EU pledged €6 billion for humanitarian aid, education, healthcare, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support for Syrian refugees in Türkiye. While the EU announced that the entire amount had been allocated, with over €4 billion disbursed, the Turkish government has expressed complaints about the speed and manner of payments made to organizations serving refugees rather than through state accounts. In 2020, the EU committed an additional €485 million to ensure the continuation of some programs through 2021. (Terry K., 2021) Türkiye's membership in the EU and the facilitation of visa processes for Turkish citizens remain key expectations for Ankara. Türkiye has conveyed its dissatisfaction to EU officials regarding the failure to fulfil EU commitments. In the spring of 2020, Türkiye did not prevent migrants from crossing its territory to reach the Greek border, where some were forcibly pushed back. In response, Greece suspended asylum applications for one-month, deported migrants who entered illegally, and deployed its military to the border. Greece claimed that "Türkiye has become a trafficker itself, instead of curbing migrant and refugee smuggling networks" (Gall, 2020). One of the key elements to prevent crossings to the Aegean islands and promote orderly migration is the Readmission statement. Under this statement, which came into effect in 2013, Türkiye agreed to accept migrants who entered Greece illegally after March 20, 2016, in exchange for resettling refugees under temporary protection to EU countries.

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Despite this statement, the one-to-one resettlement promise has yielded lower-than-expected results. While the statement aimed for a maximum of 72,000 resettlements, this target has not achieved. As of August 18, 2022, a total of 34,573 refugees has been resettled to EU countries, including Germany, Austria, and France, under the one-to-one formula (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2024). The uneven distribution of resettled Syrians across third countries, with Germany, Canada, and France hosting the largest numbers. Within the European Union's population of 447.2 million, there are 23.7 million non-EU migrants, accounting for 5.3% of the total population. In 2021 alone, 630,500 asylum applications were submitted to EU countries from citizens of 140 different countries (European Commission, 2024). Following the agrement, Greece suspended asylum applications and reinforced border security to limit the flow of refugees. During this process, practices such as pushbacks and harsh interventions drew criticism from human rights organizations. Greece accused Türkiye of failing to curb migrant flows, while Türkiye argued that the EU had not fulfilled its commitments. These mutual accusations indicate that instead of reducing tensions, the agreement has become a new source of conflict between the parties.

EU-Türkiye statement and Human Rights Criticisms

States bear the responsibility to fulfill their national, regional, and international legal obligations. In this regard, states are not independent of international statements. In the case of the EU and its member states, these obligations include adherence to the Refugee Convention, the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In its report, Amnesty International evaluated the comprehensive migration control statement reached between the EU and Türkiye on March 18, 2016. The statement stipulated that Türkiye would take back all “irregular migrants” arriving on Greek islands. The report noted that the EU's primary rationale for the statement was based on the assumption that Türkiye was a safe place for asylum seekers and refugees to be returned to. Despite Türkiye's broadly welcoming stance, the report highlighted that hosting approximately 2.75 million Syrian refugees, along with 400,000 refugees from other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, has inevitably placed a significant strain on Türkiye's new asylum system and capacity. Amnesty International further assessed that the EU-Türkiye statement failed to meet international standards. Although rhetoric and reactions against refugees have increased, the attitudes and policies of conscientious politicians and NGO representatives toward refugees are criticized. In particular, some countries’ refusal to make a fair contribution to accepting refugees has become a major point of contention. Alongside civil society organizations, some European politicians, academics, and bureaucrats have partially echoed these criticisms. Amnesty International has criticized

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the EU for "focusing on building fences rather than saving lives" and referred to the EU-Türkiye statement as "Europe's year of shame" (Amnesty International, 2016). Furthermore, the organization has warned that the EU's closure of borders to refugees and pushbacks are not legally compliant. Amnesty highlighted that, despite allocating €2 billion for constructing fences between 2013 and 2017, only €700 million was spent on refugees. Similarly, the organization criticized the EU for focusing on rescuing refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Italy while collaborating with neighboring countries known for detaining and torturing refugees, calling this approach inhumane. Amnesty International has called for the establishment of safe escape routes to the EU for those seeking protection (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2014). Despite significant and ongoing criticism from human rights defenders and humanitarian organizations toward the EU-Türkiye statement, leaders on both sides have continued to uphold its fundamental commitments. While Türkiye appeared to ease the flow of refugees toward the EU in the spring of 2020 due to unfulfilled demands, the statement remains in effect. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that "the statement remains valid and has yielded positive results" (European Commission, 2021). Some segments of the international community view the arrangement with scepticism, questioning whether Türkiye meets the standards for effective refugee protection. The 2016statement committed to creating an EU financial aid instrument for refugees in Türkiye, a joint coordination mechanism providing financial and other support to more than 1.8 million refugees. However, many Syrians live under harsh conditions, often relying on low wages in the informal sector and lacking social support. Refugees arriving in Greece are often held in overcrowded camps. Amnesty International described the statement's legacy as "one of the failed policies resulting in tens of thousands of people being forced to stay in inhumane conditions on Greek islands and putting refugees at risk by forcing them to remain in Türkiye" (Amnesty International, 2016). In 2015, EU member states collectively resettled only 8,155 refugees from around the world. Similarly, Amnesty International criticizes the international community for failing to share the responsibility of hosting refugees. Türkiye, according to the organization, hosts nearly 4 million Syrians and over 400,000 refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, and Palestine. This significant number of refugees places a substantial burden on Türkiye's ability to manage migration and meet the basic needs of refugees. Amnesty highlights insufficient burden-sharing by the international community (Amnesty International, 2021). The EU's financial assistance and cooperation efforts with Türkiye have proven inadequate in addressing the needs of refugees. This reflects the inequity and lack of solidarity in the international community's burden-sharing regarding refugee statements like the EU-Türkiye Statement should not only focus on financial and logistical solutions but also ensure the protection of refugees' human rights and fundamental needs.

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EU-Türkiye March 18 statement: Implementation Challenges and the Need for a Renewed Cooperation Framework

The March 18statement remains a significant text governing irregular migration between Türkiye and the EU. However, current issues in its implementation highlight insufficient cooperation between the two parties. Criticisms include the inadequacy of financial aid intended for Syrians living in Türkiye and the conditional nature of these funds. Another major criticism concerns the failure to implement the promised visa liberalization for Türkiye and the conditioning of improved Türkiye-EU relations on new prerequisites. These and similar issues have led to calls for updating the March 18statement (DHA, 2021). Türkiye's exploration of underground resources in the Eastern Mediterranean and its military operations in Syria against terrorist attacks have drawn criticism from the EU. As a result, the initial optimism around Türkiye-EU membership talks faded. These developments have negatively impacted relations between the two actors, stalling progress in opening new chapters and revitalizing negotiations. Furthermore, Türkiye’s calls for EU support in creating a safe zone in northern Syria to accommodate refugees within its borders have not been met, a point frequently raised by Ankara. On this matter, President Erdoğan stated, “Nearly 4 million refugees are in our country; they have been with us for 9 years. Now they tried to impose an additional burden of 1.5 million refugees on us by driving them to our borders. Months ago, I made a statement: 'If the West does not engage in burden-sharing, we will open the gates.' But they underestimated this issue” (Aydoğan, 2020). The March 18statement is part of the EU's policy of collaborating with non-European actors in its fight against irregular migration. Since its implementation in 2016, the number of irregular migrants entering Europe dropped from 861,000 to 36,000 (UNCHR, 2024). It is regarded as one of the most significant statements organized by the EU. However, the March 18statement between Türkiye and the EU is not fully implemented today. Criticisms are directed at the European side for failing to fulfill its responsibilities. Therefore, it is clear that a new discussion must emerge regarding the regulation of migration between Türkiye and the EU. The March 18statement is also viewed as a temporary solution to the refugee crisis. It demonstrates the EU's resolve to keep migrants outside its borders. Instead, emphasis is placed on creating a cooperative mechanism between the EU and Türkiye that addresses migration issues on a permanent basis (Anadolu Agency, 2020). When initially implemented, this declaration created a new area of cooperation between Türkiye and the EU and strengthened dialogue between the parties. However, challenges emerged over time in the statement's implementation. The Turkish public held the expectation that the stagnating EU-Türkiye negotiations would be revitalized, and visa liberalization would come into effect. Over time, it became evident that financial support was provided to Syrians; however, the lack of progress on other topics included in the

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statement has caused disappointment in Türkiye's public opinion. (European Commission, 2016). In February 2020, Türkiye relaxed its border controls and policies to prevent irregular migration as per the March 18statement. This shift created a negative reaction in European public opinion and generated a "threat perception" that Türkiye might open its borders at any time. Consequently, a more security-oriented approach, such as building walls along the Greek border, was adopted. Beyond reassessing the March 18statement, Türkiye has the potential to strengthen its relationship with the EU by collaborating on migration and migrant management through bilateral and regional partnerships. Considering Türkiye's capabilities and strategic significance in countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq important from Türkiye's foreign policy perspective—cooperation with the EU could be expanded, and Türkiye could play a facilitating role in these regions. Just as there is no single Europe, there is no singular European migration policy. On one side, there is a rights-based Europe, while on the other, there is a security-focused Europe that even supports building walls. For example, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia are among 12 EU countries advocating for border walls to prevent migrant crossings into the EU. In this regard, interior ministers from these countries have requested financial support from Brussels to build walls and steel fences along Europe's borders. (Bloomberg News, 2021).

4. Methodology

The selection of the proposed methodological framework is motivated by the need to address the multidimensional and uncertain nature of migration policy evaluation. The EU–Türkiye migration arrangement involves complex interactions among political, legal, humanitarian, and diplomatic factors, which cannot be adequately captured through single-method or deterministic approaches. For this reason, a hybrid multi-criteria decision-making structure is adopted. The Siemense network is used to ensure objective expert weighting by capturing similarities in expert judgments, while IDOCRIW provides robust and data-driven criterion weighting by integrating entropy and CILOS techniques. The RAM method is preferred for its ability to preserve the distinction between positive and negative criteria during ranking, thereby reflecting real-world policy trade-offs. In addition, RATGOS is incorporated to validate the robustness of the results through a similarity-based ranking mechanism. Finally, Behavioral Leadership Fuzzy Sets are included to account for psychological and behavioral variations in expert evaluations, which are often neglected in conventional models. This integrated approach therefore provides a more comprehensive, realistic, and behavior-sensitive framework compared to existing methodologies in the literature.

The data used in this study were collected through a structured expert evaluation form developed based on the relevant literature. The criteria and strategic alternatives included in the model were first identified through a comprehensive review of migration governance and policy evaluation studies. These elements were then translated into a set of evaluation questions using a five-point Likert scale to capture expert judgments. The data collection process was conducted through an online meeting with ten experts who have substantial experience in international relations and migration policy. During this session, the

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purpose of the study and the evaluation framework were explained in detail, and experts provided their assessments accordingly. Rather than a formal pilot study, the clarity and relevance of the evaluation instrument were ensured through expert feedback during this interactive process. This approach allowed for the collection of consistent and informed expert opinions while maintaining the practical applicability of the model.

This part is about the formulations and definitions of BLFSs, Siamese network, IDOCRIW, and RAM, respectively. In this manuscript, a fuzzy decision-making methodology based on expert opinions is proposed for determining the most appropriate strategy for the future of the EU-Türkiye Agreement. In this methodology, to avoid treating expert opinions as equal, a Siamese network is calculated based on the similarity ratio of the expert opinions to the opinions of the most experienced expert. The expert opinions are weighted based on this similarity ratio. Subsequently, the IDOCRIW method is used to ensure objectivity in the weighting of the criteria. Subsequently, using these criterion weights, the strategies are ranked using RAM and compared with RATGOS to test reliability of results. Additionally, BLFSs is used to manage linguistic uncertainty in the analysis. This entire analysis process is visually plotted in Figure 1.

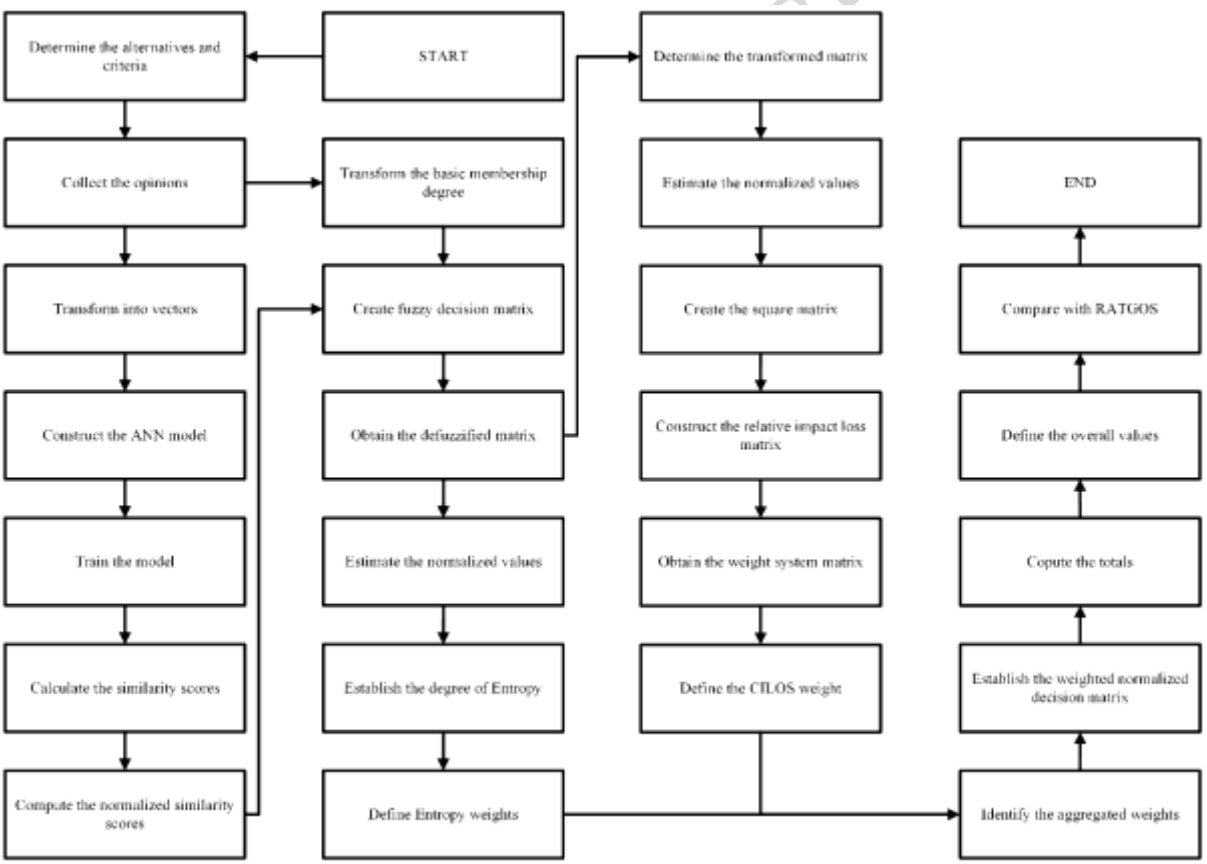


Figure 1: Analysis Process

4.1. BLFSs

Fuzzy logic theory is developed to manage linguistic uncertainty in analysis. Within this theory, fuzzy sets are derived based on different uncertainty types and approaches. In expert systems, BLFSs are one of them, which are developed based on the fact that experts show different levels of affinity to different types of leadership. According to this fuzzy set, experts exhibit different memberships to the

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characteristics of the five basic behavioural leadership styles. Thus, these characteristics influence the meaning of their opinions. Therefore, the development of BLFSs allows for more realistic and meaningful results.

According to BLFSs, the membership degree of authoritarian $(\boldsymbol{\mu_{au}})$ is calculated by Equation (1), where $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ is the basic membership of the opinion.

$$\boldsymbol{\mu_{au}(\mu) = e^{\mu-1}} \quad (\mathbf{1})$$

The reason why this membership function is defined as exponential is the rapid increase in the sharpness of the decisions of the authoritarian leadership type. The membership degree of democratic $(\boldsymbol{\mu_{dc}})$ is computed with Equation (2).

$$\boldsymbol{\mu_{dc}(\mu) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-10(\mu-0.5)}}} \quad (\mathbf{2})$$

The reason why this membership function is defined as Gaussian is that it shows high membership in the average of decisions in the decisions of the democratic leadership type. The membership degree of transformational $\left(\boldsymbol{\mu_{tf}}\right)$ is established using Equation (3).

$$\boldsymbol{\mu_{tf}(\mu) = e^{-\frac{\mu^2}{2}}} \quad (\mathbf{3})$$

The reason why this membership function is defined as Sigmoid is the stepwise increase in the decisions of the transformational leadership type. The membership degree of laissez-faire $\left(\boldsymbol{\mu_{lf}}\right)$ is estimated via Equation (4).

$$\boldsymbol{\mu_{lf}(\mu) = e^{-\mu}} \quad (\mathbf{4})$$

The reason why this membership function is defined as an inverse exponential is that it represents the abstention in the decisions of the laissez-faire leadership type. The selection of specific functional forms for each leadership style in the BLFS framework is grounded in the behavioral characteristics associated with these styles in leadership theory. Authoritarian leaders tend to make rapid, decisive, and highly polarized judgments, which is reflected by the exponential function's ability to model sharp increases in membership values as opinions become more extreme. In contrast, democratic leaders are generally associated with balanced, consensus-oriented decision-making, making the Gaussian function suitable due to its emphasis on central tendency and moderate values. Transformational leadership involves a gradual but accelerating shift in perspective, which aligns with the sigmoid function's stepwise progression. Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by indecision or withdrawal, is captured by an inverse exponential function that reflects decreasing participation intensity. Finally, servant leadership often emphasizes strong commitment at specific value extremes, which is modeled through an inverse Gaussian structure. These functional assignments translate established leadership behaviors into mathematically consistent representations within the fuzzy decision-making framework. The membership of servant $(\boldsymbol{\mu_{sr}})$ is determined with the help of Equation (5).

$$\boldsymbol{\mu_{sr}(\mu) = -e^{-\frac{\mu^2}{2}} + 1} \quad (\mathbf{5})$$

The reason why this membership function is defined as an inverse Gaussian is that the servant leadership type tends to take more part in extreme decisions. A BLFS $\left(\boldsymbol{\widetilde{Q}}\right)$ containing the membership functions of these five behavioural leadership styles is defined as in Equation (6).

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$$\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}} = \{(\boldsymbol{\mu_{au}}, \boldsymbol{\mu_{dc}}, \boldsymbol{\mu_{tf}}, \boldsymbol{\mu_{lf}}, \boldsymbol{\mu_{sr}}) | \boldsymbol{\mu} \in [\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{1}]\} \quad (\mathbf{6})$$

Consider that $\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}}$ and $\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{2}}$ are two BLFSs. Then, some basic operations are identified by Equations (7) – (12).

$$\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}} \cup \widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{2}} = \begin{Bmatrix} \max\left(\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \max\left(\mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \min\left(\mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \\ \min\left(\mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \max\left(\mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right) \end{Bmatrix} \quad (\mathbf{7})$$

$$\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}} \cap \widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{2}} = \begin{Bmatrix} \min\left(\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \min\left(\mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \max\left(\mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \\ \max\left(\mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right), \min\left(\mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}, \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}\right) \end{Bmatrix} \quad (\mathbf{8})$$

$$\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}} \oplus \widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{2}} = \begin{Bmatrix} \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} - \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} - \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \\ \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} - \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} \end{Bmatrix} \quad (\mathbf{9})$$

$$\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}} \otimes \widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{2}} = \begin{Bmatrix} \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} - \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \\ \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} - \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_2}}, \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_2}} \end{Bmatrix} \quad (\mathbf{10})$$

$$\boldsymbol{\beta} \odot \widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}} = \left\{\mathbf{1} - \left(\mathbf{1} - \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \mathbf{1} - \left(\mathbf{1} - \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \left(\mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \left(\mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \mathbf{1} - \left(\mathbf{1} - \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}\right\} \quad (\mathbf{11})$$

$$\left(\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}} = \left\{\left(\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \left(\mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \mathbf{1} - \left(\mathbf{1} - \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \mathbf{1} - \left(\mathbf{1} - \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}, \left(\mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}\right)^{\boldsymbol{\beta}}\right\} \quad (\mathbf{12})$$

The score and accuracy values are described with the help of Equations (13) and (14), respectively.

$$\boldsymbol{SV}\left(\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}}\right) = \mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} - \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} - \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} \quad (\mathbf{13})$$

$$\boldsymbol{AV}\left(\widetilde{\boldsymbol{Q}}_{\mathbf{1}}\right) = \frac{\mu_{au_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{dc_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{tf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{lf_{\widetilde{Q}_1}} + \mu_{sr_{\widetilde{Q}_1}}}{\mathbf{5}} \quad (\mathbf{14})$$

4.2. Siamese Network

Artificial intelligence systems are used to more realistically determine the importance of expert opinions. Siamese Network is a neural network-based approach that calculates the similarity ratio in datasets. This manuscript aims to highlight experts whose opinions are similar to those of the most experienced expert. In this context, a matrix containing the opinions of the k^{th} expert is created numerically for m alternatives and n criteria, as in Equation (15).

$$\boldsymbol{\mathcal{A}^k} = \left[\boldsymbol{a_{ij}^k}\right]_{(\boldsymbol{m+1})\times \boldsymbol{n}} \quad (\mathbf{15})$$

Afterwards, these matrices are transformed into vectors of the same length. Generally, the statistical parameters of the data set such as arithmetic mean are used as this vector. Then, by Equation (16), the vectors are processed in the ANN model and embedding are obtained.

$$\boldsymbol{e_k} = \boldsymbol{f}\left(\boldsymbol{a_{ij}^k}, \boldsymbol{\theta}\right) \quad (\mathbf{16})$$

Where $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ is same network parameters and $\boldsymbol{f}$ is ANN model. Then, the similarity score is established with Equation (17).

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$$s = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\mathfrak{w}^T \mathcal{A}_{kt} + \mathfrak{b})}} \quad (17)$$

Where $\mathfrak{w}$ refers the weight vector and $\mathfrak{b}$ is bias term. The loss function used in training the ANN in Equation (16) is given in Equation (18). The model parameters are updated to minimize the loss function.

$$\mathfrak{L} = -y \log s - (1 - y) \log(1 - s) \quad (18)$$

Where y is to one for similar pair or zero for different pair. The parameters of ANN are estimated by Adam algorithm. After completing the training process, the similarity scores among the most experienced expert's opinion and others' opinion are calculated. e means the learned embedding for inputs. Next, the similarity (sv) between each pair of embedding is estimated using Equation (19).

$$sv(e_{max}, e_k) = \frac{e_{max} \cdot e_k}{\|e_{max}\| . \|e_k\|} \quad (19)$$

Wherein e_{max} presents the learned embedding of the most experienced expert. Finally, the similarity scores (c) are normalized via Equation (20).

$$c_k = \frac{sv(e_{max}, e_k)}{\sum_{k=1}^{t} sv(e_{max}, e_k)} \quad (20)$$

Wherein t is the number of experts.

4.3. IDOCRIW

IDOCRIW is one of the innovative approaches that calculates criteria weights using the entropy method and CILOS. This approach, which provides objective weights, is a combination of the entropy and CILOS methods. After creating the decision matrix, the criteria weights are calculated using both the entropy method and CILOS (Al-Khulaidi et al., 2024; Alinezhad, & Khalili, 2019). The combination of these weights is then used. The steps of the method can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, linguistic opinions are transformed into the basic membership degree. Using these basic membership degrees, the BLFNs are constructed using Equation (6). Thus, fuzzy opinion matrix of the k^{th} expert $\left(\widetilde{D}^k\right)$ is obtained as Equation (21).

$$\widetilde{D}^k = \begin{bmatrix} \widetilde{d}_{11}^k & \cdots & \widetilde{d}_{1n}^k \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \widetilde{d}_{m1}^k & \cdots & \widetilde{d}_{mn}^k \end{bmatrix} \quad (21)$$

Afterwards, these values of matrix are multiplied by normalized similarity scores and summed with Equation (22).

$$\tilde{e}_{ij} = \sum_{k=1}^{t} \left(c_k \odot \widetilde{d}_{ij}^k\right) \quad (22)$$

Where $\tilde{e}$ refers to values of fuzzy decision matrix. Next, the defuzzified values (r) are established by Equation (23).

$$r_{ij} = SV\left(\tilde{e}_{ij}\right) \quad (23)$$

SV is identified in Equation (13). Defuzzified values are normalized via Equation (24).

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$$\bar{r}_{ij} = \frac{r_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^{m} r_{ij}} \quad (24)$$

Where $\bar{r}$ is normalized values. Then, the degree of Entropy for each criterion (E) is determined using Equation (25).

$$E_j = -\frac{1}{\ln(m)} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left(\bar{r}_{ij} \ln \bar{r}_{ij}\right) \quad (25)$$

Next, the deviation rate (dr) for each criterion is calculated by Equation (26).

$$dr_j = 1 - E_j \quad (26)$$

The Entropy weights (w) are obtained via Equation (27).

$$w_j = \frac{dr_j}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} dr_j} \quad (27)$$

Then, negative criterion $(\hat{r})$ is made the positive using Equation (28).

$$\hat{r}_{ij} = \frac{\min_i r_{ij}}{r_{ij}} \quad (28)$$

Afterwards, the normalized values are recalculated using Equation (24), and square matrix (a) is created regarding to Equation (29).

$$a_j = \max_i \bar{r}_{ij} = a_{k_i j} \quad (29)$$

Where $a_{k_i j}$ means the maximum values of j^{th} criterion, are taken with k_i rows to form a square matrix. Later, relative impact loss matrix (p) is constructed by Equation (30).

$$p_{ij} = \frac{a_{jj} - a_{ij}}{a_{jj}} \quad (30)$$

Next, the weight system matrix (F) is obtained with Equation (31).

$$F = \begin{bmatrix} -\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_{i1} & p_{12} & p_{1n} \\ p_{21} & -\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_{i2} & p_{2n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ p_{n1} & p_{n2} & -\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_{in} \end{bmatrix} \quad (31)$$

The CILOS weights (q) are defined using Equation (32).

$$Fq^T = 0 \quad (32)$$

Finally, the aggregated weights $(\mathfrak{z})$ are identified via Equation (33).

$$\mathfrak{z}_j = \frac{q_j w_j}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} (q_j w_j)} \quad (33)$$

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4.4. RAM

RAM is a method for ranking alternatives that explicitly distinguishes between positive and negative criteria during the aggregation process. While some preprocessing steps in hybrid models may require normalization or transformation of criteria for compatibility with other methods, the core strength of RAM lies in its ability to preserve the conceptual distinction between benefit and cost criteria in the final evaluation stage. In this respect, RAM evaluates positive and negative criteria separately and aggregates them without forcing a full conversion of negative criteria into benefit-type measures, thereby providing a more realistic representation of decision-making trade-offs. The process of obtaining the decision matrix in IDOCRIW is carried out. In other words, the defuzzified matrix is obtained using Equations (21) - (23). Next, normalized values are estimated with Equation (24). Then, the weighted normalized decision values are established by Equation (34).

$$\boldsymbol{y_{ij} = \bar{r}_{ij}\eth_j} \tag{34}$$

Afterwards, the totals of weighted normalized values of positive and negative criteria for each alternative are computed with Equations (35) and (36).

$$\boldsymbol{S_{+i} = \sum_{j=1}^{n} y_{+ij}} \tag{35}$$

$$\boldsymbol{S_{-i} = \sum_{j=1}^{n} y_{-ij}} \tag{36}$$

Finally, overall values of alternatives are defined using Equation (37).

$$\boldsymbol{R_i = \sqrt[2+S_{-i}]{2 + S_{+i}}} \tag{37}$$

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4.5. RATGOS

Ranking technique by geometric mean of similarity ratio to optimal solution (RATGOS) is a multi-criteria decision-making method that ranks alternatives based on their geometric similarity to an ideal solution. Unlike additive aggregation-based approaches, RATGOS evaluates the relative closeness of each alternative by constructing a similarity matrix derived from optimal criterion values. In this framework, alternatives that are geometrically closer to the optimal reference point are assigned higher preference rankings. The method incorporates weighted similarity measures and computes the geometric mean of these values to ensure robustness and consistency in ranking outcomes. Due to its ability to capture relational structure among alternatives and reduce the impact of extreme values, RATGOS is particularly suitable for validating results obtained from other MCDM methods (Eti et al., 2024).

5. Analysis

This part is about the results of methodology for determining the most appropriate strategy for the future of the EU–Türkiye agreement. The strategies and short codes determined in this context are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies and Short Codes

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Strategies	Short Codes
Update of the agreement	UPDAG
Continuation of the agreement	CONAG
Cancellation of the agreement	CANAG
The EU establishing a new regional externalization mechanism	EUREX
Türkiye shifting migration management to an independent regional model	TURRM

The criteria taken into consideration in evaluating these strategies and determining the most appropriate strategy are shown in Table 2. Additionally, the short codes of these criteria are also presented in the same table.

Table 2: Criteria and Short Codes

Criteria	Short Codes
Reducing irregular crossings	IRCRS
Non-compliance with refugee and human rights	NCRHR
Level of EU commitment fulfillment	EUCOM
Financial support to Türkiye	FINTK
Level of solidarity within the EU	EUSOL
Legality of Greek practices	GRLEG
Legal legitimacy	LEGIT
Diplomatic benefit	DIPBF
Political cost	POLCT
Sustainability	SUSTN

According to the criteria in Table 2, the strategies in Table 1 are evaluated by ten experts within the scope of the EU–Türkiye consensus with scale. This scale has a 5-point Likert structure, and the basic membership values are 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8 and 1, respectively. According to this scale, the opinions of the experts are summarized in Table 3.

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Table 3: Opinions

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	5	3	3	4	5	5	4	5	3	3
CONAG	4	4	3	3	2	2	4	3	2	2
CANAG	1	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	3
EUREX	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1
TURRM	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	4
CONAG	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	4
CANAG	2	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
EUREX	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
TURRM	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	5	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	5	3
CONAG	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4
CANAG	1	1	2	1	3	1	2	3	2	2
EUREX	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
TURRM	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	5	5	3	5	4	3	4	4	3	5
CONAG	3	2	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	2
CANAG	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	2	2
EUREX	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
TURRM	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4

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	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	4	4	4	3	5	3	5	4	3	3
CONAG	3	2	3	4	3	4	2	4	3	4
CANAG	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	3
EUREX	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
TURRM	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	5	5	3	3	3	5	4	5	3	5
CONAG	2	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	4	3
CANAG	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3
EUREX	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
TURRM	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	4	4	3	5	3	4	5	5	5	4
CONAG	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
CANAG	3	1	2	2	3	1	3	1	3	3
EUREX	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
TURRM	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	5	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
CONAG	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	2
CANAG	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	3	1	2
EUREX	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
TURRM	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**

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UPDAG	4	5	3	3	4	5	5	5	3	3
CONAG	4	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	2	3
CANAG	2	3	2	1	2	3	1	3	1	3
EUREX	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1
TURRM	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	3	4	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	5
CONAG	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	2
CANAG	3	1	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	1
EUREX	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
TURRM	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4

5.1. Similarity Scores of Experts

Ten of the experts have between 15 and 24 years of experience in international relations and political science. Therefore, the seventh expert, with 24 years of experience, is an experienced expert. According to the seventh expert, the similarities between the opinions of other experts are obtained using the Siamese Network with Python coding in Colab. In this process, the embedding values of the experts within the established ANN model are obtained using Equation (16). The first five rows of the experts are displayed in Table 4.

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Table 4: First Five Rows of Embeddings

E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10
.068	.042	.035	.088	.037	.038	.059	.089	.026	.035
.000	.000	.025	.055	.025	.068	.006	.007	.047	.020
.199	.164	.239	.174	.182	.185	.203	.166	.175	.155
.118	.146	.153	.124	.144	.120	.127	.142	.195	.175
.180	.090	.149	.121	.176	.069	.086	.048	.097	.115

Afterwards, model is trained with the help of Equations (17) – (19). During the training process of the model, the accuracy and loss values in each epoch are visualized in Figure 2.

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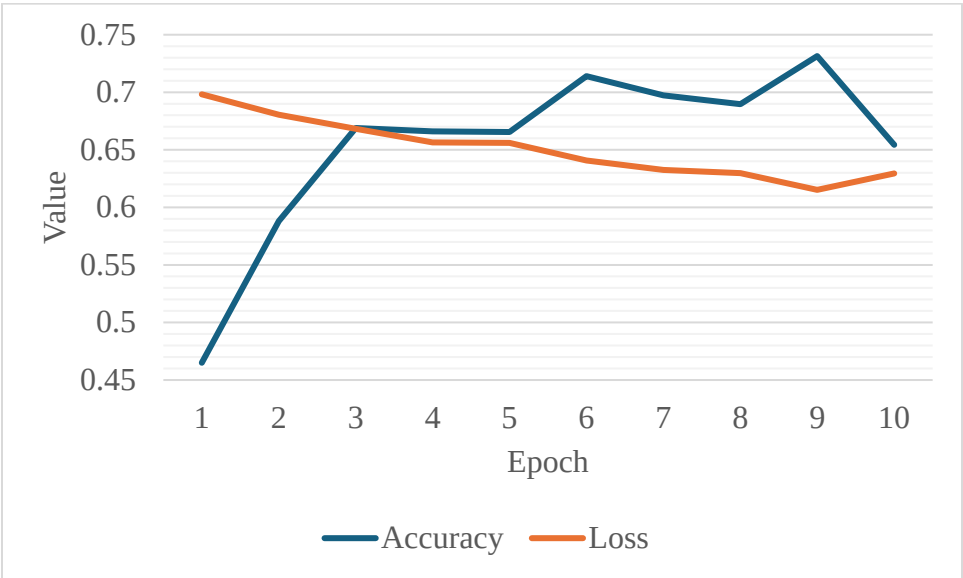


Figure 2: Accuracy and Loss Values of Model

Since the error amount is close to zero and the accuracy rate is relatively close to 1, the model is seen to be successful. The similarity ratio between experts is obtained through model construction. The similarity ratios between the seventh expert and the other experts are used as a basis. These ratios are normalized using Equation (20). The results are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Similarity Scores and Normalized Scores with E7

	Similarity Score	**Normalized Score**
E1	.971	.0996
E2	.977	.1002
E3	.974	.0999
E4	.978	.1003
E5	.960	.0985
E6	.974	.0999
E7	1.000	.1026
E8	.978	.1004
E9	.970	.0995
E10	.966	.0991

These normalized scores are used as the importance weights for the experts' opinions. Accordingly, the most important expert after the seventh expert is the eighth expert with the highest similarity of .1004.

5.2. Weights of Criteria

The scale in Table 3 is converted to the basic membership degree. BLFNs are then calculated using Equations (1) - (6). In constructing the fuzzy decision matrix, the Behavioral Leadership Fuzzy Set (BLFS) structure is employed to transform each expert opinion into a five-dimensional membership representation. In this approach, five fundamental leadership styles are taken as reference behavioral dimensions. Rather than assigning fixed leadership profiles to the experts, each evaluation provided by an expert is interpreted according to its potential alignment with these leadership characteristics.

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Accordingly, the linguistic opinions are mapped to their corresponding fuzzy representations under each leadership style. This mapping process generated a five-component membership vector for each opinion. These membership degrees reflect the extent to which a given opinion is consistent with the behavioral tendencies of the five behavioral leadership styles. The resulting membership vectors are then used to construct the fuzzy decision matrix. Thus, fuzzy opinion matrices in the form of Equation (21) are obtained for each expert. Then, the fuzzy decision matrix is constructed using Equation (22). The fuzzy decision matrix is expressed in Table 6.

Table 6: Fuzzy Decision Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	(1,.985,0,.399,1)	(1,.937,0,.468,1)	(.755,.887,0,.497,1)	(1,.924,0,.477,1)	(1,.935,0,.468,1)	(1,.956,0,.449,1)	(1,.974,0,.423,1)	(1,.974,0,.423,1)	(1,.91,0,.486,1)	(1,.957,0,.449,1)
CONAG	(.716,.824,0,.527,1)	(.707,.806,0,.538,1)	(.707,.805,0,.538,1)	(.732,.851,0,.517,1)	(.679,.744,0,.56,1)	(.707,.805,0,.538,1)	(.74,.862,0,.517,1)	(.688,.767,0,.549,1)	(.648,.662,0,.583,1)	(.687,.761,0,.56,1)
CANAG	(.536,.286,.001,.697,.999)	(.582,.505,0,.658,1)	(.594,.497,0,.631,1)	(.55,.353,0,.683,1)	(.594,.498,0,.631,1)	(.535,.283,.001,.698,.999)	(.564,.414,0,.67,1)	(.59,.518,0,.645,1)	(.517,.247,.002,.726,.998)	(.606,.544,0,.619,1)
EUREX	(.511,.187,.004,.726,.996)	(.512,.188,.004,.726,.996)	(.492,.144,.012,.755,.988)	(.491,.143,.012,.756,.988)	(.481,.12,.023,.771,.977)	(.491,.143,.012,.756,.988)	(.511,.187,.004,.727,.996)	(.471,.096,.041,.787,.959)	(.481,.12,.022,.771,.978)	(.501,.165,.007,.741,.993)
TURRM	(.74,.866,0,.507,1)	(.74,.866,0,.507,1)	(.755,.887,0,.497,1)	(.756,.888,0,.496,1)	(.725,.841,0,.517,1)	(.796,.933,0,.468,1)	(.755,.887,0,.497,1)	(.783,.92,0,.477,1)	(.783,.92,0,.477,1)	(.769,.905,0,.487,1)

Afterwards, the fuzzy decision values are defuzzified with the help of Equation (23). The defuzzified matrix is shared in Table 7.

Table 7: Defuzzified Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	2.587	2.469	2.145	2.448	2.467	2.506	2.551	2.551	2.424	2.508
CONAG	2.013	1.975	1.974	2.065	1.863	1.973	2.085	1.905	1.727	1.888
CANAG	1.124	1.429	1.459	1.219	1.461	1.119	1.308	1.463	1.034	1.532
EUREX	.964	.966	.856	.854	.784	.854	.964	.698	.786	.912
TURRM	2.100	2.100	2.145	2.147	2.049	2.261	2.145	2.227	2.227	2.187

Next, defuzzified values are normalized. For this, Equation (24) is used. In other words, values are divided by total of column. The normalized matrix is exhibited in Table 8.

Table 8: Normalized Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	.294	.276	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
CONAG	.229	.221	.230	.236	.216	.226	.230	.215	.211	.209
CANAG	.128	.160	.170	.140	.169	.128	.144	.165	.126	.170
EUREX	.110	.108	.100	.098	.091	.098	.106	.079	.096	.101
TURRM	.239	.235	.250	.246	.238	.259	.237	.252	.272	.242

Using normalized values, the entropy degree of each criterion is calculated using Equation (25). The deviation rate value is then determined by Equation (26) based on entropy. Thus, the entropy weight values of the criteria are computed using Equation (27). The results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Entropies, Deviation Rates and Entropy Weights

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN

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E	.960	.971	.971	.960	.963	.954	.966	.954	.950	.969
dr	.040	.029	.029	.040	.037	.046	.034	.046	.050	.031
w	.104	.076	.076	.105	.097	.119	.089	.121	.131	.081

After determining the entropy weights, the next step is to calculate the weight values using CILOS. At this stage, the NCRHR criterion is only a negative criterion. Therefore, the defuzzified matrix is transformed within the framework of Equation (28). In other words, the minimum value is divided by the values of this criterion. The transformed matrix is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Transformed Matrix

	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	2.587	.391	2.145	2.448	2.467	2.506	2.551	2.551	2.424	2.508
CONAG	2.013	.489	1.974	2.065	1.863	1.973	2.085	1.905	1.727	1.888
CANAG	1.124	.676	1.459	1.219	1.461	1.119	1.308	1.463	1.034	1.532
EUREX	.964	1.000	.856	.854	.784	.854	.964	.698	.786	.912
TURRM	2.100	.460	2.145	2.147	2.049	2.261	2.145	2.227	2.227	2.187

This transformed matrix is normalized by Equation (24). That is, the values are divided by the column totals. The normalized transformed matrix is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Normalized Transformed Matrix

	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
UPDAG	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
CONAG	.229	.162	.230	.236	.216	.226	.230	.215	.211	.209
CANAG	.128	.224	.170	.140	.169	.128	.144	.165	.126	.170
EUREX	.110	.332	.100	.098	.091	.098	.106	.079	.096	.101
TURRM	.239	.153	.250	.246	.238	.259	.237	.252	.272	.242

Afterwards, the maximum value of each criterion is determined, and a square matrix is created with this maximum value with the help of Equation (29). The square matrix is given in Table 12.

Table 12: Square Matrix

	IRCRS	**NCRHR**	**EUCOM**	**FINTK**	**EUSOL**	**GRLEG**	**LEGIT**	**DIPBF**	**POLCT**	**SUSTN**
IRCRS	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
NCRHR	.110	.332	.100	.098	.091	.098	.106	.079	.096	.101
EUCOM	.239	.153	.250	.246	.238	.259	.237	.252	.272	.242
FINTK	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
EUSOL	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
GRLEG	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
LEGIT	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
DIPBF	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278
POLCT	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278

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SUSTN	.294	.130	.250	.280	.286	.288	.282	.288	.296	.278

Using the values of the square matrix, the relative impact loss matrix is established by Equation (30). Relative impact loss matrix is shared in Table 13.

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Table 13: Relative Impact Loss Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
IRCRS	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
NCRHR	.627	.000	.601	.651	.682	.659	.622	.726	.676	.636
EUCOM	.188	.540	.000	.123	.169	.098	.159	.127	.081	.128
FINTK	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
EUSOL	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
GRLEG	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
LEGIT	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
DIPBF	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
POLCT	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
SUSTN	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

After the elements of the relative impact loss matrix are created, the weight system matrix is obtained by Equation (31). The weight system matrix is displayed in Table 14.

Table 14: Weight System Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
IRCRS	-.816	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
NCRHR	.627	-5.411	.601	.651	.682	.659	.622	.726	.676	.636
EUCOM	.188	.540	-.601	.123	.169	.098	.159	.127	.081	.128
FINTK	.000	.609	.000	-.774	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
EUSOL	.000	.609	.000	.000	-.852	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
GRLEG	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	-.757	.000	.000	.000	.000
LEGIT	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	-.781	.000	.000	.000
DIPBF	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-.853	.000	.000
POLCT	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-.757	.000
SUSTN	.000	.609	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	-.764

The system is solved. In other words, CILOS weights are defined using Equation (33). The CILOS weights are presented in Table 15.

Table 15: CILOS Weights

IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
.079	.106	.240	.084	.076	.085	.083	.076	.086	.085

Finally, the aggregated weights of criteria are established using Entropy and CILOS weights. For this, Equation (33) is used. The results are shown in Figure 3.

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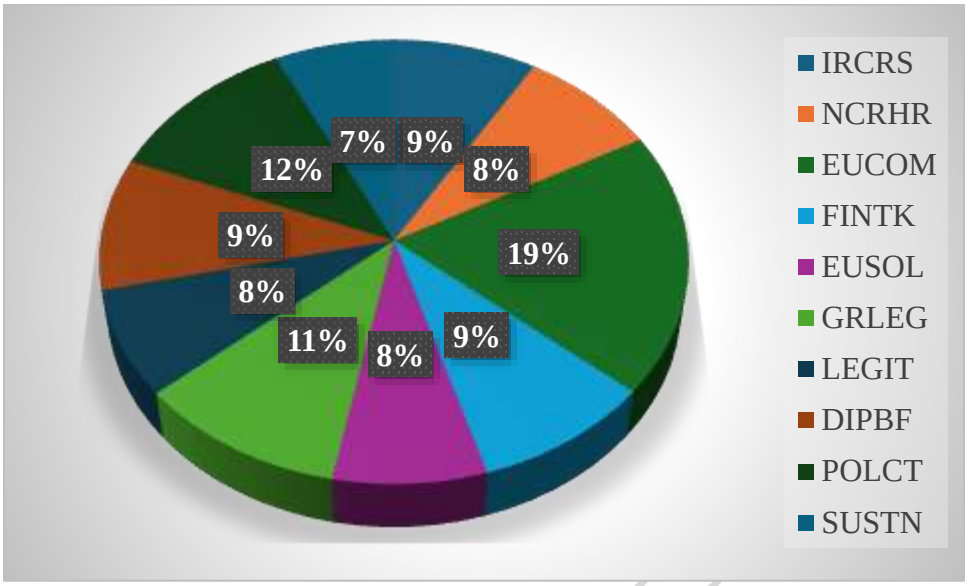


Figure 3: Aggregated Weights of Criteria

According to aggregated weights in Figure 3, the most important criteria for determining the most appropriate strategy for the future of the EU–Türkiye agreement are level of EU commitment fulfilment and political cost with .191 and .117, respectively.

5.3. Ranks of Strategies

The values of the normalized matrix in Table 7 are used as a basis for ranking the strategies for the future of the EU–Türkiye agreement. Next, the normalized values are multiplied by aggregated weights of criteria in Figure 3. The weighted normalized decision matrix is exhausted in Table 16.

Table 16: Weighted Normalized Decision Matrix

	IRCRS	NCRHR	EUCOM	FINTK	EUSOL	GRLEG	LEGIT	DIPBF	POLCT	SUSTN
UPDAG	.025	.023	.048	.026	.022	.031	.022	.028	.035	.020
CONAG	.020	.019	.044	.022	.017	.024	.018	.021	.025	.015
CANAG	.011	.013	.033	.013	.013	.014	.011	.016	.015	.012
EUREX	.009	.009	.019	.009	.007	.010	.008	.008	.011	.007
TURRM	.021	.020	.048	.023	.018	.028	.018	.024	.032	.017

Afterwards, the results of Equation (35) are obtained by summing the values of the other criteria except for the negative criterion NCRHR. Since NCRHR is the only negative criterion, the values of this criterion are the results of Equation (36). Finally, overall values of strategies are defined using Equation (37) from these totals. The results are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17: Totals and Overall Values

	S_-	S_+	R
UPDAG	.023	.256	5.186
CONAG	.019	.205	4.932
CANAG	.013	.137	4.615
EUREX	.009	.089	4.395

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TURRM	.020	.229	5.047

According to Table 16, the most appropriate strategy for the future of the EU–Türkiye agreement is update of the agreement with 5.186.

5.4. Comparative Analysis

Sensitivity analysis is performed to verify the reliability of the results. Different types of sensitivity analysis are performed. One of these is comparing the results with a different method. In this context, the analyses are repeated using the RATGOS method. The optimal values of the defuzzified matrix in Table 6 are determined. A similarity matrix is then obtained based on the optimal values. A weighted similarity matrix is then generated. Finally, the geometric means of the strategies are calculated. The results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: RATGOS Results

	RATGOS
UPDAG	.087
CONAG	.072
CANAG	.052
EUREX	.037
TURRM	.079

When the results of both methods are examined, the rank correlation coefficient of the strategies is 1, while the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.9998. In other words, while the ranking of the strategies remains the same, the results are valid regardless of the method.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the long-term performance of the EU–Türkiye migration framework and to identify the most appropriate strategic direction for its future using an integrated, behavior-sensitive multi-criteria decision-making model. The findings clearly demonstrate that the sustainability of the framework is primarily shaped by the EU's level of commitment fulfillment and the political costs associated with the agreement. In line with the research objective, the results indicate that updating the existing framework represents the most balanced and viable strategic option, outperforming both termination and alternative externalization strategies. These findings provide a structured and evidence-based answer to the central research question and highlight the importance of reinforcing mutual commitments and institutional coherence in migration governance. In addition, this study contributes to the existing literature in two important ways. First, it introduces a novel hybrid methodological framework that integrates behavioral dimensions into multi-criteria decision-making, addressing a significant gap in studies that typically rely on static or purely quantitative approaches. Second, it offers a policy-oriented analytical perspective by linking complex migration dynamics to measurable criteria and strategic alternatives. In doing so, the

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study moves beyond descriptive and fragmented analyses and provides a systematic and replicable decision-support tool for evaluating migration policies under uncertainty.

The findings of the study indicate that the most decisive factors shaping the future of the EU-Türkiye Consensus are the EU's fulfillment of its commitments and the political costs generated by the agreement—two dimensions frequently highlighted in the migration governance literature as critical determinants of policy sustainability. The predominance of these criteria underscores that cooperation frameworks relying on asymmetric burden-sharing or inconsistent political commitments tend to lose legitimacy and functionality over time. In this context, the identification of "updating the Consensus" as the most appropriate strategic option suggests that neither the termination of the agreement nor the creation of a wholly new externalization mechanism would address existing challenges as effectively as a revised and more equitable partnership. Policy recommendations derived from these findings include strengthening the monitoring and enforcement mechanisms of EU commitments, institutionalizing fair burden-sharing arrangements, enhancing transparency and accountability in funding procedures, and incorporating more robust protection guarantees for refugees. Additionally, both actors should prioritize cooperative diplomacy, long-term capacity-building, and harmonized implementation practices to ensure that the updated framework fosters mutual trust and aligns with internationally recognized protection standards.

Despite its comprehensive analytical design, this study has several theoretical and methodological limitations. Theoretically, the model relies on expert-based assessments, which may not fully capture the broader political dynamics, power asymmetries, or rapidly changing geopolitical conditions that influence migration diplomacy. Methodologically, although the proposed decision-making framework integrates advanced techniques such as Siemense network and BLFS, the model still depends on the subjective judgments of a limited number of experts and may require validation with larger and more diverse expert groups. Furthermore, the criteria and strategic alternatives were defined within the specific context of the EU–Türkiye Consensus, which may constrain the model's generalizability to other migration governance settings. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating longitudinal expert panels, expanding the model to include quantitative performance indicators, adapting BLFS structures to additional behavioral dimensions, and testing the framework in comparative regional contexts. Such extensions would not only enhance the robustness and applicability of the proposed model but also contribute to the development of more resilient and comprehensive decision-support tools for migration policy design.

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Funding Declaration: The authors do not have any funding

Ethical Statement: This study did not require ethical approval, as it is exempt under national regulations governing scientific research ethics. In accordance with the Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions issued by the Council of Higher Education of Türkiye (YÖK), ethical committee approval is not required for studies based exclusively on publicly available secondary data, documents, and official reports that do not involve human participants, personal data collection, or intervention. The analysis conducted in this study relies solely on publicly accessible institutional documents and aggregated secondary data and therefore falls within the scope of this exemption. Consent was provided from the participants verbally in online meeting in May 2025. None of these people are below 16 years old. Council of Higher Education (YÖK), Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions: https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Kurumsal/etik-yonetmeligi.aspx

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