Turkey's Coatings Industry and Market

Structure, Trends, and Competitive Dynamics

with

Perspectives on Technology and Global Integration

Background

Those of you who are only slightly familiar with Turkey would perhaps never think that Turkey is a largely industrialized country. It is true that we have outstanding natural and historical sites, the sea and sunshine, forests and secluded retreats — just to name a few of our many wonders and treasures.

Consider the ancient Ionian city of Miletos, situated about 150 kilometers south of Izmir — itself a city of great antiquity, known in the ancient world as Smyrna and reaching back in time nearly five millennia. Founded around 3000 BC, Miletos is often regarded as the cradle of science, as it was the home of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes during its golden age in the 7th and 6th centuries BC [(1)(2)].

Yet statistics clearly show that Turkey is, in fact, a largely industrialized country, as can be seen clearly in Figure 1.

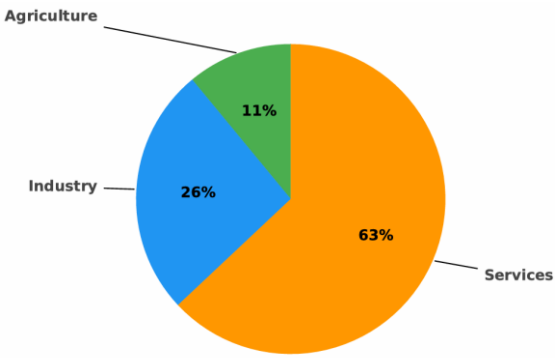

Figure 1. Turkey's GDP Composition (2024)[(3)].

Industry constitutes the second-largest component of Turkey's GDP and represents a higher share of its national output than in the EU27 average, although per capita value still remains comparatively low.

In aggregate terms, Turkey's total GDP — approximately 1.32 trillion USD in 2024 — places it among the world's major emerging economies. However, the GDP per capita remains below the EU27 average, primarily due to differences in overall economic scale, productivity, and sectoral maturity.

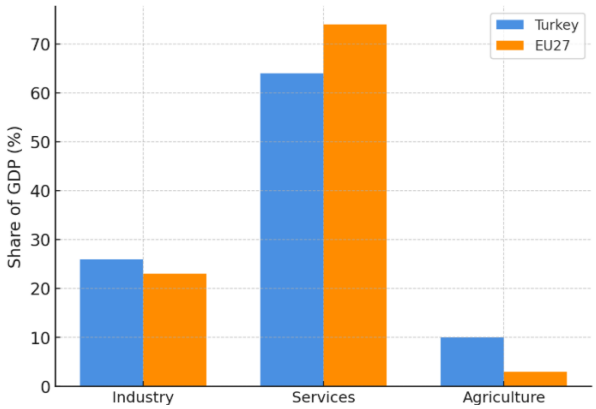

Figure 2. Comparison of GDP Composition: Turkey vs EU27 (2024)[4]

These findings highlight the dual nature of Turkey's economy — a solid industrial base alongside sectors that are still in the process of modernization and expansion.

Among the main industrial segments, the manufacturing industry holds the largest share, as illustrated in Figure 3. Mining is also a key segment and continues to gain importance with recent discoveries of rare earth element deposits in Central Anatolia, together with boron minerals, for which Turkey is recognized as the world leader in production and export.

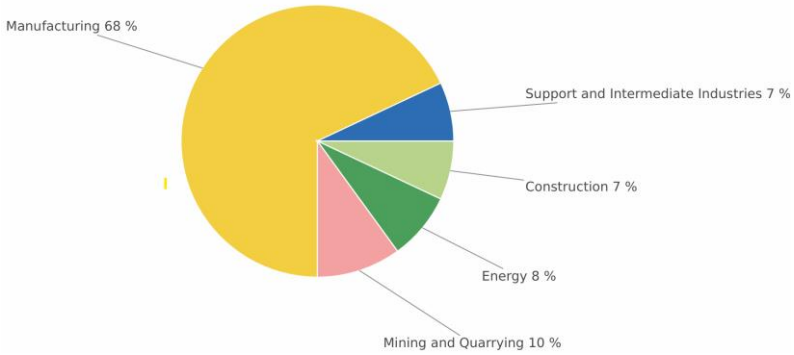

Figure 3: Industrial segments in Turkey (approximate share[5]

If you consider that Turkey was predominantly an agricultural country with practically no industry until the 1920s, we have come a long way since then. The foundations of Turkey's industrial and social modernization were laid with the establishment of the Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, gaining strong momentum during his leadership. This period was also a time of enlightenment in Turkey, thanks to Atatürk's reforms, which some historians describe as the Turkish Renaissance.

Turkish Paint Industry

Industrialization continued with the same impetus during the early years of the Republic, mainly through state-owned enterprises. One notable example from the early paint industry in Turkey is the Gölcük Paint Factory[6], originally little more than a workshop within the Gölcük Naval Shipyard, established by the Turkish Navy in the 1920s to produce marine coatings for its vessels. In fact, this factory served as a training ground for many paint chemists and engineers who later worked in the private sector.

While Turkey was taking its first steps in paint production, Europe had already built a long-standing industrial tradition. The history of the paint industry in Europe dates back more than 200 years, with early examples such as Crown Paints[7], established in 1777 in the United Kingdom, and Sikkens[8], founded in 1792 in the Netherlands.

However, the scientific foundations of coatings were laid considerably later, through the pioneering work of Joseph J. Mattiello[9] in the United States during the 1940s, whose multi-volume handbook shaped the field into the early 1950s.

While Europe's paint industry evolved in parallel with the Industrial Revolution, Turkey's industrial transformation began in the 1920s and 1930s under state-led modernization, laying the groundwork for a domestic coatings industry that would take shape in the decades after 1950.

Today, the Turkish paint industry has reached a comparable level of scientific and technological maturity to that of its European counterparts.

To understand how this transformation took place, it is essential to revisit the formative years of the Turkish coatings industry between 1923 and 1950. What began as a naval maintenance operation evolved into an embryonic industrial network supported by state policy, education, and the vision of modernization. The Gölcük Paint Factory stands as both a symbolic and practical milestone—linking defense needs with technological innovation and human capital development.

As Turkey entered the second half of the twentieth century, early initiatives in state policy, education, and modernization laid the groundwork for the emergence of a dynamic private coatings sector—diverse in its product range, export orientation, and technological ambition.

The manufacturing industry — the dominant branch within the industrial sector — includes all key segments that define a comprehensive industrial base, as depicted in Figure 4.

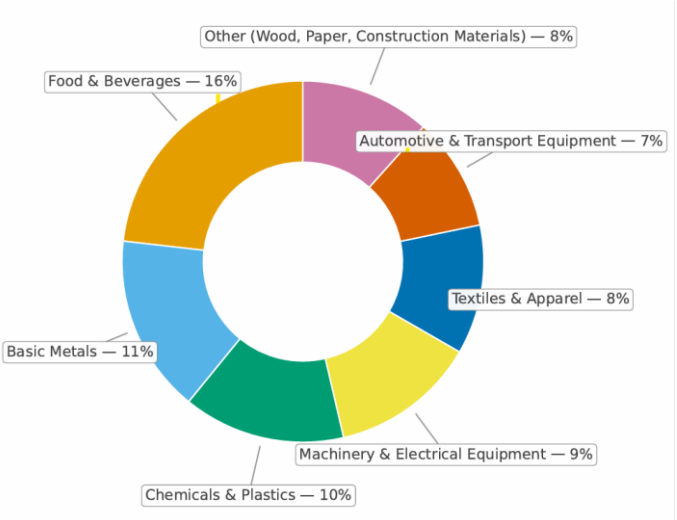

Figure 4: Segments of the manufacturing industry in Turkey[10]

As noted earlier, the paint industry in Turkey has reached a mature phase and diversified into a wide range of subsegments, including decorative coatings, wood coatings, automotive coatings, general industrial coatings, marine and protective coatings, coil and can coatings, and printing inks.

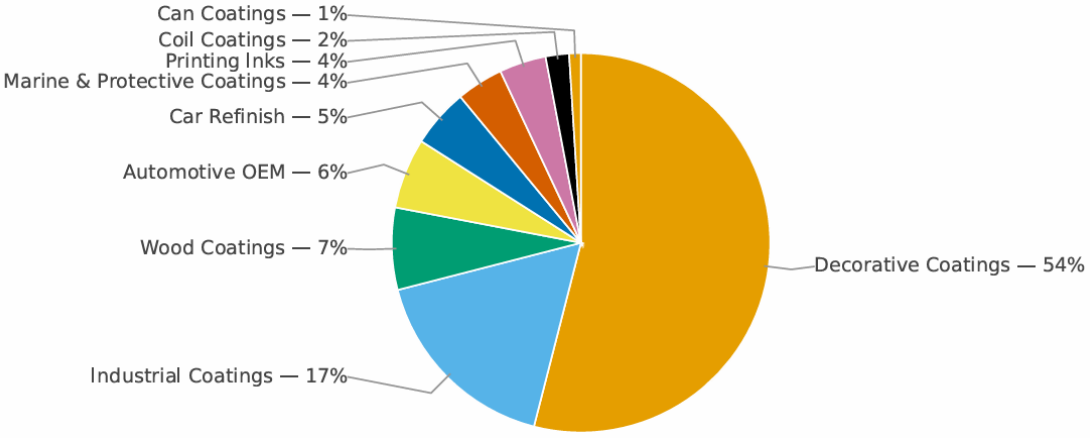

Figure 5: Turkish paint industry segmentation[11]

Paint production volume is approximately 0.9 million tons. Market value on the other hand is roughly 2 billion €. These figures positions Turkey as the 4th largest paint market among the top EU countries both in volume and production.

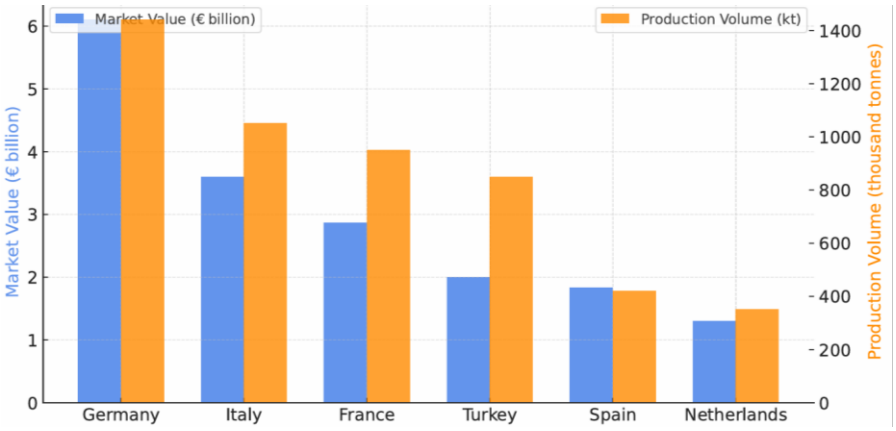

Figure 6: Top 6 EU countries and Turkey with approximate market values and production volumes[12]

Although Turkey ranks relatively high in total market size, production output, and manufacturing capacity, its per-capita paint consumption remains comparatively modest — averaging around 10 kg per person annually, versus approximately 15–16 kg across the EU-27. This gap largely stems from the country's lower per-capita income levels, as households tend to prioritize essential expenditures such as housing, energy, and food before discretionary items like paint.

The Turkish paint and coatings industry is primarily concentrated in the greater Istanbul, Kocaeli, Ankara, and İzmir regions, reflecting the country's overall pattern of industrial clustering, where manufacturing, logistics, and supply networks are most developed.

Table 1: Key indicators of Turkey paint and coatings industry 2024[13]

Indicator	Value	Notes
Total production volume	≈ 850,000 tons/year	Includes all liquid coatings (decorative, wood, industrial, automotive, marine, inks, etc.) except powder.
Total domestic market value (sales)	≈ €2.0 billion (≈ USD 2.2 billion)	Net manufacturer sales value, excluding imports
Per capita consumption	≈ 10 kg/person/year	EU27 average ≈ 15–16 kg
Exports (2024)	≈ 190 thousand tons	Equivalent to ~€700 million
Imports (2024)	≈ 110 thousand tons	Equivalent to ~€250 million
Net domestic use	≈ 770 thousand tons	Production – exports + imports

Turkey is also a significant market for powder coatings. The market is largely dominated by local production, estimated at around 85 thousand tons, making the country the fifth-largest producer in Europe. The powder coatings segment, however, is not included in this analysis.

Table 1 illustrates that Turkey's paint consumption still lags behind European averages. Narrowing this gap will require both the continued expansion of the country's manufacturing base across diverse industrial sectors and sustained growth in per-capita income toward EU-27 levels.

The automotive industry provides a notable example. Turkey has become one of Europe's leading production and export hubs for both passenger cars and commercial vehicles, with an annual output exceeding 1.3 million units. While rankings vary depending on the source, Turkey is consistently placed among the top automotive manufacturers in Europe, and stands out as a major producer of light commercial vehicles. This industrial momentum continues to drive demand for coatings across OEM and refinish segments, although per-capita paint consumption still lags behind the European average.

Turkey is both an importer and an exporter of paints and coatings. The fact that Turkey has been in the Customs Union with the EU since 1996 facilitates foreign trade particularly with EU member countries.

According to official trade statistics published by the Turkish Ministry of Trade and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), Turkey's total solvent-borne and water-borne paint imports amounted to 110 thousand tons, with a value of roughly €250 million. Most of these imports consist of specialty coatings sourced mainly from European suppliers, particularly for automotive OEM, coil-coating, and marine applications.

Turkey's paint and coatings exports, on the other hand, reached approximately 190 thousand tons in 2024, corresponding to a total value of around €700 million. Decorative coatings dominate the export portfolio, followed by wood coatings, other industrial, automotive, protective/marine coatings. Turkish manufacturers continue to demonstrate strong regional competitiveness, supported by cost efficiency, formulation expertise, and high production flexibility.

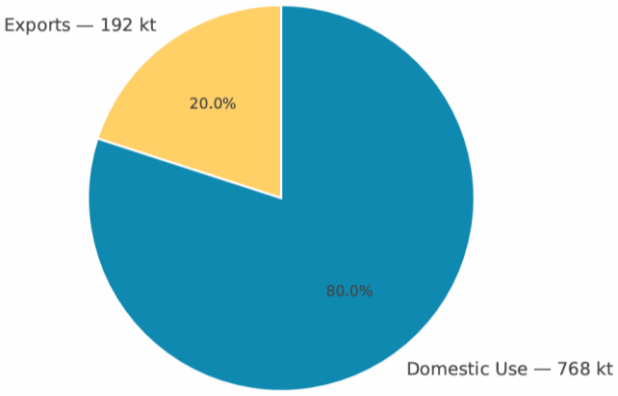

Fig 7: 2024 Output Composition of Turkish Paint Production[13]

Local companies have also developed considerable expertise in high-performance and technology-intensive coatings. Take for instance Kansai Altan, a joint venture majority-owned by Kansai Paint Co., Ltd. (Japan), which has become one of Turkey's most advanced producers of automotive OEM coatings. The company maintains a fully integrated production chain, beginning with resin polymerization from monomers and extending through electrodeposition (CED) primer, and topcoat formulations across waterborne and solventborne systems.

Thanks to its upstream integration and strong R&D foundation, Kansai Altan not only supplies the domestic automotive industry but also exports electrodeposition (CED) primers, waterborne and solventborne OEM coating systems to several automakers and component suppliers through its wholly owned subsidiary, Kansai Altan GmbH, located in the greater Düsseldorf area — all fully compliant with EU REACH and VOC directives.

This illustrates how Turkey's coatings industry has advanced beyond traditional decorative segments, becoming an active participant in high-technology, export-oriented manufacturing.

Another such example is Kayalar Kimya A.Ş., an independent company specializing mainly in wood coatings and operating its own resin manufacturing plant within its facility in the greater Istanbul area. Kayalar Kimya exports to several major European countries, and exports account for nearly 60% of its total production volume. Its in-house resin production capability enables close control over product performance and cost, reinforcing its position as one of Europe's largest independent wood coatings manufacturers.

Apart from local producers, several major international paint manufacturers also have extensive operations in Turkey. Nippon Paint (formerly Betek) and Kansai Polisan (formerly Polisan), and AkzoNobel (formerly Marshall) are leading producers of decorative coatings. Kansai Altan, Jotun, and AkzoNobel Kemipol maintain a strong market presence through well-established local organizations. BASF, PPG, Beckers, Hempel, Peter Lacke, KCC, and Axalta, on the other hand, have limited or no local manufacturing yet hold relatively strong positions in selected market segments. Some major European wood coatings suppliers —

such as ICA, Milesi, Renner, and Hesse — operate primarily on an import basis yet maintain a strong presence in several niche market segments.

The main export destinations for Turkish coatings include Iraq, Egypt, Azerbaijan, Libya, Romania, and other Middle Eastern and Eastern European markets, which together account for more than two-thirds of total paint exports. A smaller but steadily growing share is directed toward EU markets, particularly in industrial primers, alkyd systems, and OEM coatings, where Turkish producers are expanding their footprint through compliance, innovation, and cost competitiveness.

R&D and Innovation

The R&D infrastructure of the Turkish coatings industry has matured significantly over the past decade, supported by Law No. 5746 on the Support of Research, Development and Design Activities and by the support programs of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), which provide incentives for personnel, laboratory instrumentation, and pilot-scale production.

As of 2024, the Turkish paint and coatings sector hosts a well-established network of officially accredited R&D Centers specializing in coatings development, formulation, and testing, recognized by the Ministry of Industry and Technology. According to recent data, more than 40 R&D Centers are currently operating under large and medium-sized manufacturers, employing over 2,000 qualified researchers, chemists, and chemical engineers.

Leading companies such as Kansai Altan, DYO, AkzoNobel Kemipol, Nippon Paint (Betek), Kanat, Polisan Kansai, Jotun, Kayalar Kimya and İba operate certified R&D Centers with dedicated laboratories for product design and performance testing. In addition, several mid-sized enterprises maintain smaller innovation units focusing on product customization and technical service development. Some of the bigger centers also have dedicated polymer design and analytical laboratories. Many centers are equipped with pilot-scale dispersion units and resin reactors, enabling scale-up from laboratory to production trials.

Overall, this structure demonstrates a steady expansion in innovation capacity, with R&D activities increasingly directed toward eco-friendly systems, digital formulation technologies, and compliance-driven research such as REACH and KKDİK adaptation.

Regulations

The counterpart of the EU's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation in Turkey is the KKDİK Regulation—often referred to as the "Turkish REACH." It closely mirrors the EU REACH framework, differing only in a few specific aspects. One notable distinction is the requirement for each registrant company to either employ or contract a certified Chemical Safety Specialist, who is responsible for supervising the registration process.

Under KKDİK, chemical manufacturers and importers are required to submit comprehensive data on the physicochemical properties, intended uses, exposure scenarios, and toxicological profiles of substances via the Ministry's Chemical Registration System (KKS). These submissions must be completed in accordance with the phased registration deadlines set for 2026, 2028, and 2030. Several Only ssRepresentatives (ORs) operate in both domestic and international markets, assisting manufacturers in complying with the KKDİK Regulation.

The Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation has already been in force in Turkey since 2013, implemented under the national title SEA Regulation.

Conclusion

Overall, the industry's trajectory demonstrates both resilience and adaptability within a challenging global environment**.** From its early foundations in state-led industrialization to its current scale and diversity, the Turkish paint and coatings industry has evolved into one of the most dynamic segments of the country's manufacturing base. Reflecting both strong domestic demand and a growing export capability, it now plays an increasingly strategic role within the regional coatings landscape. While challenges remain in regulatory harmonization, sustainability, and digital transformation, continued investment in R&D and innovation is paving the way for greater competitiveness. Positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey's industry is well placed to strengthen its presence in the global value chain and contribute to shaping the future of coatings across its neighboring regions.

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(3) Compiled from TÜİK (2024) and TOBB (2024) data.
(4) Compiled from TÜİK (2024), Eurostat (2024), and The Global Economy (2024).
(5) Compiled from TÜİK (2024) Manufacturing Production Index, NACE Rev.
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(10) Authors' compilation based on CEPE (2024), BOSAD (2024), and industry reports.
(11) BOSAD (2024), CEPE Country Reports (2024), TÜİK Industrial Data, ChemQuest estimates.
(12) Authors' compilation based on CEPE, Bosad, Fipec, Asefapi, VdL, Assovernici, 2023-2024 reports.
(13) Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), Eurostat, and The Global Economy (2024).

Note: Due to the time lag in paints and coatings statistics, data for 2025 are not included in this article.

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