



Discussion Paper - Turkey

Health Tourism Internationalisation

Key Facts

SBA 10 Sub-dimension:10.1.1

Country:

Turkey (Non-EU)

Results & Impact:

- 700,000 visitors p.a. in 2017
- 62% increase in visits p.a. since 2013
- Number of private hospitals rose from 271 in 2002 to 571 in 2017
- Total revenue in 2017: €1 billion
- Leading ministries: Development; Health; Tourism & Culture
- Main sector association *Turkish Healthcare Travel Council (THTC)* founded in 2005
- THTC has 144 network offices in 85 different countries
- SMEs registered with THTC: 317

A. Policy Level

The National Tourism Strategy 2023, drafted in 2007, mentions health tourism only briefly as one of several tourism categories to be improved for more diversification. More serious attention to health tourism is paid only seven years later, with the **10th National Development Plan 2014-2018**, which views the entire health tourism value chain in a holistic fashion, formulates objectives, targets, performance indicators, steering and data collection structures, and ministry-level responsibilities for each program component. The main policy objective was to increase the number of medical tourists to 750,000 by 2018.

BACKGROUND

- In 2005, the Turkish Healthcare Travel Council (THTC) is founded.
- In 2007, the National Tourism Strategy does not provide concrete policies.
- Number of health tourists rose from 75,000 in 2007 to over 700,000 (2018).
- As late as 2013, health tourism enters the National Development Plan with a tangible policy framework.
- 2015: “Health Tourism Coordination Council – *SATURK*” was established under the Ministry of Health’s Directorate for Health Tourism.

B. Programme Level

The program level is derived from the policy objective and consists of four technical components and one for monitoring (component 0):

0. *Monitoring*: Each component is monitored by one lead ministry, while overall monitoring is done by the Ministry of Health and “*SATURK-Council*”.
1. Developing institutional and legal infrastructure.
2. Improving physical and technical infrastructure.
3. Increasing quality of health tourism services.
4. Promoting effective promotion and marketing in health tourism.



C. Action Level

The public sector, with the leadership of the Ministry of Health, acts as a strong regulator to ensure that quality standards are upheld. Together with related ministries and local administrations, it facilitates investments in private hospitals through incentives, land provision and sometimes public-private partnerships for larger investments. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health based on its own experience, shares knowledge with the private sector on procurement of medical equipment and international standards.

Main activities of the public sector are:

- Self-monitoring and coordination of each component by the assigned ministry; overarching monitoring by the Ministry of Development.
- Integrating pharma and medical devices industry into the value chain, through clusters, FDI incentives.
- Provision of a detailed regulatory framework. The *Regulation30123* is published by the Ministry of Health regulating the standards of both service providers in the health sector as well as intermediaries.
- Dedicated price table for foreigners for 6,257 medical procedures.
- Dedicated price table for foreigners in the field of stem cell procedures
- VAT exemption on services provided to foreigners.
- Grant support to SMEs in the sector for up to 60% of investments dedicated for internationalisation of medical services (e.g. certification costs, representative office establishment abroad, marketing).

In summary, the public sector acts as a monitor, reliable regulator, and facilitator. The private sector takes the role as investor, innovator and marketer of services, organising themselves in the *THTC* as the main sector association.

D. Key Success Factors

- Continuous transfer of specialist knowledge through public-private dialogue, i.e. for equipment procurement.
- Private sector's own initiatives as early as in 2005 through the establishment of the sector association *THTC*.
- Regulatory clarity and constant updating of the regulatory framework, ensuring certification and quality standards.
- Strong incentives through VAT exemptions and grant support.
- Synergies with existing tourism destinations, thermal and cultural tourism.

