



WORKING TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE:

Syrian refugees' economic
participation in Turkey

March 2019

DURABLE
SOLUTIONS
PLATFORM

The Durable Solutions Platform (DSP) aims to generate knowledge that informs and inspires forward-thinking policy and practice on the long-term future of displaced Syrians. Since its establishment in 2016, the DSP has developed research projects on key questions regarding durable solutions for Syrians. In addition, DSP has strengthened the capacity of civil society organizations on solutions to displacement.



IGAM Research Centre on Asylum and Migration is a Turkish non-profit association created to improve the rights of refugees and migrants, particularly the rights of undocumented migrants both in Turkey and in the world. Through its work, IGAM has been focusing on the issue of integration, which has become a top agenda issue in Turkey and elsewhere. IGAM is registered in the Ankara Associations Department under the Ministry of Interior. It is a financially independent, humanitarian and non-political association.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFAD – Disaster and Emergency Management Authority
CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
DGMM – Directorate-General of Migration Management
DRC – Danish Refugee Council
ECHO - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ESSN – Emergency Social Safety Net
FGDs – Focus group discussions
GoT – Government of Turkey
IOM – International Organization for Migration
IRC – International Rescue Committee
KIs – Key informant interviews
LFIP - Law on Foreigners and International Protection
NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council
SMEs – Small- and medium-sized enterprises
TP – Temporary Protection
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

COVER PHOTO:

Syrian refugees and host community learn tailoring in Kilis, Turkey. November 2017.
Photo by: Elif Iřık/DRC.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the opportunities and barriers for Syrian refugees' economic participation and integration in Turkey. It adopts a micro-level approach, examining everyday realities and perceptions of Syrians and Turkish host community members in two municipalities, Sultanbeyli and Hatay. The study's main objective is to assess how existing legal, economic and socio-cultural aspects either support or impede Syrians' ability for economic integration in Turkey. Rather than taking a macro-approach, this study aims to shed light on how macro-level processes, programming and policies impact the integration process on the micro-level.

The report is based on an extensive literature review and primary data collection using a qualitative methodology. Primary data was collected through 24 focus group discussions (FGDs) in Sultanbeyli and Hatay with Turkish and Syrian men and women from different employment categories. The FGDs provided first-hand information from Syrian and Turkish employers, formally and informally employed and unemployed respondents. A total of 17 key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with municipality officials, NGO representatives, academics and researchers. The bulk of the data was collected in October and November 2018. Furthermore, this report's analysis draws on an extensive review of existing literature on the policy context in Turkey.

Overall, this study finds that significant legal, economic and socio-cultural barriers exist to Syrians' attainment of **self-reliance** and **sustainable livelihoods** in Turkey. These barriers are often interlinked and overlapping, making the task of improving Syrians' economic integration a highly complex one.

Syrians in Turkey find legal protection under the Temporary Protection (TP) regime, which provides access to education, healthcare and documentation. However, Syrians experience significant **legal barriers** to accessing formal employment. Due to administrative and financial burdens related to work permits for Syrian employees, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) default to informal labor. Existing regulations under the Temporary Protection (TP) regime create additional barriers for the formalization of Syrians' work engagements, for instance through a quota limiting the number of TP beneficiaries to 10 percent of total staff at a workplace, a geographical limitation that work permit issuance is restricted to cities in which Syrians were registered upon arrival in Turkey and the need for acquiring additional permits by Turkish authorities for jobs in the education and health sectors. The above obstacles were frequently cited by Syrian respondents as impediment to accessing formal employment.

Access to formal employment is also impeded by **economic barriers**. The difficulties in formalizing employment mean that many Syrians are at risk of economic exploitation, being paid below the minimum wage, on an irregular basis or sometimes not at all. The economic sectors that Syrians are mostly engaged in, such as the textile, construction and agricultural sectors, were already prone to informality before their arrival in Turkey. Financial assistance provided to 1.26 million Syrians through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)¹ was mentioned by those Syrian respondents who were receiving it as important to meet their basic needs. It is perceived as a reliable and regular source of income in the midst of economic uncertainty. Critically, some Syrian respondents indicated that they did not try to pursue formal work for fear of losing access to this financial assistance, thus being forced to choose informality. The necessity to meet basic needs such as food and shelter, coupled with income insecurity, means that time and resources to pursue education opportunities that could pull families out of poverty.

The above aspects are also closely connected to, and influenced by, socio-cultural barriers between Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities. The most critical is the language barrier. The command of the Turkish language is highlighted as the most essential aspect to finding work, but perhaps more importantly to avoid being exploited and to being regarded positively by Turkish employers and host community members. While Syrians generally held more positive feelings towards their host country, Turkish respondents were more sceptical about Syrians' integration potential. When it comes to gender dynamics, Syrian female respondents held positive views about wanting to work and take an active role in the labor market, while male respondents clung to the notion that women should, and need, not work.

1 UN Women and ASAM (2018). Needs Assessment of Syrian Women and Girls under Temporary Protection Status in Turkey. June 2018. Available at: <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/08/needs-assessment-of-syrian-women-and-girls-under-temporary-protection-status-in-turkey>. Accessed on 7 January 2019. P. 6

The Government of Turkey's (GoS) commitment to support Syrian refugees, by accepting over 3.6 million Syrians into the country, reforming its legal system to create a TP regime providing beneficiaries with basic human rights and commitment to non-refoulement, is unparalleled and commendable. When it comes to economic integration however, the lack of a macro-level **integration policy** has meant that Syrians' participation in the Turkish labor market has not been adequately guided, with dynamics unfolding without a sense of structure and sustainability. The latter is strongly felt by Syrian respondents, who are desperate to bring a sense of stability into their lives after years of displacement, as well as by Turkish host communities who support the assistance of Syrians in need but are getting impatient with the lack of structured approaches when it comes to policies for improving the economic situation of Turkish citizens and assisting Syrians.

A number of key policy and programming **recommendations** can be drawn from the findings of this study in order to improving the economic integration of Syrians into Turkey's formal labor market, and therefore make durable solutions available to Syrians in displacement. A more detailed list of recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY

- Expand protection of Syrians in Turkey by granting Temporary Protection (TP) beneficiaries a special dispensation from employment restrictions usually granted to aliens and conferring the same rights regarding wage-earning, self-employment and liberal professions as permanent residents or nationals.
- Increase access to formal employment by lifting legal and administrative barriers for self-employment and wage earning for Temporary Protection (TP) beneficiaries, including easing administrative restrictions on finding formal employment outside of place of registration, increasing the quota for TP beneficiaries allowed to be hired by registered enterprises, reducing company registration costs to bring more unregistered Syrian business into the formal economy and facilitating freedom of movement and lifting travel restrictions to encourage legal employment.
- Ensure that refugees are aware of their rights by improving the access and flow of correct information in Arabic and Turkish, through municipalities, NGOs, employment agencies and social media
- Increase economic growth by taking a regional- or area-based approach when developing economic policies designed to boost formal employment of TP beneficiaries and Turkish citizens, tailored to the geographic specificities and based on a market analysis and consultations with municipalities.
- Remove language barriers by incentivizing Turkish language courses to TP beneficiaries to enable them to achieve sufficient command of the language to fulfill their everyday and employment needs. Develop minimum standards for Turkish language classes provided by NGOs with an accreditation and certification system.

DONOR COMMUNITY

- Ensure burden-sharing of the Syrian refugee caseload, increasing available resettlement spaces and accepting refugees for complementary pathways based on non-discriminatory criteria, protection needs and vulnerability.
- Continue funding financial assistance programmes, including the ESSN, targeted at vulnerable TP beneficiaries, who rely on the assistance to meet their basic needs, including food and shelter, but revising it in terms of committing to multi-year funding, integrating conditionality components, where relevant, through attendance of Turkish language classes and vocational courses and considering a phasing out period for beneficiaries who enter formal employment.

- Continue funding and building the capacity of Turkish municipalities and civil society organizations, by prioritizing projects focused on supporting Turkish-Syrian partnerships, livelihoods and social cohesion between Syrians and Turkish host communities.
- Develop gender sensitive approaches in supporting and encouraging formal employment for both Turkish and Syrian women through targeted capacity-building programs, promotion of practices and regulations and inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators as funding and/or reporting requirements.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Collaborate with public sector entities, especially with local Chambers of Commerce, as well as with municipalities and Turkish and Syrian NGOs, to create job opportunities and hire TP beneficiaries who graduate from vocational courses and those with higher education qualifications, providing them with on-the-job training.
- Build the capacity of Syrian companies by offering business training tailored to their local or regional needs, delivered by trainers competent in Turkey's and Syria's business environments and who speak Arabic fluently.
- Increase commitment to providing female-friendly workplaces by setting up confidential complaint mechanisms within companies, strengthening accountability mechanisms and organizing gender sensitivity trainings for all employees.

NGOS

- Adapt vocational training programmes designed to support Syrians' livelihoods opportunities to focus on the specific local market needs that Syrians could fill and be more creative in the selection of programmes available, moving away from gender-stereotypical courses such as cooking or knitting into for example IT, logistics or project management, and providing career counselling.
- Bridge the gap between public and private sectors by creating opportunities for dialogue between companies, employment agencies, local Chambers of Commerce and other business groups on employing TP beneficiaries.
- Create "champions" among Syrians who have successfully set up businesses or been hired by Turkish companies, to mentor fellow striving Syrian women and men striving to set up their own businesses or make a career. Where the language is no obstacle, create such a mentorship programme between Turkish and Syrian businesses, especially for women-led businesses.
- Increase constructive engagement and collaboration with Syrian organizations, including supporting their capacity-building.

2. INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, Turkey has welcomed over 3.6 million Syrian refugees into its borders.² They join half a million more asylum seekers and refugees from other countries,³ making Turkey the country hosting the largest number of refugees worldwide.⁴ In order to deal with the increasing number of Syrians, Turkey passed the “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” (LFIP) in April 2013, representing the most comprehensive legal framework to date in Turkey dealing with matters of migration and protection of asylum seekers, and introducing the TP regime for Syrians.⁵

In January 2016 the Government of Turkey (GoT) passed the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners under TP, giving TP beneficiaries the right to apply for a work permit and access formal employment.⁶ Despite this commendable step to improve Syrians’ opportunity for self-reliance, only 19,925 work permits have been granted to Syrians under TP as of March 2018,⁷ representing 0.5 percent of the registered number of Syrians in Turkey. This means that very few Syrians have access to sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance through formal employment.

Experience shows that when refugees are supported in becoming socially and economically self-reliant, and given freedom of movement and protection, they are more likely to contribute economically to their host country.⁸ Critically, Turkey has been hesitant to take a long-term approach to Syrians’ integration, arguably because it is concerned of a public backlash if accepting Syrians’ permanent presence.⁹ The lack of long-term perspective makes Syrians’ integration into the formal labour market more challenging.

Previous research has indicated the need for designing medium- and long-term plans to provide productive employment opportunities for Syrians and vulnerable Turkish citizens.¹⁰ Steps need to be taken to ensure the sustainable economic integration of Syrians while simultaneously managing grievances of host communities. In other words, the main question is not whether, but *how*, to best weave Syrian refugees into Turkey’s social and economic fabric.

This study therefore aims to better understand how the current legal, economic and socio-cultural realities impact Syrian refugees’ ability to become self-reliant and pursue sustainable livelihoods in Turkey. It explores the barriers and opportunities for Syrian refugees’ economic integration in Turkey. The cases studied include Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities in Sultanbeyli and Hatay municipalities.

The study’s main line of inquiry explores how Syrians’ economic integration in the Turkish labor market can be improved. This will be further investigated by addressing the impact of national policies on the municipality and local level, the role private sector plays in enabling economic participation and the lessons learnt from the ESSN.

- 2 DGMM (2018). Distribution of Syrian Refugees in the Scope of Temporary Protection by Province (17.12.2018). Ministry of Interior, Republic of Turkey. Available at: http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik/temporary-protection_1024_4748. Accessed on 8 January 2019
- 3 Kirişçi, K., Brandt, J. and Erdoğan, M. (2018). Syrian refugees in Turkey: Beyond the numbers (19 June 2018). Order from Chaos. Brookings. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/06/19/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-beyond-the-numbers/>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.
- 4 Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017). Protecting Syrians in Turkey: A Legal Analysis. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 29(4), pp. 555–579. Accessed on 18 December 2018. P. 555
- 5 DGMM (2013). Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Law No: 6458. Ministry of Interior. Republic of Turkey. Available at: [http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/law%20on%20foreigners%20and%20international%20protection\(2\).pdf](http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/law%20on%20foreigners%20and%20international%20protection(2).pdf). Accessed on 19 December 2018.
- 6 İcduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016). Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Towards Integration Policies. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 15(3), pp. 59-69. Available at: http://turkishpolicy.com/files/articlepdf/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-towards-integration-policies_en_2781.pdf. Accessed on 19 December 2018. P. 61
- 7 European Union (2018). “Assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey”: Conference document. Supporting the future of Syrian and the region. Brussels II Conference 24-25 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34146/turkey-partnership-paper.pdf>. Accessed on 7 January 2019.
- 8 World Bank (2015). Turkey’s Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Road Ahead. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23548/Turkey0s0respo0s0an%20d0the0road0ahead.pdf?sequence=1>. Accessed on 20 December 2018
- 9 International Crisis Group (2018). Turkey’s Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions. Report N°248. (29 January 2018). Brussels: International Crisis Group. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/248-turkeys-syrian-refugees-defusing-metropolitan-tensions>. Accessed on 16 December 2018
- 10 for example: Ibid; International Crisis Group (2016). Turkey’s Refugee Crisis: The Politics of Permanence. Report N°241. (30 November 2016). Brussels: International Crisis Group. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-s-refugee-crisis-politics-permanence>. Accessed on 16 December 2018; and Kamyaz, T. and Kadkoy, O. (2016). Syrians in Turkey – The Economics of Integration, *Al Sharq Forum*. Available at: <http://www.sharqforum.org/download/3263/>. Accessed on 16 December 2018.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

3.1. DURABLE SOLUTIONS AND LOCAL INTEGRATION

A durable solution is achieved when displaced persons, in this case refugees no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination issuing from their displacement. The following three types of durable solutions are distinguished: (1) voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, (2) local integration in the country of first asylum and (3) resettlement to a third country. This research focuses on the second durable solution, through the lens of economic participation for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The majority of countries hosting large refugee populations tend to have limited resources and capacities to adequately integrate and provide for incoming refugees. In fact, 84 percent of the world's refugees under the UNHCR's mandate are hosted by developing countries, placing a humanitarian burden on economies struggling to grow and with few additional resources to support new residents.¹¹ Consequently, that tends to aggravate the longer-term economic and social impact of the refugee presence which, if ignored, can spark off resentment, and even instability. A protracted refugee presence in these circumstances would often tend to be viewed as a burden, despite the potential human and material resources that refugees can bring. Under the right conditions, refugees can attain self-reliance, become able to pursue sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the development of the host country, not least economically (UNHCR, 2003:9).

UNHCR defines local integration as a process composed of three intertwined dimensions, namely legal, economic and socio-cultural. Firstly, local integration is a legal process, whereby refugees attain a wider range of rights in the host state. Secondly, it is an economic process of establishing sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to that of the host community.



Syrian refugees and host community learn tailoring in Kilis, Turkey. November 2017. Photo by: Elif Işık/DRC.

11 Edmond, C. (2017). 84% of refugees live in developing countries. World Economic Forum. 20 June 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/eighty-four-percent-of-refugees-live-in-developing-countries/>. Accessed on 24 January 2019.

Thirdly, it is a social and cultural process of adaptation and acceptance that enables the refugees to contribute to the social life of the host country and live without fear of discrimination.¹² Crucially, it is possible for a refugee to acquire and exercise a wide range of rights, to become self-reliant and to develop close social ties with the host country and community, in other words to integrate in the country of asylum, without necessarily becoming a naturalized citizen of the asylum state.¹³

3.2. ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PROCESS

Local integration is a complex process in which legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions are inextricably interlinked. This study specifically zooms in on economic integration, encompassing broader socio-cultural, legal and material dynamics in the host country. While the term ‘economic’ defines those aspects of social life having to do with attaining material welfare through the allocation of resources that are usually scarce,¹⁴ the material aspect cannot be decoupled from the broader social reality. For instance, engagement in the labor market can present a path to socio-cultural integration when characterized by positive interactions and non-discrimination, the latter of which could be legally encoded.

This **study defines refugees’ economic integration** in the country of first asylum as positive when:

1. Refugees become self-reliant, rather than relying on assistance by humanitarian actors or the host state, and can pursue sustainable livelihoods
2. Refugees have positive interactions with local communities and fellow refugees in their daily lives and in the workplace
3. Refugees are able to enjoy rights and entitlements that make it possible for them to access work opportunities and employment rights without discrimination based on their legal status

In other words, economic integration encompasses a broad array of factors that together either enable or hinder the process. For instance, legal rights have to be in place that make it possible for refugees to work while also ensuring that there is social cohesion between host and displaced communities so as to not increase tensions and competition in the workplace. Crucially, the process of economic integration involves a multi-way process implicating host communities and refugees, but also the host government, private sector, CSOs and aid actors. The vital role of economic integration in refugees’ lives cannot be overstated. For a refugee, income generation is the most fundamental condition for self-sufficiency that also prevents the need for humanitarian assistance. Being financially independent as an individual and being socially integrated in the host society are indispensable rights.¹⁵

3.3. DEFINING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AT THE MICRO-LEVEL

This study’s definition of economic integration encompasses legal, economic and socio-cultural aspects. In order to best assess progress towards economic integration and understand the barriers and opportunities that exist to achieve it, these aspects will be analyzed on the micro-level. The micro-level analysis focuses on individual actors, their interaction, and the social situations in which individuals and groups interact. Crucially, units and processes that are discussed at the macro-level only ever manifest themselves through concrete actions and interactions of individuals and groups of individuals in real-world, social situations at the micro-level.

Building on the definition of economic integration as stated above, this section will aim to define how economic integration translates into actions and processes at the micro-level.

12 Fielden, A. (2008). Local integration: an under-reported solution to protracted refugee situations. *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Research Paper No. 158. UNHCR: Geneva. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/486cc99f2.pdf>. Accessed on 16 December 2018. p. 1

13 Crisp, J. (2004). The local integration and local settlement of refugees: a conceptual and historical analysis. *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No.102. UNHCR: Geneva. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-my/407d3b762.pdf>. Accessed on 16 December 2018. p. 2

14 Kuhlman, T. (1991). The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(1), pp. 1-20. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/4.1.1>. Accessed on 17 December 2018.

15 Zetter, R. and Ruaudel, H. (2016). Refugees’ Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment. Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD). Available at: https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/KNOMAD%20Study%201%20Part%20I-%20Assessing%20Refugees%27%20Rights%20to%20Work_final.pdf. Accessed on 17 December 2018.

3.3.1. Legal dimension: Refugees are able to enjoy rights and entitlements that make it possible for them to access work opportunities and employment rights without discrimination based on their legal status

Legal status unquestionably plays a crucial role in the integration process, often determining the opportunities and barriers for positive social interactions as well as self-reliance. International legal instruments protect refugees' rights, including that of working and generating an income. The 1951 Geneva Convention obliges state parties at the very least to grant refugees "the most favorable treatment" accorded to other aliens in the same circumstances, justified by the fact that refugees cannot rely on their governments to negotiate favorable conditions for them.¹⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also include the right of everyone, without distinction, to gain a living and to free choice of employment.¹⁷ Moreover, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) offers special protection to women against discrimination in employment.¹⁸ In principle, international human rights instruments guarantee refugees' right to work.

In practice however, governments frequently restrict free access to the labor market for non-nationals. Developing countries may even have special dispensations generally allowing them to impose restrictions on the economic rights of non-nationals in order to protect their national economy.¹⁹ The majority of large refugee-hosting countries are developing countries and sometimes have restrictive employment regulations for non-nationals and refugees.²⁰ As a result, refugees can face important obstacles in entering domestic labor markets, such as legal and administrative difficulties based on their legal status but also high unemployment rates in the host country's economy.²¹

Evidently, the legal framework governing the rights and duties of refugees covers a wide range of aspects that can directly impact the access to the labor market. These aspects include freedom of movement, access to education, healthcare and other public services as well as the administrative provisions for identity and travel documents, the latter of which can be a precondition to access services in the first place.²² It is essential to recognize that even where states have lifted legal and administrative barriers for refugees, legal access to the job market is often not enough for economic integration. Obtaining a job is not only difficult in itself, but does not necessarily guarantee self-reliance, not least for refugees who frequently lack wider social and family networks, which are often instrumental in helping individuals and households meet their everyday needs.²³

On the micro-level, refugees are able to access work opportunities and employment rights without discrimination based on their legal status by:

- Being able to access basic social services such as healthcare, education and work opportunities
- Being able to secure necessary identity documents, which is often a prerequisite to accessing work opportunities legally

16 United Nations General Assembly (1951). Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951). United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>. Accessed 18 December 2018.

17 UN General Assembly (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (16 December 1966). United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 993. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>. Accessed 18 December 2018.

18 UN General Assembly (1979). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (18 December 1979). United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>. Accessed 18 December 2018.

19 Article 2(3) of the ICESCR reads as follows: "Developing countries, with due regard to human rights and the national economy, may determine to what extent they would guarantee the economic rights recognized in the present Covenant to non-nationals." UN General Assembly (1979).

20 UNHCR (2003). Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern. UNHCR Geneva. May 2003. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/partners/partners/3f1408764/framework-durable-solutions-refugees-persons-concern.html>. Accessed on 18 December 2018. P. 9

21 Da Costa (2006).

22 Da Lomba (2010).

23 Da Costa (2006).

- Being able to use their educational certificates, or access educational opportunities, that enable them to widen their access to work opportunities
- Being able to enjoy a certain degree of mobility in the host country, in order to move to where the work opportunities are.

3.3.2. Economic dimension: Refugees become self-reliant, rather than relying on assistance by humanitarian actors or the host state, and can pursue sustainable livelihoods

Achieving economic self-reliance and being able to pursue sustainable livelihoods are the two main economic indications for refugees' integration in a host country. Self-reliance means that an individual or household does not need to rely on any external support to be able to meet basic needs, and can procure the latter in a dignified way. Consequentially, this presumes that individuals and households are able to generate the necessary basic income, and therefore secure their livelihood, in a dignified way. Moreover, a critical dimension is the reliability of the income-generation, in other words, whether the income will be regular and available over a certain period of time.

Self-reliance is the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet basic needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern (PoC), and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian or external assistance.

Box 1: Definition of self-reliance²⁴

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.

Box 2: Definition of sustainable livelihood²⁵

Access to work opportunities is an essential element of human dignity as well as the ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency, one of the cornerstones of the successful integration of refugees in their host country.²⁶ Promoting self-reliance through making available work opportunities reduces the need for prolonged dependence on the country of asylum or international assistance, and is mutually beneficial to refugees and host states.

On the micro-level of the individual, family or community, achieving self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods concretely translate into:²⁷

- Being able to find, and adequately access, income-generating opportunities

24 UNHCR (2011). Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4eeb19f49.pdf>. Accessed on 17 December 2018.

25 DFID (1999). Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets. Department for International Development. Available at: <https://www.enonline.net/attachments/872/section2.pdf>. Accessed on 17 December 2018.

26 Da Costa, R. (2006). Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations. Legal and Protection Policy Research Series. UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/44bb90882.pdf>. Accessed on 17 December 2018. p. 56

27 The indications provided here and in the following two sections are drawn from the secondary data and findings of the report.

- The income generated can cover the basic expenditure of the individual or household
- The income is reliable, regular and can cover basic expenditure of the individual or household over a longer period of time

3.3.3. Socio-cultural dimension: Refugees have positive interactions with local communities and fellow refugees in their daily lives and in the workplace

When it comes to social interactions between refugees and host community members, it is often argued to be a two-way process.²⁸ On the one hand, refugees have an active role to play, for example in acquiring the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge.²⁹ On the other hand, it falls on the host community to ensure that refugees are accepted in social interactions, and have access to the public sphere, formal education opportunities and to the labor market.³⁰ However, popular discourse and attitude often perceive integration as a one-way process, with refugees expected to adapt to the host society's culture, rather than it being a process of mutual accommodation.³¹

Critically, the absence of government support for the integration process, for instance through a lack of formal integration policies or frameworks, increases the risk of placing the 'burden' of integration on refugees, and local host communities, alone.³² From an economic perspective, this implies that refugees are both blamed for 'stealing' job opportunities from the host community, while simultaneously being blamed for not contributing to the host economy, for instance by relying on state or humanitarian assistance. Critically, beyond the purely financial aspects, employment plays a key role in furthering the integration process of refugees by improving their language skills, encouraging the formation of friendships and professional contacts with the host population, and generally helping refugees gain acceptance by their local communities.³³

On the micro-level, achieving positive interactions between refugees and host communities from an economic integration perspective would translate into:

- Non-discrimination in terms of employment security, wages and working conditions for refugees and other vulnerable groups
- Availability and access to formal education, and language, opportunities for refugees
- Overcoming gender and social normative barriers that might impede economic participation
- Development of refugees' social capital and networks in the host country and increased positive social relations between refugees and local host communities
- Availability and access to the labor market for refugee entrepreneurs

28 Council of Europe (1997). Measurement and indicators of integration. Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs. Available at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/migration/archives/documentation/Series_Community_Relations/Measurement_indicators_integration_en.pdf. Accessed on 17 December 2018. P. 33

29 Da Lomba, S. (2010). Legal Status and Refugee Integration: a UK Perspective. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 23(4), pp. 415-436. Accessed on 18 December 2018. P. 418

30 Ibid; Rudiger, A. and Spencer, S. (2003). Social Integration of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities: Policies to Combat Discrimination. The Economic and Social Aspects of Migration. Conference jointly organized by the European Commission and the OECD, Brussels, 21–22 January 2003. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/4/15516956.pdf>. Accessed on 18 December 2018. P. 5

31 Rudiger and Spencer (2003) p. 8; Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E. and Vertovec, S. (2002) Integration: Mapping the Field. Report of a Project carried out by the University of Oxford Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre. London: Home Office Online Report. Available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr2803.doc>. Accessed on 18 December 2018.

32 Ibid.

33 Da Costa (2006) p. 56

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TOOLS

The research consisted of an extensive literature review of key publications and policy documents and primary data collection through FGDs and KIIs conducted between August and December 2018. A qualitative research approach was chosen in order to get a more granular understanding of how legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of Syrians' economic participation impact their self-reliance and pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. The choice of the qualitative methods of semi-structured KIIs and FGDs allowed for an understanding of respondents' detailed human experiences, observations and perceptions, which can also be a driver for decision-making.

Primary data collection tools included key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 17 KIIs were conducted over the period of September to December with a municipality representatives, Turkish officials, Turkish CSOs, academics and researchers. This research focuses on Sultanbeyli and Hatay for several reasons. Firstly, both two urban municipalities present a high concentration of Syrian refugees. Istanbul is the city that hosts the highest number of Syrians, approximately 560,000, in Turkey, many of whom live in Sultanbeyli, a district located at the outskirts of Istanbul.³⁴ In Hatay, Syrians constitute around 30 percent of the total population.³⁵

Secondly, both local governments are active in the area of Syrians' economic participation and have a presence of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on supporting Syrians' pursuit of livelihoods.³⁶ Last but not least, both locations have a high number of Syrian ESSN beneficiaries: Istanbul hosts the highest number of total ESSN beneficiaries with around 15 percent and Hatay hosts the fourth-largest number with almost 10 percent.³⁷

	Sultanbeyli				Hatay			
	Turkish		Syrian		Turkish		Syrian	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employer	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Employed (formal)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Employed (informal)	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Unemployed	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total:	3	2	4	3	3	2	4	3
							Total FGDs:	24

Table 1: Breakdown of FGDs

The FGDs in Sultanbeyli and Hatay took place between 23 October and 2 November. A total of 24 FGDs were conducted in both locations, reaching 118 respondents in total, of which 77 were Syrians and 41 were Turkish. In order to gain a more detailed perspective on economic participation, FGDs were disaggregated by employment category (employer, formally employed, i.e. with work permit and social insurance, informally employed and unemployed), by nationality (Turkish and Syrian) and by gender (male and female). All FGDs were conducted in accordance with common guidelines of research ethics, and respected the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, who were all over 18 years of age. Due to challenges in organizing FGDs with Turkish informal workers in Sultanbeyli and Hatay, 3 interviews were held with Turkish informal workers (one male, two female) in Ankara on 29 December.

34 DGMM (2018).

35 Ibid.

36 KIIs with Sultanbeyli municipality official and with Antakya Chamber of Commerce and Industry official. October 2018.

37 Turkish Red Crescent (2018). Factsheet 1: Beneficiaries by Provinces. Emergency Social Safety Net. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/KIZILAYKART_ESSN_Programme%20- Factsheet-1_August_2018.pdf. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

4.2. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The topic of labor market participation of Syrian refugees in host countries, especially in Turkey and Jordan, is currently highly prioritized in donor and policy circles. Structural economic challenges faced by these countries on the macro-level mean that holistic and sustainable solutions are not straightforward. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing reflection on Syrian refugees' sustainable integration into the Turkish economy by bringing in a bottom-up perspective to some of the key policy dilemmas and questions. While the study does not focus on the macro-level policy environment, it highlights the qualitative and nuanced socio-economic realities experienced by Syrians and Turks in their everyday life. Due to limitations in timeframe and budget for this project, this study covers only two municipalities in Turkey and reached a limited number of respondents. The research findings are therefore indicative rather than representative. Nonetheless, an analysis of the primary data indicate certain trends which can be further explored. Last but not least, challenges were faced in holding FGDs with Turkish respondents working informally, due to their fear of being discovered and penalized given that informal work is illegal.

5. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF SYRIANS IN TURKEY

As of December 2018, Turkey hosts over 3.6 million Syrians, most of whom reside in the Istanbul area and in Southern governorates.³⁸ This section will aim to provide a contextual background to the economic integration process of Syrian refugees in Turkey to date. The following paragraphs will highlight the main legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions related to Syrians' economic integration based on key texts and sources.

5.1. LEGAL DIMENSION

5.1.1. Prior to the Syrian refugee influx

Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, but maintains a geographic reservation not obligating Turkey to grant refugee status to refugees coming from outside Europe.³⁹ This limitation means that individuals seeking refuge from non-European countries are not given refugee status and are not protected under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. The durable solution of local integration has therefore not been considered for non-European refugees in Turkey before.

Turkey is also a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),⁴⁰ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),⁴¹ and the Convention against Torture (CAT),⁴² legal frameworks that commit the Government of Turkey to adhere to international protection for asylum seekers and non-refoulement. Most of the public and policy debates, as well as legal changes, on the integration of migrants and refugees that took place prior to the conflict in Syria were related to Turkey's accession process to the European Union (EU).⁴³

38 DGMM (2018).

39 Kirisci, K. (1996). Is Turkey Lifting the 'Geographical Limitation'? — The November 1994 Regulation on Asylum in Turkey. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 8(3), pp. 293–318. P. 293. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

40 Council of Europe (2010). European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14. European Court of Human Rights. Available at: https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

41 UN General Assembly (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 16 December 1966 (entered into force 23 March 1976). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

42 UN General Assembly (1984). Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. 10 December 1984 (entered into force 26 June 1987). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

43 İcduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016). P. 62; and Memişoğlu, F. (2018). Assessing the Development Displacement Nexus in Turkey. International Center for Migration Policy Development. November 2018. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Assessing%20the%20Development-Displacement%20Nexus%20in%20Turkey_FINAL.PDF. Accessed on 19 December 2018. P. 7

As Turkey reached a turning point in its bid for accession to the EU in 1999, it began introducing new policies and laws aimed at improving its legal frameworks on refugee and asylum policies in the 2000s.⁴⁴ Among them, Turkey submitted a National Action Plan to the Council of Ministers for the adoption of the EU acquis on asylum and migration in 2005, showing a level of commitment to improving the country's legal structure on migration.⁴⁵ The plan outlined the drafting of an asylum law, establishing a civil institution to deal with migration and asylum issues and creating admission centers, all by 2012.⁴⁶

5.1.2. After the Syrian influx

When displacement due to violent conflict in Syria started in 2011, Turkey adopted an "open door" policy, publically referring to Syrians as "guests", which in effect granted Syrians no legal rights as refugees and implied their temporary stay.⁴⁷ As the number of displaced Syrians continued to rise, the Ministry of Interior drafted a "Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (LFIP), which was passed by the Turkish Parliament on 4th April 2013 and formally approved as Law 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK) by the Turkish President on 10th April 2013.⁴⁸ The LFIP represents the most comprehensive legal framework to date in Turkey dealing with matters of migration and protection of asylum seekers.

The LFIP introduced a legal framework for responding to the Syrian presence in Turkey, namely through setting up a Temporary Protection (TP) regime to apply to foreigners in cases when there is a large influx into Turkey and when they cannot return back to the country they were forced to leave.⁴⁹ Article 91 introduced a legal basis to the TP regime by noting:

1. Temporary protection may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection.
2. The actions to be carried out for the reception of such foreigners into Turkey; their stay in Turkey and rights and obligations; their exit from Turkey; measures to be taken to prevent mass influxes; cooperation and coordination among national and international institutions and organizations; determination of the duties and mandate of the central and provincial institutions and organizations shall be stipulated in a Directive to be issued by the Council of Ministers.⁵⁰

The LFIP also formally established the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), under the Ministry of Interior, in order to manage Turkey's migration policies, strategies and engagements with relevant agencies.⁵¹ As article 91 in the LFIP only laid out general terms for TP, a Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) was published in October 2013, elaborating on the principles, content and procedures to be applied to persons concerned.⁵² The TPR constitutes the main piece of domestic legislation governing Turkey's de facto "temporary protection practice" that was in place since 2011.⁵³

Turkey's "open door" and visa policies towards Syrians have changed since 2016, introducing a compulsory visa regime for Syrians entering Turkey by air and sea, while the Turkish border to Syria was increasingly closed and controls tightened.⁵⁴ All Syrians who seek protection are in theory

44 Library of Congress (2016). Refugee Law and Policy: Turkey. Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/turkey.php#ftn15>. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

45 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016), p. 62

46 Republic of Turkey (2005). National Action Plan on Migration and Asylum [Turkish]. Available at: [http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/turkiye_ulusal_eylem_plani\(1\).pdf](http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/turkiye_ulusal_eylem_plani(1).pdf). Accessed 9 November 2018.

47 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016), p. 60

48 DGMM (2013). Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Law No: 6458. Ministry of Interior. Republic of Turkey. Available at: [http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/law%20on%20foreigners%20and%20international%20protection\(2\).pdf](http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/law%20on%20foreigners%20and%20international%20protection(2).pdf). Accessed on 19 December 2018.

49 DGMM (2014). Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Ministry of Interior. Republic of Turkey. Part 1, Section 1, Article 2. Available at: http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/eng_minikanun_5_son.pdf. Accessed on 19 December 2018. P. 16-17.

50 Ibid, P. 93. Article 91.

51 Ibid.

52 Republic of Turkey (2014). Temporary Protection Regulation. 22 October 2014. Available at: http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/_dokuman28.pdf. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

53 Asylum Information Database (2014). The temporary protection regulation of 22 October 2014. European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Available at: <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/temporary-protection-regulation-22-october-2014>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

54 Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017), p. 558. See also Human Rights Watch (2018). Turkey Stops Registering Syrian Asylum Seekers. 16 July 2018. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/16/turkey-stops-registering-syrian-asylum-seekers>. Accessed on 19 December 2018; Fordham, A. (2016). The Syrians Keep Fleeing, But Now They Hit Turkey's Closed Border. NPR. 27 February 2016. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/02/27/468246402/the-syrians-keep-fleeing-but-now-they-hit-turkeys-closed-border>. Accessed on 7 January 2018.

covered by the TP regime, including those who are not able to present any identification documents from Syria.⁵⁵ The TP regime includes the right to stay in Turkey until a more permanent solution is found, protecting Syrians against forcible returns to Syria through the principle of non-refoulement.⁵⁶

5.1.3. Legal framework for Syrians' economic integration

The TP regime grants Syrian nationals a lawful stay in Turkey until the conflict in Syria ends, including access to health, education, social assistance and the labor market. Syrians' eligibility to access these services depends on registration with Turkish authorities under the TP regime and issuance of a TP identification card, or kimlik.⁵⁷ In principle, all Syrian children can access schooling for free in Turkey as long as they are registered with the Turkish authorities. Syrians who have completed high school in Syria are eligible to take the High School Proficiency and Equivalency Examination for International Students and tuition fees for all Syrian students attending State universities were waived.⁵⁸ However, serious difficulties to enroll and retain Syrian children in school remain, not least due to language barriers and economic difficulties.⁵⁹ Around 40%, approximately over 360,000, of Syrian school-aged children are currently not attending school.⁶⁰

Prior to 2016, Syrians entering the country with valid passports were able to apply for residency permits and then for the right to work, as foreigners.⁶¹ In January 2016, the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners under TP passed, enabling Syrians who have been registered under TP for at least six months to apply for a work permit to work legally.⁶² According to the regulation, work permit applications for employees are to be made online by the employer, while self-employed Syrians, including those who want to set up business, have to apply directly.⁶³ Two noteworthy components of this regulation are that formal employees under TP cannot be paid less than the minimum wage and that the number of employees under TP protection cannot be more than ten percent of the number of Turkish employees.⁶⁴

The principles and procedures regarding the employment of TP beneficiaries are to be determined by the Turkish Council of Ministers, which also decides for which sectors, professions and geographical areas work permits can be issued.⁶⁵ Syrians are only able to legally work in the province in which they are registered. To work in another province, Syrians need to change their registration by applying at the Provincial DGMM office with proof of new employment. This vastly limits Syrians' mobility inside Turkey to access work opportunities as the need to generate income does often not allow them to wait for bureaucratic and administrative procedures. As Syrians are only able to work in the provinces in which they are registered, the law in its current form limits the number of Syrians that can work in a given province to 10 percent of its total private sector employment, which is problematic taking into account Syrians' geographic distribution in Turkey; the majority living in Istanbul and Southern provinces.⁶⁶

Furthermore, some sectors such as the health and education sectors require additional permits from the relevant ministries.⁶⁷ Article 7 of the Regulation states that the issuing of work permits can be ceased for certain provinces that "are notified by the Ministry of Interior to be risky in terms

55 UNHCR (2018). Temporary protection in Turkey. UNHCR Help. Turkey. Available at: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/temporary-protection-in-turkey/>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

56 Ibid.

57 UNHCR (2018). Registration with the Turkish authorities. UNHCR Help. Turkey. Available at: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/reception-and-registration-with-the-turkish-authorities/>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

58 Refugee Rights Turkey (2017). The Right to Education for Syrian Refugees and Other Persons under Temporary Protection: Questions & Answers. March 2017. Available at: <https://www.mhd.org.tr/images/yayinlar/MHM-8.pdf>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

59 Qaddour, K. (2017). Educating Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Sada Middle East Analysis. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 20 November 2017. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/74782>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

60 Daily Sabah (2018). Thousands of Syrian refugees back in school through Turkey's efforts. 23 May 2018. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/education/2018/05/24/thousands-of-syrian-refugees-back-in-school-through-turkeys-efforts>. Accessed on 19 December 2018.

61 Kızıl, C. (2016). Turkey's Policy on Employment of Syrian Refugees and its Impact on the Turkish Labour Market. In Eroğlu, D. Cohen, J.H., Sirkeci, I. (eds.) (2016). Turkish Migration 2016: Selected Papers. London: TPL. P. 164

62 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016), p. 61

63 UNHCR (2018); İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016), p. 64

64 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016), p. 64

65 Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017).

66 Kamyaz, T. and Kadkoy, O. (2016), p.4

67 Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017).

of public order, public security or public health”.⁶⁸ Additionally, article 6(2) stipulates that work permit applications lodged by TP beneficiaries for jobs and professions permitted only for Turkish citizens, shall be disqualified. These jobs include lawyers, public notaries, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, security at private or public institutions and professionals within territorial waters.⁶⁹ However, despite these limitations the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners under TP presents a positive step towards improving Syrians’ economic participation in Turkey.

- Successful registration under TP including the issuance of a TP identification card, for 6 months or more
- Employment is in the same province as the TP registration
- The requestor has no incomplete or other current work permit in place
- The number of TP beneficiaries with work permits cannot exceed 10% at a given workplace
- Professions which are only permitted for Turkish citizens are not open for applications
- Work permit applications shall be submitted by the employer, who will employ foreigners under temporary protection, through the e-government gateway

Box 3: Conditions to obtain work permits under Regulation on Work Permits under TP

5.2. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

While the TP regime allows for Syrians’ right to work in theory, in practice challenges to access this right remain. The TP status and kimlik does not automatically grant Syrians the right to legally work when and where they wish. Syrians in Turkey are densely located in cities, with 95% of them living in urban areas and most of them in provinces bordering Syria as well as the lower-income outskirts of Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara.⁷⁰ In Turkey’s South-Eastern provinces, where the majority of Syrians in Turkey resides, levels of unemployment have historically been high, often forcing Syrians to compete with local communities for low-skilled and low-paid jobs in sectors that are prone to informality and precariousness including construction, manufacturing and textile.⁷¹

While some studies have pointed towards positive trends, such as Syrians filling an unmet need for unskilled labor and displacement of local informal labor leading to its greater formalization of jobs and extended time in education, the widespread perception and experience of Turkish workers indicates competition and tensions in the labor market.⁷² With 11 percent of unemployment of Turkish citizens in July 2018,⁷³ and around a third of the Turkish labor force working informally in 2015, resentment about job competition is high among Turkish nationals.⁷⁴ In Turkey, the informal sector accounted for 31.4% of the country’s GDP in the period 1991-2015.⁷⁵

68 Government of Turkey (2016). Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection. Decision Number: 2016/8375. Unofficial translation. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/582c71464.html>. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

69 Ibid and Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017).

70 Baban, F., Ilcan S. and Rygiel, K. (2016). Syrian refugees in Turkey: pathways to precarity, differential inclusion, and negotiated citizenship rights. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(1). Pp.41-57; Kirisci, K., Brandt, J. and Erdoğan, M. (2018).

71 Kamyaz, T. and Kadkoy, O. (2016).

72 World Bank (2015); see also United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization and the World Food Programme (2017). Jobs make the difference: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities. Available at: <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/SyriaResponse/Jobs%20Make%20the%20Difference.pdf>. Accessed on 20 December 2018; and Building Markets (2017). Another Side to the Story: A market assessment of Syrian SMEs in Turkey. Available at: https://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm_reports/another_side_to_the_story_a_market_assessment_of_syrian_smes_in_turkey.pdf. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

73 CEIC (2018). Turkey Unemployment Rate. Available at: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/turkey/unemployment-rate>. Accessed on 24 January 2019.

74 International Crisis Group (2016), p.12 and Bellamy, C., Haysom, S., Wake, C. and Barbelet, V. (2017). The lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees: A study of refugee perspectives and their institutional environment in Turkey and Jordan. Overseas Development Institute. Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11343.pdf>. Accessed on 20 December 2018. P. 41

75 Medina, L. and Schneider, F. (2018). Shadow Economies Around the World: What Did We Learn Over the Last 20 Years? International Monetary Fund. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2018/wp1817.ashx>. Accessed on 3 January 2019. P. 54

With the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners introduced only in 2016, serious consequences arose due to the lack of employment rights. The challenges to exercise certain professions legally as Syrians, as well as to work formally in various sectors have pushed many Syrians to work informally, without access to social security and at risk of exploitation.⁷⁶ Despite the Turkish economy's need for low-skilled labor, the informal nature of Syrians' employment is exposing them to exploitation and not creating sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance, which has been argued to have been a reason for Syrians to risk their lives to reach Europe.⁷⁷

Given the conditions, neither employers nor Syrians have an incentive to apply for formal work arrangements. For the employer, officially employing a Syrian means increased expenses, including paying the monthly minimum wage (around \$400), social security contributions and taxes.⁷⁸ For Syrians, particularly those working in low-skilled sectors, informal employment means that they do not pay social security contribution or taxes. If Syrians do stay longer-term, it also means that they will not be eligible for social security benefits, which might place an increased burden on individuals and host communities. It also means that the wages they earn are lower than the official minimum wage and that they might be faced with dangerous working conditions without being insured for treatment in case of accident.⁷⁹

An often overlooked fact is the positive impact Syrian entrepreneurs and businesses have to job-creation and livelihoods for themselves and other refugees. More than 6,500 registered companies have been founded or co-founded by Syrians in Turkey since 2011,⁸⁰ and together with unregistered businesses the total number is estimated to be over 10,000.⁸¹ On average, Syrian companies employ 9.4 people and report that most of their employees were previously working in the informal sector.⁸² The distribution of nationalities of employees is unknown. Around three quarters of registered Syrian businesses in Turkey fall under the micro category of less than 10 employees.⁸³

A comprehensive vulnerability monitoring exercise conducted by the World Bank in 2018 found that approximately half of Syrian refugee households can be considered poor.⁸⁴ A household is defined as poor if its income is below the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) of 324 TL per capita per month. The Minimum Expenditure Basket represents the minimum monthly cost of the goods and services required for refugees to live a dignified life outside the camps.⁸⁵ In comparison, data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute indicates that the severe material deprivation rate for Turkish citizens, a statistic similar to the monthly poverty threshold that tracks families' abilities to afford at least several basic material essentials such as food and heating, stood at 30.3 percent in 2015.⁸⁶ A major cost for Syrians is rent – however, assistance towards accommodation costs or rent is not covered by the LFIP.⁸⁷ This arguably contributes to everyday forms of precarity, as families in urban areas must use any money they have to cover the high costs of accommodation, often living in overcrowded houses, flats, and makeshift arrangements.⁸⁸

High levels of poverty among Syrian refugees mean that children are often directly or indirectly forced to work to support the household income. Child labor as a social problem in Turkey predates the Syrian crisis. In 2009, at least six percent of children between the ages of 6 and 17 years were working in order to support their families' household income; the majority of them belonging to the Kurdish and Roma communities, two minority groups in Turkey.⁸⁹ By early 2011, an estimated 960,000

76 Bidinger, S. (2015). Syrian Refugees and the Right to Work: Developing Temporary Protection in Turkey. Boston University. Available at: <https://www.bu.edu/ilj/files/2015/01/Bidinger-Syrian-Refugees-and-the-Right-to-Work.pdf>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

77 Bellamy, C., Haysom, S., Wake, C. and Barbelet, V. (2017), p. 41 and Inegli-Ciger, M. (2017).

78 International Crisis Group (2016).

79 Ibid.

80 Hürriyet Daily News (2018). Syrian entrepreneurs thrive in Turkey, boost economy. 16 May 2018. Available at: <http://www.hurriyettailynews.com/syrian-entrepreneurs-thrive-in-turkey-boost-economy-131907>. Accessed 5 January 2019.

81 Building Markets (2017). P. 9

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 World Food Programme (2018a). Refugees in Turkey: Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise (Round 2). Ankara. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000071428/download/?_ga=2.7451250.1135739691.1546676619-287467957.1546676619. Accessed on 20 December 2018. P.16

85 Ibid.

86 Halberg, E. (2017). Causes of Poverty in Turkey. The Borgen Project. Available at: <https://borgenproject.org/causes-of-poverty-in-turkey/>. Accessed on 24 January 2019.

87 Baban, F., Ilcan S. and Rygiel, K. (2016).

88 Ibid.

89 International Labour Organization (2009). Give Girls a Chance: Tackling child labour, a key to the future. Geneva: International Labour Office. Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=10290>. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

children were working in Turkey, a number that doubled to an estimated 2 million children – including Syrians – in 2018.⁹⁰ The need for Syrians to sustain themselves coupled with the challenges to obtain work permits prior to 2016 as well as afterwards has exacerbated the issue.

In an effort to support Syrians to meet their basic needs, the EU-funded cash assistance programme Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) was set up in 2016 to provide eligible Syrian families with unconditional cash assistance on a monthly basis. The ESSN programme is the result of a partnership between the EU and Turkey, implemented by WFP and the Turkish Red Crescent, reaching over 1 million refugees in Turkey.⁹¹ It represents the biggest humanitarian project that the EU has ever funded. If a family is deemed eligible, a monthly allowance is loaded on to debit cards, also known as Kızılay cards, which can be used in any cash machine and in shops.⁹²

Eligible families receive 120 TL, or approximately 22 USD, a month per person, meaning a family of five persons would receive 600 TL, or around 112 USD, per month. Eligible families will continue to receive assistance as long as they continue to be eligible and as long as there is funding available for the programme.⁹³ Building on the ESSN, UNICEF has implemented a Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) project, aiming to increase the number of refugee children enrolled in, and attending, school in Turkey through providing targeted cash transfers to encourage some 230,000 Syrian children to attend school regularly.⁹⁴ The CCTE project is running independently of the ESSN, and the financial assistance varies based on the number of children enrolled, their school grades and gender – slightly more assistance is provided for enrolled girls.⁹⁵ Critically, when Syrians get formally employed, they cannot access the ESSN programme any longer, a criteria which is not easily found in information about the ESSN published online.⁹⁶



Daily life in Akcakale and Harran refugee camps. Sanliurfa, Turkey. Photo by: cemT

90 Karaca, E. (2011). Almost 1 Million Child Workers in Turkey. 21 June 2011. Bianet. Available at: <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/education/130881-almost-1-million-child-workers-in-turkey>. Accessed on 8 January 2019; Ahval News (2018). There are 2 million child workers in Turkey, union says. 7 January 2018. Available at: <https://ahvalnews.com/child-labour/there-are-2-million-child-workers-turkey-union-says>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

91 World Food Programme and European Union (2017). About the ESSN Card. Available at: <http://www.essncard.com/about-card/>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

92 Summers, H. (2018). 'Why we're paying the rent for a million Syrian refugees'. The Guardian. 26 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/26/scheme-cash-transfer-turkey-1m-refugees-eu-aid>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

93 See Turkish Red Crescent (2017). About the ESSN. KIZILAYKART. Available at: <http://kizilaykart-suy.org/EN/faq0.html>. Accessed on 24 January 2019.

94 UNICEF (2017). EU and UNICEF to reach thousands of refugee children in Turkey with Conditional Cash Transfer for Education. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/eu-and-unicef-reach-thousands-refugee-children-turkey-conditional-cash-transfer>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

95 For more information, see: UNICEF (2017). How Can I Benefit from CCTE? Available at: [http://unicef.org.tr/files/editorfiles/ccte_brosur_EN_010817_printer\(4\).pdf](http://unicef.org.tr/files/editorfiles/ccte_brosur_EN_010817_printer(4).pdf). Accessed on 24 January 2019

96 Summers, H. (2018).

5.3. SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

While the TP regime covers much grounds it does not include a comprehensive integration policy aimed at incorporating migrants and refugees into the wider societal context of the country.⁹⁷ Turkey's centralized governance system also means that initiatives designed to promote social cohesion do not always target local concerns. For instance, treasury allocations are distributed among municipalities according to the number of Turkish citizens, without considering the added refugee population, which stretches resources in communities with large numbers of Syrians.⁹⁸ Crucially however, the link between livelihoods and social cohesion is well understood by the GoT. The Turkish name for the ESSN programme is Sosyal Uyum Yardımı Programı, for which the literal English translation is Social Cohesion Assistance Programme.⁹⁹ The Turkish name underlines the idea that providing basic needs assistance to refugees is intended to support the social cohesion of refugees within Turkish communities.

Studies on social cohesion have found that feelings of compassion and solidarity expressed by Turkish communities towards Syrians are decreasing, with many Turks keeping a "conscious distance" to Syrians.¹⁰⁰ Host communities, especially those who feel marginalized by ethnic, sectarian or ideological differences, perceive Syrians as a threat to their political and economic interests, view them as a burden on the deteriorating public services and blame them for price increases and rising unemployment.¹⁰¹ Although the Turkish government has emphasized cultural and religious affinities with Syrian refugees, the public perceives a surprisingly large cultural and social distance, pointing towards an unpreparedness to share their future with Syrians.¹⁰²

An online survey conducted among Syrian and Turkish respondents in 2017 and early 2018 by the World Food Programme (WFP) found that Syrians were much more willing to socially engage and to work side-by-side with Turks than vice-versa.¹⁰³ Moreover, Syrian women seem to be more socially conservative when it comes to social mixing with Turkish host communities than men.¹⁰⁴ Arguably, a significant barrier for successful social interactions is the difference in language, which affects labor market participation and effective participation in social and cultural life in Turkey. As many Syrians have been in Turkey for at least several years at this stage, many have already learnt basic Turkish or are willing to learn.¹⁰⁵

While Turkey does not run compulsory Turkish language courses for beneficiaries of TP, Turkish language courses are offered by some municipalities and non-government actors, including by NGOs.¹⁰⁶ Both the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, through its employment agency İŞKUR, and the Ministry of National Education, through the Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, have vocational centers around the country that offer training for various skill levels.¹⁰⁷ International organizations are working with these institutions to support both refugees and host communities, however Syrians are often unaware that such vocational trainings are also open and available to them.¹⁰⁸ Some municipalities have been particularly innovative in their efforts to accommodate Syrian refugees by running free language courses, instituting social support programmes and collaborating with civil society initiatives to support Syrians integration.¹⁰⁹

Regarding schooling, when Syrian students first arrived in Turkey, a majority attended "Temporary Education Centers" (TECs), which have now become "Transitional Education Centers" as the Turkish Ministry of National Education plans to integrate all Syrians into Turkish state schools by 2020.¹¹⁰ A number of challenges exist for Syrian students' smooth transition to Turkish state schools.¹¹¹

97 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016).

98 International Crisis Group (2018).

99 World Food Programme (2018b). Social Cohesion in Turkey: Refugee and Host Community Online Survey. Available at: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000039741/download/>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

100 Erdoğan, M. (2017). Syrians-Barometer-2017: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey. Available at: <https://mmuraterdogan.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/syrians-barometer-executive-summary.pdf>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 World Food Programme (2018).

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 International Crisis Group (2018).

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Kirişci, K., Brandt, J. and Erdoğan, M. (2018).

110 Qaddour, K. (2017).

111 Similar to the contexts of Jordan and Lebanon, challenges in the education sector exist such as limited national capacities including number of qualified teachers, lack of trauma-sensitive instruction and discrimination faced by both Syrian students and volunteers or teachers.



Syrian refugee children studying at home. Istanbul Turkey. Photo by: Tolga Sezgin

Since public schools in Turkey only teach in Turkish, Syrian children who do not speak Turkish, for example, have difficulties following the Turkish curriculum.¹¹² Syrian children who are enrolled in Turkish schools and graduate with Turkish diplomas are expected to improve their chances for accessing work opportunities.

Overall, more than 600,000 Syrian children out of over one million Syrian school-aged refugee children in Turkey have been enrolled in the Turkish education system for the 2018-2019 school year.¹¹³ This means that around 40 percent of Syrian children are not attending school, which strongly impedes their ability to learn or improve their Turkish language skills. Moreover, the older children get the higher the risk that they would drop out of school, with boys above 12 years old at particular risk of engaging in child labour to support their family.¹¹⁴

A research conducted on the barriers to Syrians' schooling in five different provinces in Turkey in 2017 found that social integration of Syrian children residing in provinces closer to Syria was better compared to that of Syrians living in Ankara and Istanbul, citing similarity of cultural practices and wider use of Arabic language as the main reasons.¹¹⁵ Interviewed parents whose children were not attending school pointed to economic vulnerabilities and cultural reasons.¹¹⁶ Education has a substantial impact on employment prospects: an analysis of OECD countries, including Turkey, in 2012 shows that the people with higher levels of education have better job prospects, with men having generally higher employment rates than women.¹¹⁷ Ensuring access to quality education is therefore vital, as individuals with higher qualifications provide a stable supply of high-skilled workers, a necessity for promoting economic development.¹¹⁸

The integration and social cohesion of young Syrians in Turkey, which constitutes a significant part of the Syrian refugee population – around 43 percent of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey are between zero and 17 years old – is essential for the economic security of their families and host countries.¹¹⁹ When it comes to higher education, Syrian refugees have faced favorable policies and schemes. Since 2013, Syrians have been exempted from paying tuition fees unlike other international students, with enrollments increasing on a yearly basis.¹²⁰

112 Coşkun, İ, Ökten, C., Dama, N., Barkçin, M., Zahed, S., Fouda, M., Toklucu, D., Özserp, H. (2017). Breaking down Barriers: Getting Syrian children into school in Turkey. SETA. Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research. Available at: https://setav.org/en/assets/uploads/2017/09/R90_BreakingBarriers.pdf. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

113 Hürriyet Daily News (2018). Over 600,000 Syrian children schooled in Turkey: Ministry data. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/over-600-000-syrian-children-schooled-in-turkey-ministry-data-137249>. Accessed on 20 December 2018.

114 Carlier, W. (2018). The Widening Educational Gap for Syrian Refugee Children. Background Report. KidsRights Report 2018. Available at: <https://goo.gl/yZrJgB>. Accessed on 27 January 2019. P. 7

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 OECD (2012). How does education affect employment rates? Education at a Glance: Highlights. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1787/eag_highlights-2012-11-en. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

118 Ibid.

119 Dereli, B. (2018). Refugee Integration through Higher Education: Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Policy Report. United Nations University. Available at: https://i.unu.edu/media/gcm.unu.edu/publication/4405/Final_Begu%CC%88m-Dereli_Policy-Report.pdf. Accessed on 27 January 2019. P. 8; UNHCR (2019). Syria Regional Refugee Response: Turkey. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>. Accessed on 27 January 2019.

120 Dereli, B. (2018).

Moreover, Syrians can enroll in UNHCR-supported higher education preparation programmes for high school graduates to increase their Turkish proficiency levels before starting university, or apply for scholarship programmes, such as DAFI.¹²¹ By June 2018, 1,916 Syrians received higher education scholarships, of whom 55 percent were male and 45 percent female recipients.¹²² In the 2017-18 academic year, the total number of Syrian students enrolled in public and private universities stood at 20,701. Despite improving Syrians' access to higher education, only four per cent of Syrian refugees can continue their tertiary level education in Turkey, with a clear gender discrepancy of 63 percent male and only 37 percent female students.¹²³

Studies on the informal sector in Turkey point towards a negative correlation between the level of education and informal employment, i.e. the lower the level of education, the more likely a worker is to work in the informal sector, especially women.¹²⁴ An assessment conducted by the DGMM in 2016 found that over 30 percent of Syrians in Turkey were illiterate and only around 6 percent held high school diplomas or higher education degrees.¹²⁵ This data indicates that a big proportion of Syrian refugees in Turkey are low-skilled, and due to their precarious legal status and limited Turkish language skills, potentially exploitable for jobs in the informal economy.

In a study conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Turkey in 2017, Turkish host communities perceived the arrival of Syrian refugees to Turkey negatively, attributing an increased job competition and a reduction in wages to it.¹²⁶ On the other hand, Syrian refugees felt negatively about the lack of protection mechanisms and rights granted to them by Turkish employers.¹²⁷ These concerns were seemingly amplified by negative perceptions from both communities of the others' work ethic. While Turkish communities assumed that this was due to the fact that many services were being provided for Syrian refugees, Syrian refugee communities expressed their inability to participate in social events, to interact with their community and neighbors, or to settle administrative matters, due to the long working hours and the low wages.¹²⁸

The situation of Syrian refugees' economic integration in Turkey has a strong gender dimension. While women have the same employment rights as men, social gender norms can create barriers for women to access these rights – be it due to real and perceived protection risks associated with women and girls, or to working in public spheres not perceived as being appropriate for women.¹²⁹ When it comes to exposure to vulnerabilities, the labor market places Turkish men in a more advantageous position compared to Syrian men, and Syrian men in a better position than Syrian women.¹³⁰ As a result, only 14% Syrian refugee women are employed in Turkey versus 73% men,¹³¹ with work permit applications mostly requested and granted to Syrian men.¹³²

Prevalent gender norms in Syria place domestic chores, children's upbringing and caretaking responsibilities on female family members, while income-generating activities tend to be traditionally associated with men.¹³³ However, due to economic precariousness in Turkey, more women have had to enter the labor market to make ends meet. For some women, this move is forced and undesirable

121 Ibid.

122 Inter-Agency Coordination Turkey (2018). TURKEY EDUCATION SECTOR. Q2 January - June 2018. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66064>. Accessed on 27 January 2019. P. 2

123 Dereli, B. (2018).

124 İçduygu A. (2016). Turkey: Labour Market Integration and Social Inclusion of Refugees. Directorate General for Internal Policies. European Union. Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/595328/IPOL_STU\(2016\)595328_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/595328/IPOL_STU(2016)595328_EN.pdf). Accessed on 8 January 2019. P. 20

125 Erdoğan, A. and Erdoğan, M. (2018). Access, Qualifications and Social Dimension of Syrian Refugee Students in Turkish Higher Education. In Curaj, A., Deca, L. and Pricopie, R. (eds.). European Higher Education Area: The Impact of Past and Future Policies – 2018. Springer International Publishing. Pp 259-276

126 IOM Turkey (2017). Social Cohesion assessment: Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of Host-Refugee Cohesion in Three Districts in Turkey. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62914>. Accessed on 22 December 2018.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 CTDC (2015). Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Gender Analysis. London: Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration. Available at: <http://ctdc.org/analysis.pdf>. Accessed on 22 December 2018; Tören, T. (2018). Documentation Report: Syrian Refugees in the Turkish Labour Market. The International Center for Development and Decent Work and University of Kassel. Available at: http://www.uni-kassel.de/upress/online/OpenAccess/978-3-7376-0450-5_OpenAccess.pdf. Accessed on 22 December 2018.

130 Ibid.

131 UNHCR (2018). Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2018-2019. 3RP Turkey. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63168>. Accessed on 22 December 2018. P. 80

132 "Out of the 4,019 work permits given to Syrians in 2015, 3,739 of them were given to males." Source: Kamyaz, T. and Kadkoy, O. (2016).

133 Khattab, L. and Myrntinen, H. (2017). "Most of the men want to leave": Armed groups, displacement and the gendered webs of vulnerability in Syria. International Alert. Available at: https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Gender_VulnerabilitySyria_EN_2017.pdf. Accessed on 8 January 2019. P. 16

as it puts them at risk both physically and socially, while for others – especially young women, this reflects a positive step towards newfound agency and control over their own lives.¹³⁴ Women often face the double-burden of domestic and income-generating responsibilities, which is further exacerbated due to the limited family and social networks.

A study conducted by UN Women Turkey and the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) with over 1,200 Syrian women across seven Turkish cities shows that over 90 percent of them were not informed about work permits, therefore underlining the assumption that women lack knowledge about rights and responsibilities in employment areas.¹³⁵ Moreover, around 40 percent of women working in formal and informal jobs seem to find their employment through Syrian networks in contrast to 20 percent with the help of Turkish host community members and four percent through the assistance of a Turkish labour agency.¹³⁶ Last but not least, gender dynamics within the family and women's marital status seem to play a role in enabling women's participation in the workforce. Women with a higher education diplomas, divorced and non-married women have higher rates of employment compared to married women.¹³⁷

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYRIANS' ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND SELF-RELIANCE?

The following sections will present key findings based on a qualitative analysis of the study's primary data from KIs and FGDs in Sultanbeyli, Hatay and Ankara. Direct quotes by respondents are highlighted, in order to bring forward respondent's own voices and opinions. The findings will be presented along the three categories from the study's definition of economic integration, encompassing the following aspects:

1. Legal dimension: Refugees are able to enjoy rights and entitlements that make it possible for them to access work opportunities and employment rights without discrimination based on their legal status
2. Economic dimension: Refugees become self-reliant, rather than relying on assistance by humanitarian actors or the host state, and can pursue sustainable livelihoods
3. Socio-cultural dimension: Refugees have positive interactions with local communities and fellow refugees in their daily lives and in the workplace

134 IOM Turkey (2017). This finding came out strongly in Lebanon, see El-Masri, R., Harvey, C. and Garwood, R. (2013). Shifting sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon, Beirut: Abaad – Resource Centre for Gender Equality and Oxfam. Available at: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/shifting-sands-changing-gender-roles-amongrefugees-in-lebanon-300408>. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

135 UN Women Turkey and SGDD-ASAM (2018). Needs Assessment of Syrian Women and Girls under Temporary Protection Status in Turkey. Available at: <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/country/turkey/the%20needs%20assessmentengwebcompressed.pdf?la=en&vs=3139>. Accessed on 9 January 2019. P. 6

136 Ibid. P. 45-46

137 Ibid. P. 45-46

6.1. LEGAL DIMENSION

While Syrian respondents in the FGDs were not directly asked whether they are registered under TP or not, throughout the discussions many of them indicated that they were registered under the TP regime. This status provides them with access to social services such as healthcare, including access to hospitals, but also access to education, a point that was repeatedly mentioned by respondents. Under the TP regime, Syrians' right to employment is directly tied to applying for and obtaining a work permit, both for wage employment and self-employment. The specificities of this legal process pose practical challenges in Syrians' daily lives and livelihoods in Turkey.

6.1.1. Diploma equivalence

First, there are limitations and restrictions for Syrians to formally enter the labor market, due to the GoT's concerns of national security, public health, and public order, but also in specific sectors such as health or education, where additional permits need to be obtained.¹³⁸ Similarly, higher education certificates from Syria are not accepted and require further certification in Turkey, a process about which respondents did not have detailed knowledge. The confusion regarding which documents are required, and what the processes are, to be able to use education certificates from Syria in order to get formal employment in Turkey are also emphasized by some respondents.



I want to do my job as a doctor and I would like to work formally (with work permit). It is hard to work as a doctor even if you have your diplomas, we cannot certify our Syrian degrees in Turkey.

Syrian man, informally employed by a CSO in Hatay



I have a university diploma from Syria but it does not have an equivalence in Turkey. I faced a lot of difficulties to find a job. My temporary protection identity card is often not enough; many employers also want to see residence permits in order to provide formal employment.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

Municipalities are the frontline actors confronted on issues of legal questions relating to work permits and documentation. However, the policy response on TP beneficiaries is highly centralized through the DGMM.¹³⁹ By law, municipalities are mandated and resourced to serve Turkish citizens only, meaning that financial resources to support refugees are limited.¹⁴⁰ As mentioned by a key informant from Sultanbeyli municipality, any support to Syrians risking to attract more refugees and therefore straining resources further.¹⁴¹ The interviewed official from Sultanbeyli municipality stressed that closer cooperation between CSOs, municipalities and universities was needed to develop strategies on supporting Syrian refugees in accessing formal labor.¹⁴²

6.1.2. Work permit: advantages and disadvantages

FGD respondents showed varying levels of awareness and knowledge on the legal advantages that come with formal employment, i.e. a work permit and sigorta (social insurance). Overall, there was a general understanding among most Syrian respondents that formal employment is more advantageous than informal employment, although not everyone was able to explain why. Those Syrian respondents

138 Ineli-Ciger, M. (2017).

139 Erdoğan, M. (2017). Urban Refugees from “Detachment” to “Harmonization”: Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: The Case of Istanbul. Migration Policy Workshop and Marmara Municipalities Union's Center for Urban Policies. Available at: https://mmuraterdogan.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/mmu-urban-refugees-report-2017_en.pdf. Accessed on 5 January 2019.

140 Kirişçi, K., Brandt, J. and Erdoğan, M. (2018).

141 KII with Sultanbeyli municipality official. October 2018.

142 Ibid.

in FGDs who were aware of the legal advantages of formal employment cited as main benefits employment and income security. Their main source of information on this question is word of mouth from fellow Syrian colleagues or networks, which could indicate that limited information by other sources, for instance employers, Turkish government institutions and NGOs, is provided on this matter.



When I started the job, I was not informed about whether I would receive insurance or not. I also was not well informed about it and learned about the meaning of insurance later. I think it is very useful. I wish I would have it. Once I hurt my elbow, and the doctor told me to take rest for 15 days, but my workplace only allowed me 5 days because I am uninsured. These five days were also deducted from my salary. If I would be insured, my salary would not have been cut.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli.



I would prefer working with insurance. If I work with insurance then my working hours and salary will be fixed and I cannot easily get fired.

Syrian woman, informally in Hatay



I am not entirely sure why insurance is better than informal employment. I know that it is better, but I am not sure what it helps with. I hear that it is useful for retirement in Turkey.

Syrian man, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

Respondents who are formally employed have the highest level of information on the advantages of work permits and social insurance that comes with it. However, the data seems to indicate that they gained this knowledge only after they became formal employees, emphasizing the gap of knowledge for those who not have access to work permits.



After arriving in Turkey, I worked informally for around 5 years. I knew that I should be insured, but I did not have much of an idea about what this entailed. When I started my current job (with a work permit), I was able to learn exactly what the advantages are. Thanks to the work permit and insurance, we can travel freely without getting a travel permit. We can also benefit from a discount at private hospital.

Syrian man, formally employed in Sultanbeyli



After becoming insured, I found out that I have many rights. For example, without insurance I was not able to get my maternity leave. I had to go back to work 10 days after giving birth. Now, I am pregnant again, and my maternity leave will be 4 months.

Syrian woman, formally employed in Hatay

Aside from a lack of basic legal information on labor market regulations, Syrian respondents faced the challenge of locating the source for the correct information on how to initiate the work permit process. Respondents across the board specified that they were unsure who to address with their questions on work permit regulations. In practice, a number of agencies are providing information related to work opportunities and livelihoods support, including but not limited to İŞKUR, the Turkish Employment Agency, with whom Syrians can register, and UNHCR partners such as Support to Life (STL), Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce as well as other NGOs.¹⁴³

143 UNHCR (2018). Livelihoods. UNHCR Help. Turkey. Available at: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/livelihoods/>. Accessed on 2 January 2019.

6.1.3. Business owners and employers

Under the TP regime, Syrians can be self-employed, i.e. establish their own businesses, in Turkey but need to have a legal enterprise that is established and registered according to the Turkish Commercial Code.¹⁴⁴ Once the enterprise is officially registered in Turkey, the business owner can formally apply for a work permit.¹⁴⁵ In FGDs with Syrian business owners in Sultanbeyli and Hatay, a number of legal challenges for economic integration were highlighted. The respondents owned small businesses, including small grocery stores, mechanics repair shops, hairdressing salon and textile shops.

Syrian employers stressed having a lack of information on the registration process for their businesses in Turkey. Several respondents in Sultanbeyli mentioned only being confronted with the legal administration side of their business after having set up their business. The below quote is representative of similar stories we collected from small-scale Syrian employers.



I first opened my hairdressing salon without a license. A few days after the opening, the police came and told me that if I do not get a license within fifteen days, my store will be closed. They came with an Arabic translator, otherwise I would not have been able to understand them. I hired an accountant to help with the paperwork. I signed the papers he told me to sign, but I did not know what they were. I had to pay a lot of money (around TL 4,000) but I am not sure what for. I did not know that it would be so difficult to get a license. In Syria, you can get a license after opening your shop.

Syrian man, business owner in Sultanbeyli

In Hatay, several FGD respondents mentioned that their businesses were not registered and that they had not been checked by the municipality or the police. However, one respondent in Hatay, who used to work as a lawyer in Syria, mentioned having received some support to register his business there.



It is very difficult to obtain a tax signboard and a license for a business. We do not know how it is done. We spoke with accountants and financial advisors and they helped us. We have received a training from the European Turkish Business Center Network in Hatay. This training has helped us a lot.

Syrian man, business owner in Hatay



If my company was registered, I could get a work permit. Then I could travel all over Turkey.

Syrian man, business owner in Hatay



Because my business partner is Turkish, setting up my estate agency business was easy for me. My only problem is that Syrians from other cities want to come view houses, but they cannot do so because they do not have travel permits.

Syrian man, business owner in Hatay

Another challenge Syrian business owners' face when it comes to economic integration is the travel restrictions placed on both ordinary Syrians under TP, and on themselves in cases when their shops are not registered.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.



Syrian refugee workers are in a textile factory. Istanbul, Turkey. Photo by: Thomas Koch

6.2. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The FGDs with Syrian and Turkish respondents discussed the topic of self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. Across the board, it was apparent that the issue of Syrians' vulnerability was linked to their protection challenges and poverty. Indicative differences can be noted between the employment categories, such as employers, formally employed and informally employed respondents when it comes to practices, knowledge and attitudes on regular income-generation opportunities.

6.2.1. Economic precariousness and exploitation

The most shared experience of Syrian respondents was that of having engaged in informal employment, which in many cases was directly linked to them being economically exploited. The vast majority of Syrian respondents who were formally employed at the time of the FGDs stated to previously having been informally employed.

“

I worked in a steel factory. Syrians worked four times as much as Turkish workers. Instead of paying us more or at least praising us, the employer threatened he would deduct TL 200 (USD 37) if we missed for a day, and he did not allow us to take a lunch break.

Syrian man, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

“

I had to have surgery for my back. I could not continue my job as driver and had to return the car to the company I was working with informally. They fired me and did not pay me my salaries of the last three months I worked with them.

Syrian man, unemployed in Sultanbeyli

A common challenge Syrians face when being informally employed is the irregular, late or lack of payment of their salaries. Respondents gave numerous first- and second-hand accounts regarding this issue. Due to their vulnerable position, they are often afraid to follow up on receiving payments from their employers. Moreover, Syrians working informally often have to work long hours, without recourse to protection mechanisms such as Turkish labor law or trade unions.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Turkish respondents pointed out that in their view many Syrians do not have adequate information about their employers, be it due to language barriers, information not being provided to them or ignorance.

146 See for example Erdoğan, S. (2018). Syrian refugees in Turkey and trade union responses. *Globalizations*, 6(15), pp. 838-853.



No employer will make the [monthly salary] payment in one go. Ninety percent of Syrian men working informally face this problem. In Syria, you know the people in your community, including the employers and where they live. What is the solution? The court process takes too long and the police does not follow up on this.

Syrian man, unemployed in Sultanbeyli



Syrians are often discriminated against by Turkish employers. Syrian workers often do not know what company they work for. When you ask them, they say ‘I work with brother Hasan’. They should be made aware on their rights, and as a first step to check the license of the company.

Turkish woman, formally employed in Sultanbeyli

All primary data indicates that it is relatively easy for Syrians to find and access low-skilled and informal work opportunities. Turkish respondents felt that it was especially easy for young Syrians to find low-skilled jobs, but that both Turkish and Syrian job seekers have difficulties finding high-skilled jobs. Responses by Syrians validate this perception: in both Hatay and Sultanbeyli, Syrian respondents stress that finding informal low-skilled employment is fairly easy. This contrasts with experiences in finding formal employment, which often happens only several years after having worked informally.



If you are looking for a temporary job that is easy, for example in the construction sector. Finding a qualified job is difficult.

Syrian man, informally employed in Hatay



We are discriminated against because we do not speak Turkish, with longer working hours and less pay. When we complain to our employers, they tell us ‘we can easily replace you’.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

The nature of the low-skilled informal work opportunities is precarious: salaries are paid irregularly or not paid at all, working hours are longer than usual and employment safety is not guaranteed. As work permits are difficult to obtain and some professions are reserved for Turkish nationals only, many Syrians with qualifications are often forced to accept low-skilled jobs that are not in their field, in order to earn a living. Several respondents stressed that in order to make ends meet, they had no choice but to work informally – the low wages and long working hours impeding the pursuit of further studies or Turkish language classes.

Moreover, women face additional hurdles in their pursuit of self-reliance. Dominant gender norms, which place household and caretaking responsibilities on women, mean that they face gender-specific challenges in finding adequate employment opportunities. Syrian female respondents mentioned getting paid less for the same work done by men as well as the difficulties of balancing the domestic and family workload given the longer working hours.



It is difficult for women to work. Some of the women who work leave their children in the care of their own mothers during the day. But not every child has a grandmother in the same city that can take care of it. Many women cannot rely on anyone for help. Working women need nurseries.

Syrian woman, unemployed in Sultanbeyli



[Syrian] women face more challenges in finding work than [Syrian] men. But we need to work to rely on ourselves.

Syrian woman, unemployed in Sultanbeyli

It is significant that Syrian men also face gendered vulnerabilities when it comes to self-reliance. Several male respondents raised the issue of conflict-related injuries preventing them from working and earning an income for their families and themselves.



Before fleeing to Turkey three years ago, I used to be an army soldier in Syria. I injured my knee during the fighting. This is why I have difficulties finding longer-term employment: I cannot stand on my feet for too long because of my injury. If it was not for my injury, I would work in the construction sector to earn a living.

Syrian man, unemployed in Sultanbeyli



We had our own house in Syria, here we have to pay rent. My 16 year old son is also working but our income is still not enough. Sometimes I consider quitting my job, but my husband earns 1700 TL, our rent is 650 TL and we have a child in school. My son wants to get married soon but earns only 1200 TL, which is not enough to sustain a wife and children.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

While all FGD respondents were adults, several parents mentioned that their children – and especially their sons had dropped out of school in order to work and contribute to the family income. Other parents lamented that their sons were not earning enough to sustain themselves and start their own families.

6.2.2. Work permit versus ESSN

As stated above, Syrian FGD respondents showed varying levels of awareness and knowledge of the advantages of formal employment, i.e. working with a work permit and sigorta (social insurance). Overall, there was an understanding among most Syrian respondents that formal employment is more advantageous than informal employment. Nonetheless, many respondents stated preferring to work informally, without a legal contract with their employer.

The primary data points towards a dilemma for Syrians working in Turkey. While formal employment provides easier mobility in Turkey, employment and income security, as well as additional labor rights such as maternity and sick leave, some Syrians indicated that they prefer working informally as they are afraid of losing the financial assistance (ESSN) they currently receive. Registered families living in Turkey under TP are eligible to apply to the ESSN, which is granted to those in most need such as large families, single females, single-headed households and the elderly. Critically, TP beneficiaries employed with a valid work permit, or who own registered assets in Turkey, are not eligible to receive assistance.¹⁴⁷

A municipality official in Sultanbeyli argued that eligibility for the multi-purpose cash assistance should be linked to vocational trainings or compulsory attendance of Turkish language classes, therefore enabling Syrians socio-cultural interactions with Turkish host communities.¹⁴⁸ A Syrian male respondent working informally as an interpreter in Sultanbeyli sums up the dilemma many Syrians are facing in Turkey:

147 World Food Programme (2018c). The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN): Helping Refugees in Turkey. Available at: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000063537/download/>. Accessed on 8 January 2019.

148 KII with Sultanbeyli municipality official. October 2018.



Being insured [working formally] has both positive and negative sides. When I am insured, I will benefit from private hospitals discounts and my employer will have to pay me compensation when I leave my work. The harm of getting insurance is that I will stop receiving the financial assistance I currently get from the Turkish Red Crescent [ESSN].

A strong trend that emerged from all FGDs with Syrians is that relying solely on a salary from formal employment would not suffice to cover the basic needs of the family. Despite salaries from formal employment being higher than those from informal employment, Syrians indicated that this would still not enable families to cover their expenses without the additional ESSN assistance. Syrian respondents explained that this is because the costs of living for Syrians are higher due everyday discrimination, especially on rent prices. This financial challenge was mentioned especially by respondents from Sultanbeyli. The need for more money to cover the inflated accommodation costs pushes more members of a household to generate an income, reinforcing Syrians' predicament of finding jobs the informal sector.



When I wanted to rent an apartment, the landlord told me 'Turkey helps Syrians so much, normally I would the flat out for 500 TL/month, but for you it will be 800 TL/month'. The condition of the apartment is terrible, but we need a roof over our heads.

Syrian woman, working informally in Sultanbeyli



The rental prices are very high for Syrians. Landlords exploit us because we receive financial assistance [ESSN], but most of our money goes to cover the rent.

Syrian man, working informally in Sultanbeyli

Syrian male and female respondents working informally, and being unemployed, were the most skeptical in terms of finding formal employment. Several reasons were cited for preferring informal employment. Some respondents stated that their children, and in some cases they themselves, would lose access to free medication for their disabilities if they were to work formally. Many expressed that they could not afford losing the ESSN assistance due to the big household size and expenses associated with it. When discussing self-reliance, Syrian respondents often stated that one breadwinner alone cannot keep a family afloat. Faced with the legal, economic and social precariousness that mark the day-to-day realities of many Syrians in Turkey, the ESSN assistance seems to provide a reliable source of income for many, used primarily to cover rent or food costs.



I do not want to work with an insurance for now because if I am insured, the financial assistance I am getting will be cut off. I would eventually want to have formal employment, but I have a child with a disability and if I am insured, the medication I get for him will also be cut off.

Syrian man, informally employed in Sultanbeyli



I do not want a work permit. I have 8 family members. We already have a lot of expenses, we pay 950 TL for rent, excluding the bills, so we need this financial assistance.

Syrian man, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

A comparison with Syrians' employment and living situation back in Syria sheds some light on how they interpret and perceive self-reliance. When asked about their previous work and living conditions in Syria, most respondents expressed owning their homes, sometimes with land which they used to grow vegetables. With no rent to pay, minimal costs for electricity and water, and living costs overall low, respondents expressed that their salaries used to go a longer way in Syria. Working hours used to also be more family-friendly, especially for women who used to return home around 2 pm.



In my three years in Turkey, I was not able to save any money. All our family's earnings go directly to covering costs: rent, bills and food. Nothing is our property. We have to work 24/7 to be able to rely on ourselves but this is not sustainable for the future.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

In contrast, life in Turkey is perceived as expensive and difficult. The majority of Syrian respondents express not feeling self-reliant, the exception being those who are formally employed. But contrary to their situation back in Syria, formal employment would still not enable one person alone to earn enough money to ensure the family can cover their basic needs. Working hours are perceived as too long, often until 6 or 7 pm, even if these are in line with those of Turkish workers. Self-reliance, as perceived by Syrian respondents who have worked and lived in Syria before arriving in Turkey, seems to partly cover property ownership, being able to save money from the income and partly being self-employed. As is explored further below, the lack of self-reliance is exacerbated by the economic exploitation of Syrians, especially through inflated rent prices.

6.2.3. Business owners and employers

Syrian small-scale business owners and employers in Hatay and Sultanbeyli mentioned struggling operating their businesses due to a number of economic challenges. The most-cited challenge was linked to the high costs associated with running a business. These included the store or factory rent, the company registration fee and ensuing taxes. Respondents make clear that this is not due to a desire to avoid the law, but rather linked to their vulnerable position as TP beneficiaries with limited financial and social capital in Turkey.



In legal terms, it is more difficult to start a business in Syria than in Turkey. But taxes are higher in Turkey. In Syria, everything was ours. We are refugees in Turkey. Everything costs us and we have to pay rent for our own shops.

Syrian man, business owner in Hatay



I think I am contributing to the Turkish economy. I want to expand my business because I am not making much profit now. I have to pay double for the store rent than it is normally worth. We have to pay rent for both the store and our home, so there is not much extra money left at the end of the month. It is very difficult to take care of oneself here. In Syria, my three children were going to school but here they all need to work.

Syrian man, business owner in Sultanbeyli

Syrian small business owners thus face difficulties due to the inflated rent prices they have to pay for their stores, in addition to the rent they pay for their homes – an aspect that is further explored in the section below. Crucially, the lack of guarantees for their future stay in Turkey also inhibits business growth: Several respondents made clear that they are sceptical to grow their businesses or to register them, and therefore to invest time and money, as long as it is not certain whether they will be able to legally remain in Turkey on the longer term.

In KIIIs with public sector officials and researchers, the unmet potential of the private sector to harness refugees' potential to improve the economic situation was frequently raised. The private sector was argued to be a crucial player in supporting the economic integration of Syrians while contributing

to the Turkish economy, but a player that has so far not been fully drawn in or engaged with.¹⁴⁹ This passive engagement was partly attributed to Turkish-led companies' fear of competition.¹⁵⁰ Civil society was perceived to be well-placed to bridge the divide between public and private sector actors by several KIIs.

It was suggested that CSOs could play a facilitating role, convening government actors and private sector companies together, but also further inserting themselves into the employment and livelihoods debate. CSOs were argued to be diverse, both Turkish- and Syrian-led, and to well-understand both Syrians' and Turkish host community's challenges and needs when it comes to self-reliance and livelihoods.¹⁵¹ The advantage of civil society is its agility and flexibility; its limitations are a lack of coordination and capacity, which should be overcome to play a more convening role between actors.¹⁵²

6.3. SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

The process of economic integration is one of social and cultural interactions. Economic integration is likely to be more successful if other dimensions of integration are dealt with constructively, such as language, legal status and gender equality. The development of social networks in the host community, be it with neighbors, friends or business partners, also demonstrates positive social interactions in the integration process. Findings from the FGDs point towards a number of existing socio-cultural challenges to Syrians' integration in the Turkish labor market. These include everyday forms of discrimination and economic exploitation, negative prejudices, discriminatory gender norms and language differences.

6.3.1. Everyday forms of discrimination

Overall, Syrian respondents in both Hatay and Sultanbeyli reported being discriminated against based on their nationality as Syrians, in relation to employment opportunities and everyday activities. As illustrated above, Syrians are often hired on an informal basis and on lower pay than Turkish workers. Several Syrian respondents suggested that their Turkish employers were not willing to apply for work permits for them, while others were unsure about the process themselves. However, the prevailing attitude among Syrian respondents was that Syrians in Turkey get discriminated against based on their nationality.



When you work without work permit and insurance, your salary will be very low. My brother applied for a job and asked for insurance. But the employer told him that insurance is not made for Syrians.

Syrian woman, formally employed in Sultanbeyli



The working environment for Syrians is tough. Syrians are taken advantage of. I worked as a cleaning woman for a while, and after one week my wrist was inflamed. I do not know who to complain to or where to get my rights from.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

149 KII with Omar Kadkoy, TEPAV. November 2018.

150 KII with Antakya Chamber of Commerce and Industry official. October 2018.

151 KII with Meryem Aslan, OXFAM Turkey. November 2018.

152 KII with Ahmet Ceran, IKV. October 2018; KII with Meryem Aslan, OXFAM. November 2018.

Just as with inflated rent prices for Syrians' private accommodation, Syrian business owners in Hatay and Sultanbeyli also highlighted their vulnerability to inflated rent prices for their stores, sometimes forcing them to close their businesses down.

“

The landlord of the small shop I rented came by one day and told me that his neighbor wanted to have the store. He told me I could stay if I paid him 1,200 TL a month instead of 800 TL – which was already a lot, so I had to relocate.

Syrian man, business owner in Sultanbeyli

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“When we make some noise at home, our neighbors complain immediately about us. But they themselves can make as much noise as they want. Our children are treated differently from Turkish children in school. The school driver leaves our children in random spots. We do not know who to and where to complain about this. I am afraid of repercussions if I complain.

Syrian woman, informally employed in Sultanbeyli

Moreover, several examples of day-to-day discrimination were cited by Syrian respondents, especially by women who are mostly in charge when it comes to children's health and education. Anecdotes of verbal harassment by Turkish neighbors and children were cited, including curfews imposed by Turkish landlords on their Syrian tenants. Several women cited difficulties their children are facing in Turkish schools, including physical harassment by other children and in some cases difficulties to registering their children in schools.

6.3.2. Gender norms and vulnerabilities

Social expectations about men and women's roles in family and society are pervasive throughout the FGDs, especially among Syrian respondents. The responsibility for earning the bulk of the family income is placed on the man, often father and husband. A trend in the data is the strong desire by Syrian female respondents to find employment and earn an income, in contrast to Syrian men's perceptions that women should not, and do not want to, work. The wish to take part in the labor force is especially notable among younger female respondents, who do however highlight the lack of childcare support structures for working mothers. While not directly mentioned by respondents, the differing attitudes between Syrian men and women when it comes to women's active participation in the Turkish labor force has the potential of causing tensions between partners or parents and their children.

“

It is our tradition in Syria that women do not work. Shall we change our way of life and our norms just because we moved to Turkey?

Syrian man, unemployed in Sultanbeyli

“

In our Turkmen culture, women generally do not work. Occupations such as teachers or nurses are acceptable, but it is very difficult to find another job. Those who are really in need working in the fields (in agriculture).

Syrian man, informally employed in Hatay

A serious peril that Syrian women reported in the FGDs is that of physical and sexual harassment in the workplace. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the research team did not probe into this matter, but some respondents mentioned it nonetheless. Syrian women who mentioned having been harassed at work stressed that they were too scared to file complaints and left the workplace without getting paid for their work. According to them, the lack of Turkish language competencies was the main obstacle to fighting the harassment. In comparison, no Turkish female respondents expressed a similar incident.



The main reason I left my previous job was the harassment I faced there. I did not know whom to complain to. I did not know how to tell my problem because I do not know Turkish. People think that because I am a refugee here I am supposed to accept everything.

Syrian woman, formally employed in Hatay



Men do not have the responsibility of looking after the children, feeding them etc. Women should both work and look after their homes, which is a difficult task.

Syrian woman, unemployed in Hatay

While perhaps more Syrian women are working in Turkey than what was common in Syria, domestic and caretaking responsibilities remain within their remit. This is important to bear in mind when it comes to advocating or working for increasing women's access to the labor market, as it can place an additional burden on women. Syrian women's broader set of social responsibilities is confirmed by female respondents raising broader social challenges faced by different family members and the household more generally, more frequently and in a more detailed fashion than male respondents.

Despite the pervasiveness of gender norms and roles in Syrians' everyday lives, discussions on Syrian economic integration often remain gender-blind.¹⁵³ Sectors in which majority Syrian women work in are the most precarious ones, namely seasonal and agricultural sectors.¹⁵⁴ While the consensus among KIIs is that Syrian women should be better integrated into the formal economy, and into more qualified jobs, there is currently not enough data and no strategy on achieving this goal.

6.3.3. Turkish perceptions of Syrians' participation in the labor market

Overall, Turkish respondents held negative opinions on Syrians participation in the labor market. This was mainly due to the perception that Syrians were replacing Turks in low-income jobs, and that Turkish employers preferred to employ Syrians as they accepted lower wages and informal work. While Turkish respondents overwhelmingly sympathized with Syrians' need to work in order to make ends meet while they are in Turkey, they are worried about the impact the increase in informality is having on their fellow nationals and on the Turkish economy.



Syrians are useful to employers. They accept bad working conditions because they are in need for work. But this harms the economy: the state cannot collect taxes and therefore no positive contribution is done to the state.

Turkish female lawyer formally employed in Sultanbeyli



For us as farmers it was useful that Syrians came. It is difficult to find people to work in the fields; Syrians are the only ones who work there seasonally.

Turkish farmer in Hatay

While this study's findings are indicative only, the findings seems to point to slightly more positive perceptions among Turkish respondents in Hatay. Arguably, the closeness of the province to Syria and similar sectors of work might provide more homogeneity among the population groups. A widespread perception among Turkish respondents is that the majority of Syrians in Turkey represent an unskilled labor force, as skilled Syrians have mostly left for Europe.

153 The majority of reports reviewed for this study flagged gender as an aspect of Syrian refugees' economic integration, but rarely analyzed the issue in more depth to find entry points or solutions to increase women's labour market involvement.

154 KII with Ahmet Ceran, IKV. October 2018.

The strongest negative perceptions on Syrians' economic participation were held by informal workers and unemployed Turks, possibly as they are most affected by the competing Syrian labor force. Many of the Turkish FGD respondents had the impression that Syrians actively avoided legality and payment of taxes. Through FGDs with Syrians, it is clear that some do prefer working informally, however, that this is primarily due to their financial precariousness and out of fear of losing the ESSN assistance. Among Turkish business owners, the prevailing perception is that Syrian businesses evade the payment of taxes, while Turkish businesses are punished when doing so.



“Because Syrians are working for low wages, employers are confident that they can find workers at all times. We [Turks] cannot get jobs we want and we cannot negotiate the salaries.

Turkish woman, unemployed in Sultanbeyli



The arrival of Syrians affected the rent prices. In areas where there are many Syrians, for example in Sultanbeyli, rent increased due to the demand. But in areas with no Syrians, rent also increased, because of the fact that there are no Syrians there.

Turkish woman, formally employed in Sultanbeyli

Turkish respondents expressed frustration with the Turkish economy more generally, pointing towards shortcomings that precede the arrival of Syrian refugees into the country. Many raised the fact that university graduates had difficulties finding job opportunities in their own field, pushing them towards unskilled and low-paid jobs. By 15 January 2018, İşkur, the state's employment agency announced that the unemployment rate among Turkey's university graduates stood at 12.8 percent, although the real number is estimated to be higher as most university graduates do not seek jobs through İşkur.¹⁵⁵ Critically, data from the Turkish Statistical Institute shows that out of 1 million jobless university graduates, 66 percent were women, pointing towards prevalent gender discrimination in the labor market.¹⁵⁶

The arrival of Syrians in Turkey is argued to have exacerbated the lack of job opportunities for Turkish citizens, as Turkish employers prefer hiring Syrians with lower wages, or renting out their stores to Syrians for more profit. Some Turkish respondents thought that Syrians are somehow provided with preferential treatment through Turkish government policies, especially when it comes to receiving financial support. While these assumptions are factually incorrect, as the ESSN is covered by the EU, they create negative perceptions of Syrians among the Turkish host community.



Syrians can stay as long as they work, at the end they are humans. But – let everyone work. Now Syrians are working for a low wage but Turks are not working at all. The government should think about this. Everyone should get their rights. Syrians are not taking their rights and we are not taking our rights.

Turkish informal worker in the furniture sector in Ankara



Syrians arrived in a situation of economic crisis in Turkey. We do not have a long term policy for Syrians, and that is why they work illegally. Syrians who used to work as engineers do very different jobs in Turkey. Our policies are not enough.

Turkish formal employee in an NGO in Sultanbeyli

Ultimately, Turkish respondents pointed to what in their opinion were structural issues that require adaptive policy solutions, not least when it comes to Syrians' economic participation in the country. The perception of several Turkish respondents was that the lack of government policy on the future of Syrians is affecting their future as Turkish citizens.

155 Açıköz, E. (2018). Turkey's unemployed university graduates take unskilled jobs. *Hürriyet Daily News*. 11 February 2018. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-unemployed-university-graduates-take-unskilled-jobs-127127>. Accessed on 27 January 2019.

156 Ibid.

6.3.4. Turkish language, social cohesion and a future in Turkey

On the whole, the command of the Turkish language was perceived as the most critical element in facilitating employment as well as social life by both Syrian and Turkish respondents. Many Syrian respondents explained that being able to speak Turkish meant that they could go about their lives more easily: employers cannot take as much advantage of them as cheap informal labor, landlords cannot take as much advantage of them with inflated rents and Turkish host community members would generally interact with them in a more generous way. Successful command of the Turkish language was described to be even more important and useful than having formal employment – arguably, understanding one’s legal rights underpins being able to claim them.



In Turkey, you need the Turkish language in order to achieve self-reliance.

Syrian woman, formally employed in Sultanbeyli



The language barrier is the biggest problem to work. When we get discriminated against, we are not able to defend our rights because we do not speak Turkish.

Syrian man, formally employed in Sultanbeyli

Many Syrian respondents stated not having the time to attend Turkish language courses as they had to be at work all day. Some male respondents mentioned that their wives attended language courses as they did not work. Additionally, several young Syrian respondents detailed that they would like to pursue education opportunities, but the long working hours did not allow them to do so and the necessity to generate an income for their families took absolute precedence to anything else. Acquiring command of the Turkish language and a work permit seem to represent the two main indications for Syrians’ social capital in Turkey. While more Turkish residents understand and speak Arabic in Hatay, making social interactions easier, in Sultanbeyli this is not the case. Not speaking Turkish will minimize the interaction with the host community.



It is difficult to interact with our neighbors. We smile at each other when we meet, but nothing more. My wife and I wanted to invite them over for tea, but it is not possible for us to communicate as we do not speak Turkish.

Syrian man, informally employed in Sultanbeyli



I feel that I am part of Turkey. It took a few years to adapt here. When we get to know Turkish people our lives become easier. It is important to have Turkish friends. When I need something, I go to them and they help me. When I need a warrantor, my Turkish friends warrant for me.

Syrian man, formally employed in Sultanbeyli

While Syrian respondents seem to prefer deepening their relations with the Turkish host community and attempt to participate in social life in Turkey, Turkish respondents were more hesitant to socialize and interact with Syrians. In the FGDs, Turks criticized the increase of Syrian shops, Arabic signs in streets and crowded living conditions of Syrian refugees. A few respondents stressed feeling more insecure in public spaces due to the presence of Syrians. Despite this, Turkish respondents perceive Syrians who have work permits and social insurance, and who speak Turkish, positively. Positive examples of collaboration were cited by Syrian small-scale business owners, who are exploring joint ventures with Turkish counterparts or send each other customers when they have too big a workload.

Most Syrian respondents voiced hope of remaining in Turkey in the foreseeable future, with Syrian employees with work permits and business owners expressing the most positive views about staying on in Turkey. Many Syrian respondents hoped to one day become Turkish citizens, and viewed formal employment as well as higher education as pathways to achieving that goal. It is apparent that those Syrian respondents who had formalized employment status were better able to express long-term plans, in contrast to those who were working informally or who were unemployed. The data suggests that economic integration provides Syrian refugees with an outlook for the future, which in turn helps them become productive members of society.



In Syria, I used to have a shop, a car and a house. I lost everything in the war. In Turkey, I started from scratch. I set up a mechanical repair shop, which is doing well, but because I cannot get a driving license as a Syrian, I cannot improve my business. My two youngest sons go to school in Turkey and do not write Arabic. How could I take them back to Syria? They feel more Turkish than Syrian.

Syrian man, business owner in Sultanbeyli



Turkey is a great country, if you get your rights. I am working 14 hour days to be able to stay afloat. We are worried to be pushed back to Syria. If I do not get Turkish citizenship in a year, I will seriously consider going to Europe.

Syrian man, business owner in Sultanbeyli

Many Syrian respondents expressed their wish to eventually be naturalized in Turkey, and a few already had Turkish citizenship. Turkish President Erdogan's had made an announcement in July 2016 that Syrians could eventually be granted Turkish citizenship, considered an important step towards recognizing durable solutions for Syrians in Turkey, accepting that some Syrians will stay in Turkey either long-term or permanently.¹⁵⁷ In the same year, amendments were made to the Turkish citizenship law putting forward investment and capital criteria for acquiring the Turkish citizenship.¹⁵⁸ According to the Turkish Parliament's Refugee Rights Sub-commission, 30,000 Syrian nationals had been granted citizenship in Turkey as of 2017.¹⁵⁹ As some Syrians are becoming Turkish citizens, it is critical to ensure that they feel, and are, part of Turkish socio-economic fabric. Anecdotes of Syrians using their Turkish citizenship mainly for mobility purposes and to pursue business opportunities in Gulf countries or elsewhere has been argued to be a direct consequence of the lack of integration policy.¹⁶⁰

As the Syrian conflict has passed the eight-year mark, Syrian FGD respondents seemed eager to find some permanence and consistency in their lives. Despite the hardships, Syrian respondents were aware of challenges Turkish workers faced too, and were appreciative to have found safety in Turkey. Syrian business owners particularly stressed that legal obstacles hindered the growth of their businesses, and therefore the potential for social interaction and economic contribution to Turkey. The lack of Turkish government policy on the fate of Syrian refugees kept them in a state of uncertainty, making it difficult for some to plan for the longer-term and leaving others in a state of limbo.

157 İçduygu, A. and Şimşek, D. (2016). P. 62 and Akcapar, S. K. and Simsek, D. (2018). The Politics of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: A Question of Inclusion and Exclusion through Citizenship. *Cogitatio*, 6(1), pp. 176-187.

158 For more details, see Akcapar, S. K. and Simsek, D. (2018). P. 180

159 Ibid.

160 KII with Omar Kadkoy, TEPAV. November 2018.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined the opportunities and challenges for Syrians' economic participation and integration in Turkey by adopting a micro-level approach in the municipalities of Sultanbeyli and Hatay. Integration, understood as a process encompassing legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions, was examined through perceptions and social actions at the interpersonal level. More specifically, this study aimed to look at how national policies work on the ground and in the everyday lives of Syrians and what the impact financial assistance programmes have on Syrians' self-reliance.

Structural challenges and policy limitations to Syrians' economic integration have concrete consequences on the micro-level, which are reflected through legal, economic and socio-cultural aspects. While Syrians in Turkey are protected under the TP regime, providing them with access to education, healthcare and documentation, the right to formal employment is more difficult to come by. Potential employers are less inclined to register Syrians due to administrative hurdles and the need to pay fees. Syrians also face legal barriers to finding employment with restricted mobility, a quota system and difficulties in implementing degree equivalency in Turkey. Municipalities have a limited scope of influencing such policies, and depending on their stance towards refugees, try to support them through running free language courses, instituting social support programs and permitting a certain degree of legal flexibility for Syrians opening businesses.¹⁶¹

With approximately half of Syrian refugee households in Turkey considered poor,¹⁶² immediate needs such as covering costs for food and shelter remain a priority for many. This study revealed that Syrians strongly value, and rely on, the financial assistance they receive through the ESSN. With the Turkish economy already characterized by a high degree of informality, the additional pool of low-skilled Syrian workers in desperate need to earn an income puts employers in a powerful position. As many Syrians are subjected to paying inflated rents and to precarious working conditions, they either cannot afford to pay social security contributions and taxes or do not see the value in doing so. They are in essence forced to choose illegality over not meeting basic needs.

A number of socio-cultural differences exist between Syrians and Turkish host communities that can impede economic integration, the most significant of which is the language barrier. While many Syrians have acquired conversational Turkish after several years in displacement, the lack of formal or compulsory language courses impedes their successful language acquisition. The difficulty to communicate allows for easier exploitation and lost opportunities when it comes to social and job opportunities. Some Syrian respondents indicated that the command of the Turkish language is more crucial than work permits. While Syrians were more inclined to feel at ease in Turkey, Turkish respondents were more cautious in wanting to socially engage with Syrians. Social interactions between both groups seem rather limited.

Ultimately, the challenges to Syrians' economic integration in Turkey are overlapping with other dimensions of integration and difficult to disentangle. A question mark remains over the ways in which an integration process manifests itself when an overarching integration policy is lacking. The lack of design and implementation of a sustainable integration framework for Syrians has left the Turkish state mostly out of the integration process, creating a lack of durability and sustainability regarding Syrians' self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. Syrian respondents in this study stated that the lack of Turkish government policy on their fate has kept them in a state of uncertainty, leaving them unable to plan ahead, e.g. by starting a business and investing in their social security in Turkey. It is not too late, however, for change so that both groups can reap the benefits through improved social relations and economic growth.

161 Kirişçi, K., Brandt, J. and Erdoğan, M. (2018).

162 World Food Programme (2018).

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of policy and programming recommendations can be drawn from the findings of this study in order to improving the economic integration of Syrians into Turkey's formal labor market, and therefore make durable solutions available to Syrians in displacement. The following recommendations are targeted at the GoT, the donor community, the private sector and civil society actors.

GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY

- Expand protection of Syrians in Turkey by granting Temporary Protection (TP) beneficiaries a special dispensation from employment restrictions usually granted to aliens and conferring the same rights regarding wage-earning, self-employment and liberal professions as permanent residents or nationals.
- Increase access to formal employment by lifting legal and administrative barriers for self-employment and wage earning for Temporary Protection (TP) beneficiaries, including:
 - Easing administrative restrictions on finding formal employment outside of place of registration;
 - Increasing the quota for TP beneficiaries allowed to be hired by registered enterprises;
 - Reducing company registration costs to bring more unregistered Syrian business into the formal economy;
 - Facilitating access to financing to start and develop businesses;
 - Facilitating freedom of movement and lifting travel restrictions to encourage legal employment;
 - Fastening the process of degree and qualification equivalency and acceptance;
 - Easing regulatory burdens, improving the operating environment to encourage formalization, job creation, and enable Syrian entrepreneurs to deploy and retain their capital in Turkey.
- Increase regulations on landlords and property owners to ensure that rental arrangements are not exploitative or against existing laws.
- Strengthen control and fine companies that employ both Turkish citizens and TP beneficiaries in non-compliance with the Turkish Labour Law.
- Ensure that refugees are aware of their rights by improving the access and flow of correct information in Arabic and Turkish, through municipalities, NGOs, employment agencies and social media, on:
 - Legal procedures for self-employment and company registration;
 - Labor laws and employees' rights for wage-earning.
- Develop up a communication strategy with the objective to inform Turkish host communities about Syrians' economic activities, and therefore countering rumors or inaccurate statements.
- Increase economic growth by taking a regional- or area-based approach when developing economic policies designed to boost formal employment of TP beneficiaries and Turkish citizens, tailored to the geographic specificities and based on a market analysis and consultations with municipalities.

- Remove language barriers by incentivizing Turkish language courses to TP beneficiaries to enable them to achieve sufficient command of the language to fulfill their everyday and employment needs. Develop minimum standards for Turkish language classes provided by NGOs with an accreditation and certification system.
- Encourage private sector entities, especially large-sized companies, to hire TP beneficiaries and to increase the overall availability of job opportunities by reducing costs, e.g. by providing incentive loans to businesses who employ a certain number of TP beneficiaries, or reducing taxation costs to decrease informal employment (taxation subsidies could be covered by the donor community).

DONOR COMMUNITY

- Ensure burden-sharing of the Syrian refugee caseload, increasing available resettlement spaces and accepting refugees for complementary pathways based on non-discriminatory criteria, protection needs and vulnerability.
- Continue funding financial assistance programs, including the ESSN, targeted at vulnerable TP beneficiaries, who rely on the assistance to meet their basic needs, including food and shelter, but revising it in the following ways:
 - Committing to funding the ESSN on a multi-year basis in order to provide continuity and a sense of stability for beneficiaries;
 - Making financial assistance conditional to enrolling in Turkish language courses and/or vocational courses, excluding those deemed especially vulnerable;
 - Providing a reduced amount of financial assistance for a certain period of time to TP beneficiaries who have entered formal employment, in order to support their transition into self-sufficiency.
- Continue funding and building the capacity of Turkish municipalities and civil society organizations, by prioritizing:
 - Projects focused on supporting livelihoods and social cohesion between Syrians and Turkish host communities;
 - Projects that include and support Turkish-Syrian partnerships, e.g. in business cooperation and project delivery through civil society actors;
 - Capturing the needs and expectations of local Turkish host communities, along with those of Syrian refugees.
- Develop gender sensitive approaches in supporting and encouraging formal employment for both Turkish and Syrian women, including through:
 - Funding targeted programs to build Turkish and Syrian women's skills and improving their employability;
 - Promoting practices and regulations that support gender equality in the workplace among public and private sector actors engaged in working with TP beneficiaries;
 - Developing gender-sensitive indicators as funding and/or reporting requirement.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Support the formal employment and livelihoods of TP beneficiaries by sponsoring and hiring them, providing them with on-the-job training and developing their skills, especially large-size companies.
- Collaborate with public sector entities, especially with relevant chambers of industries and commerce, as well as with municipalities, and with international, Turkish and Syrian NGOs, to create job opportunities and hire TP beneficiaries and Turkish citizens who graduate from vocational courses, thereby providing creative solutions to local socio-economic challenges.
- Develop procurement policies that support contracting goods and services from companies owned by, or employing, Syrians.
- Build the capacity of Syrian companies by offering business training tailored to their local or regional needs, delivered by trainers competent in Turkey's and Syria's business environments and who speak Arabic fluently.
- Increase commitment to providing female-friendly workplaces by setting up confidential complaint mechanisms within companies and strengthening accountability mechanisms. The improvement of gender sensitivity within the company may improve the work environment, and therefore support staff retention and higher productivity among employees.

NGOS

- Provide Turkish language courses in line with accreditation guidelines where applicable and taking into account flexible timings, mornings and evenings, for full-time workers.
- Review vocational training programs designed to support Syrians' livelihoods opportunities to focus on the specific local market needs that Syrians could fill and be more creative in the selection of programs available, moving away from gender-stereotypical courses such as cooking or knitting into for example IT, logistics or project management, and providing career counselling.
- Incorporate gender sensitivity trainings in all livelihood programs tailored to men and women, covering basic modules such as gender norms, gender roles and harassment in the workplace.
- Bridge the gap between public and private sectors by creating opportunities for dialogue between companies, employment agencies, local Chambers of Commerce and other business groups on employing TP beneficiaries.
- Create "champions" among Syrians who have successfully set up businesses or been hired by Turkish companies, to mentor fellow striving Syrian women and men striving to set up their own businesses or make a career. Where the language is no obstacle, create such a mentorship program between Turkish and Syrian businesses, especially for women-led businesses.
- Increase constructive engagement and collaboration with Syrian organizations, including supporting their capacity-building.



