# MATILDE

**Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Regions**

# QUALITATIVE IMPACTS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS: TURKEY

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**Deliverable 3.3 –** Country report on social impacts focusing on qualitative impacts of TCNs arrival and settlement. Turkey

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

As of February 24, 2021, the total number of Syrians in Turkey in the status of temporary protection is more than 3,6 million, and with the other international migrants, the country hosts more than 4 million foreigners (DGMM, 2021). This has a huge impact on the lifeworld of everyone living in Turkey and leads to a change in the public administration of the country. Thus, to what extent it is recognized is still questionable.

Syrians, first as accepted as *guests,* are granted the "temporary protection" status in 2014 by Act No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection and Temporary Protection Regulation (AFIP). With this regulation, the right to health, education, access to labour market, social assistance, and interpretation services become possible in the provinces they are registered but to what extent these rights turn into capabilities needs scrutiny. In Turkey, there existed already inequalities and regional development gaps which have caused limitations on the capabilities of its citizens (Karatay et. al., 2016), faces many problems: poverty; informal economy; child labour, and access to qualified education for all (Uyan-Semerci et. al., 2013; 2014 and Uyan-Semerci & Erdogan, 2017). Yılmaz (2019) concludes that although the current situation in Turkey can no longer be treated simply as emergency, humanitarian assistance programs and the implementation of different policies and projects are provided in sense of emergency support to Syrians. Unfortunately, this is still a valid observation. The role of the public sector, including municipalities, increases especially in social assistance and health care. Local authorities cooperate with international organizations and civil society organizations to provide free services. Thus, competition among the most vulnerable groups concerning social assistance and job opportunities in the informal labour market creates further tensions, even before COVID-19.

Syrians are still not regarded as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. An important reflection of this lack of future perception results in not learning the Turkish language, particularly by women and the elderly population. For children and youngsters, the difficulty is not about learning the language, but rather, poverty, bullying, and exclusion. For harmonization, there is still a long way to go.

In order to assess the effects of TCNs arrival to and settlement in the region, Bursa and local Karacabey, and to analyse migration-related social policies and governance related to TCNs integration process, 23 stakeholders (including ministries as well as their affiliated public administrations, municipalities, international umbrella organization, NGOs, institution operating on asylum and refugee care, education, and training institution, and individual researcher) with around 50 people (including policy implementers, public officers responsible for beneficiary relations/livelihood program/protection program/refugee liaison, representatives of professional associations as well as practitioners such as trainer, health mediator, a doctor in charge with migrant healthcare, nurse, clinical psychologist and/or sociologist) contacted for the data collection request. Although three of the contacted people showed interest at first and the interviews were already scheduled, they had to be cancelled afterward because they did not get upper-level official approval/permission. Two of the contacted stakeholders, operating as NGOs at the regional level Bursa, refused to participate in the field research. In addition, the Bursa Provincial Directorates and Karacabey District Directorates of some public administrations affiliated with different ministries had to be excluded from the data collection process primarily due to their request for an additional official approval at the ministerial level. Although we have official confirmation and approval from the Ministry of Interior to conduct the research in the field, their request for additional official approval from different ministerial was challenging. It takes several weeks due to the official procedures, and at the time of writing this report, our requests are still being in the process of evaluation.

After all, regarding the migration-related social policy analysis, in-depth interviews with nine different actors/stakeholders were conducted at national (Turkey), regional (the province of Bursa) and local (Karacabey) levels during February and March 2021. Three of them were carried out as group interviews/small focus group with the participation of either two or three different people (Please check

out the Data Collection Plan attached at the end of the report to see the details about pseudonymized interviewees). Because of the existing Covid-19 conditions, it was not possible to visit their offices and/or arrange focus group meetings with participants from different organizations, these group interviews give us the possibility to learn more about the field with different expertise's views from the same institution/organization. In order to understand processes and practices in terms of healthcare services especially in rural areas, we also carried out 1 focus group with the participation of seven interviewees, having the job titles of either nurse and/or health mediator in the region, particularly serving in the agricultural areas, mobile health service to seasonal agricultural workers.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted remotely by using the Zoom conferencing tool. After having received the interviewees' consent, all interviews except one policy implementer (*Informant 12*) were audio-recorded. Afterward, they were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using thematic analysis. We also utilized the information gained from the first interview series already conducted between October and December 2020 for Deliverable 3.1 therein this report. In this regard, 8 additional interviews with the participation of 10 people from different stakeholders had been carried out during the previous round.

Although very few Afghans and Iraqi Turkmens were mentioned, TCNs in Bursa are almost all Syrians and how they live, work; how they exercise their cultures, customs and to what they have access to rights and furthermore to what extent they are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and overall, their wellbeing are tried to be reflected based on the interviews and focus group analysis. Thus, as expected, these interviews reflect the views of people who are working in the field and some share the perception and concern of the local population, and some, with different experiences, are advocates of migrants/refugees and their rights.

In order to understand both the positive and negative impact of immigration on the functioning of the society the following headings: social polarization; social cohesion; active participation and citizenship rights, and access to and quality of services are elaborated respectively.

## 2. SOCIAL POLARISATION

The findings of our earlier research on the perceptions towards Syrians show that there is a large – unfortunately negative – consensus in the Turkish public opinion, which polarizes almost every issue along with party identity (Erdoğan and Uyan- Semerci 2018)[1].  The existing anti-immigrant attitude is mostly framed as a threat to the economic wellbeing of the Turkish citizens and a threat to lifestyle (Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2016; 2020).

Income inequality across socio-economic groups and the co-existence of different ethnic groups and minorities have been important problems in Turkey. Thus, with the arrival of Syrians, the country also has been experiencing a new reality in which "social cohesion", the first time its history, for refugees whose numbers exceed 3,6 million.  "The concept of Syrian itself is like a curse at school" is stated by Informant 16 (*National level, research facility)*, a very striking quote one of the authors of this report already heard during a training she conducted on migration. The same informant underlined the fact that there is not enough contact and she said, "those prejudices are not broken without contact anyway".

Competition among the most vulnerable groups with respect to social assistance, access to rights and job opportunities in the informal labour market create tensions, this point is repeated by almost all informants:

> *"Because in the first wave of migration, all social assistance was directed to Syrians. And needy local people could not benefit from this. But it has been overcome immediately after a year, with the transfer of other sources."* (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

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[1] For the findings of the Dimension of Polarization in Turkey 2020, please see https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/home/.

As stated for the seasonal agricultural workers in Karacabey, to what extent they are welcomed may change from one village to another. The inhumane living and working conditions of the seasonal agricultural workers and their families do not easily change (Uyan-Semerci et al 2014; Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2017), from infrastructure to child labour, seasonal agricultural workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in Turkey. Thus, acceptance of low wages, accepting lower daily wages than Turkish citizens create further tension. Due to the pandemic, fear and to increase the distance contribute to this tension:

> *"Seasonal agricultural workers have not arrived yet when we visited the tent areas at the very beginning of the project. It was April. We were in contact with the local people living in the village and the headman. At that time, we had such reactions. Let the state care for its people first, unfortunately. You look after the local people living here first. For this reason, we spent time in villages for 3 or 4 months of the year with the villagers" (*Regional level, international umbrella organization, FocusGroup1a).

Seeing the economic difficulties in Turkey as the main source for prejudice, Informant 9b argues that contributions to the textile sector, or food culture need to be stated as a positive development: "Because, in general, one of the biggest obstacles between immigrants' harmony with the local population is the prejudiced "they took our jobs away" judgment. Because of this judgment, people are actually not willing to accept Syrians, and they may even fall into a resilient position for such reasons". (*National & Regional levels, NGO, Informant 9b)* Furthermore, misinformation contributes to negative attitudes and prejudices. Misinformation on the available services and rights and misinformation on the budget that is spent all increase social tension:

> *"Misinformation is created, to give an example, Syrians enter the university without an exam, they get a salary, and so on. People's prejudices somehow turned into hatred because it could not be clarified properly. The economy is still very bad.".* (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

> *"When it is said that we have spent so much money for refugees and that this year's gross national product has actually dropped, this actually shows whom to blame…In other words, the source of the money spent for this example is not specified, it is not specified where it is made or whose money, what is it, where it comes from, so the local people are generally having problems in knowing to the source, but it is regarded as money taken from our own pocket. This is the perception."* (Informant 9b)

Bursa, "a city which has a memory of migration" is a common saying that contributes to a dialogue with the institutions in terms of "harmony". However, migrant groups who have settled in the region long before Syrians also have negative attitudes:

> *"I do not know how to express this, but currently the most discriminated group is Syrians. Not speaking the language definitely has an effect. Their latest arrival definitely has an effect. Interestingly enough, because there is a conflict between immigrant groups. It is not as if we are immigrants and they are also immigrants, we understand each other, but there is a situation where immigrants do not want each other. … Municipality, municipal officials told us that there were many Romanian citizens and Syrians in that district, but this situation caused violence in many more districts. So not only the exclusion of Romans who are Turkish citizens, so by all Turkish citizens have systematic racism against the Syrians. Unfortunately, we witnessed too many such acts of violence in the local area of Bursa. It seems too much to us, "my child was going to school, he doesn't want to go to school anymore because of his peer bullying". Here we changed three schools, it is always the same thing, my children do not go to school anymore. Or here we are, not one, not two, but five or six times, we changed addresses, moved from home; Unfortunately, in Bursa, we come across the statements that we were systematically subjected to psychological or physical violence in every neighbourhood we visited, we cannot stand it anymore."* (National & Regional levels, NGO, Informant 9a)

The immigrants who came in the eighties and nineties from the Balkans, mostly have Turkish origin:

*"We were different, we came from nothing. We worked, but these people are not working. They are lazy, they are a burden on the state. They love enjoyment, entertainment" etc. Such prejudices are very common. As they also compare with themselves. Or "the state did not do these things when we came. Thus, now it is treating Syrians like its own citizens. Syrians are able to do more things, they have higher status, e.g. in the hospital more than us" ... By the way, all of these rumours are actually not true; but they believe so. That is, "they are primary citizens, we have become secondary citizens in our own country." I hear this very often in field studies I go to. So there is a situation of prejudice, a situation of rumour and an inability to empathize. Actually, there is a hidden anger, but I think we see this in a somewhat moderate way. In other words, hot confrontation, fighting and so on do not happen much."* (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11a)

Thus, two of our informants who are actively working for Syrians also use the same wording as "while my citizen/my people are looking for a job" …The question "why are you serving them?" is asked to our informants:

*"Of course, there are places where they are subjected to a lot of discrimination, we witness this on the field, for example, when we go to the health field, families are visited and a need assessment area is built to see what kind of need is needed, even in these areas we meet, including us. why are you serving them?"* (Regional level, Asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

Thus, there is also the view that these reactions have decreased in the last 1-1.5 years, that there is progress:

*"but if you ask whether it has been fully resolved, …I think this issue of language still continues as a problem especially for women. In the meetings we held – let's not only consider women but also men – it has been 8-9 years since I came here, but I observed that they still have resistance in Turkish. I think the issue of language still seems to be an obstacle before us in the framework of harmony. But I also see little progress. At least we do not encounter such reactions anymore, you give Syrians, you do not give them to us, I see a serious decrease in their reactions.* (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a)

However, the anti-immigrant attitude is not only a result of this economic threat perception, but also noted as a threat to lifestyle of the population. The use of the Arabic language has created tension:

*"We observed that Arabic texts were written in the shops of our Turkish tradesmen just to attract Syrian customers, and this disturbed our people about using Turkish. I mean, everyone wants to use Turkish, they want to see it. Actually, it is not racism but nationalism, we have a spirit of nationalism. There were minor reactions about this, and we had two or three shops, if I remember correctly, about three or four shops, as far as I know from the police for licensing. Others did not have a license; they were easily intervened. In others, it has been edited and translated into Turkish and such a reaction has actually been prevented."* (Local level, public administration, Informant 14)

The overcrowded house which is most of the time due to economic difficulties is explained as cultural difference:

*"Perhaps this is due to a cultural difference. They are more together and unfortunately, they have many children. Fifteen or twenty people can be very comfortable in a house and in these conditions, nobody wants to give a house, we had difficulty finding a house for them. We became intermediaries. There are a few events that I have also experienced. That degree, I went and talked to the landlord, because they cannot find a house. They have money but cannot find a house."* (Informant 14)

The activities that are organized for both communities contribute to overcoming social distance:

*"For example, one day, we organized an event with great participation on women's day. We rented a wedding hall. It was a women's group of almost eight hundred, nine, and mixed Turkish and Syrian. I was dealing with the arrivals at the door. A group of Syrian and Turkish women started bickering with each other. They said, why did you call us, if Syrians would come, if we knew, we wouldn't be here?" And there we intervened with a female friend. 1-1.5 hours after "Those who just fought at the door are now dancing on the table." So seeing this, actually makes us feel good, and it shows that the issue is actually not having a dialogue. In other words, when people get to know each other when dialogue is established, this prejudice disappears.* (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11c)

Although the enrolment rate for schools was increasing, Covid-19 has negatively affected school participation. Education, an important policy area for social cohesion, may contribute to social polarization as discriminatory practices, such as bullying, can lead to school dropouts:

*"One of the most fundamental issues we encounter in education is peer bullying. So yes, in Turkey also there has been peer bullying among children. But here, when it comes to Syrians, It is also bullying combined with discrimination and racism. It is a problem in itself for the children to attend school, to go and to be successful in the schools."* (National & Regional levels, international umbrella organization, Informant 3a)

Noting that this is definitely not reflecting the complete picture, one informant underlines the targeted policies to Syrian students is the main cause for bullying:

*" I observe the most in the field is serious peer bullying and therefore dropouts ... Because the supports to this time, only given to foreigners, as the funds have always been international funds and they may not focus on locals. Imagine a school, a book is sent to the school; but they say that you will only give it to Syrian students. This is something that directly affects harmony very negatively. Both their teachers and the Turkish students there ... Now, when you go to this school and ask why there is peer bullying here, why there are conflicts, the problem actually starts from here. Perhaps it may be beneficial for the Provincial Directorate of National Education and the ministries to pursue such a policy in terms of delivering support to both local and foreign communities. These aids should be distributed equally, not only to foreigners. Because this always comes back to us as a problem of adaptation."* (Informant 11a)

Informant 16 is a consultant, trainer, and researcher on "inclusive education" and based on her experiences in the field, she summarizes the importance of school not only for academic purposes but the role it plays in socialization, noting that online education, as part of Covid-19 measures, has created further problems:

*"After the temporary education centres disappear, they enter an unfamiliar cultural environment and there were serious cases of discrimination, and there are still cases, so discrimination is at the forefront, in schools. Therefore, there is not such a school environment where they love to go. However, school is very important, of course, in the lives of children. … There were some advantages of inclusion efforts at school. Of course, online education limits them very much. As such, the anxiety of being behind academically came to the fore...What the school offers is also very important, so it is not just an academic environment, socialization is very important in the lives of children… For example, the school has a very important role in health follow-up. When all these disappeared, the support mechanism around the children became very weak. That's why the role of the school was so important. You know, I can say that for the pandemic. School plays a very dominant role in children's lives, from every angle."* (National level, research facility, Informant 16)

There are projects that are particularly designed for preventing dropouts from school and also to prevent child labour (*Informant 11c*), nevertheless the follow-ups are a lot harder in the current pandemic conditions.

The stated problems with respect to social polarization are crucial to understanding social cohesion, namely social mobility, social inclusion, and social capital. The "temporary" protection, legal status of Syrians in Turkey, is the key to understand the main cause of the difficulties one faces with respect to social cohesion:

*"... thinking that they came here temporarily, and they will return one day. Be it in terms of learning the language or learning the lifestyle. Since they have thoughts like "We are not permanent here, we will return", this has greatly affected their relations with the local population. …They have trouble with a sense of belonging and they are anxious because of the reactions, attitudes, difficulties they will face, they come here with a lot of anxiety problems such as a future concern."* (Regional level, Asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

Although there are projects and programs aimed at "harmonization", the term that is preferred in Turkey, the obstacles in the field still continue. "Language" and "living in two separate communities" are stated as the main problems. The projects are designed to overcome these problems however with the pandemic, the projects face many challenges as the main goal is to get locals and Syrians together and to create ways of intimate contact, which is against the Covid-19 measures. One of the most stated obstacles to social cohesion which also affects access to rights is the lack of language (*Informant 4*) (*Informant 3a*):

*"..there are a lot of people who have stayed here for 5-6 years and cannot learn Turkish. This is a huge problem of adaptation, I think, it is still a problem of adaptation that we are struggling with, that is, not being able to overcome the language barrier, not being able to teach this language, and at the same time, people's own resistance. We still have language-related problems such as "Our children already speak this language, we do not need to learn it. We already find a job, the state gives us a job under these conditions, we do not need to learn". When you look at it, there are people who have been living here since 2013, how many years have been but still haven't learned the language. …you see that there is a serious acceptance problem by the local people. In other words, they are still not accepted, people also have this fear, "they have become permanent here, they are no longer guests, we no longer think they will go. This makes it difficult to accept more with the economic difficulties coming. Their prejudices are also increasing. A little bit of hate is also growing."* (Informant 11a)

The lack of contact is also stated as "living as two separate groups", they live in the same locality, region, country but with very limited contact:

*"There is no such thing as getting used to them. Everyone is for her own interest. We are living as two separate groups, they are in their own way, we live in our own way. They were being helped in the beginning, now everyone has stepped away"* (Local level, public administration, Informant 5).

The following quote which underlines the importance of inclusion of the Syrians as registered workers and/or taxpayers is important. However, the existence of a huge informal economy makes things a lot harder. As in the case of seasonal agricultural workers, neither Turkish citizens nor TNCs are registered workers:

*"The impact on the local community can be in the context of; People usually say that Syrians work illegally in jobs where we can work, they work for less money at work. Entrepreneurship and employment in the state administration mean that these people are included in a tax system, they can be included in the insurance system in two controlled ways and work under*

*the state supervision. So this system is able to work through legal ways, including as citizens of Turkey and who are these people who will receive if he deserves. Whether they are Syrian or illegal workers will not affect the situation. So I think the hate there will be a little more rubbed down, it affects it that way."* (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

NGOs and various institutions of public administration work on "harmonization" which basically aims at social cohesion. Harmonization with sports and music (bands/chorus) are used as a tool for social interaction (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a).

*"(…) we organized many adaptation activities under the titles of "…" and "…. Activities". These adaptation activities were generally about dialogue, sharing, common culture, common language, common things we could have fun and learn. These include conflict resolution and mediation workshops, empathy workshops, drama workshops; We have produced and implemented formats where they can understand each other as human beings, in fact, without needing too much language, perceive each other as human being and understand what they are experiencing as well. For example, in the social cohesion camps, two groups were divided in the empathy workshop, we organized an activity for the group of Syrians, "You are completely nationalist in this event, Turks who do not want Syrians in this country", and Turks "you are refugees who were displaced in the war". It was very impressive. Many things came to light here, people actually perceived how silly they were reacting to each other like that, and there was a very nice ambiance there. Apart from that, these were again carried out with mute drama workshops, which were never spoken, people could see that they could perceive each other without speaking a language. We did art workshops, with children and women. We did glass painting workshops; we did a rap music workshop with children. They revealed in their own words how bad racism and discrimination are, that people should be judged by their own character, not by where they were born. We also had Turkish friends in the …. event, who were included in the bands. It was one of these activities and it was very nice to see that Turks, Syrians, Iranians and Afghans can sing the same song and keep the same rhythm in the same group"* (National level, NGO, Informant 10).

Harmonization is an area that has been prioritized in the last two years, but as already stated by the experts in the field it cannot be considered a real social cohesion program (*Informant 3a*). Hence comparatively, there is progress:

*"Maybe when we compare 2014-2015 with 2019-2020, at least it is a bit more like "we have to make adaptation policies" before public institutions and "we are establishing units for this" or "we are starting to work like this". Maybe I can tell by comparing it in the last 5 years. In that respect, I can say that it was easier for us to do common things with public institutions, at least compared to a few years ago."* (National & Regional Levels, NGO, Informant 9c)

The last two years' positive developments have also been delayed due to the pandemic. The delay of social cohesion programs as the main purpose to come together and contact, the very existence of COVID 19 threatens the main goal:

*"We have a district municipality, … They give the citizens who come to their districts there an integration brochure. In other words, in the sense of what cultural values are there in Bursa. The Provincial Migration Board also prepared a booklet called Harmony in Bursa when it was first established at that time. inspirational way. Just a week ago, we received an integration program training with the Provincial Directorate of Immigration. Our head of department and directors also attended. The implementation was to start but was delayed due to the pandemic."* (Regional Level, Public Administration, Informant 13b)

Despite the improvements especially over the past five years, Turkey has been evaluated to go halfway to guarantee migrants basic rights and opportunities while living in the country (MIPEX, 2020). Following the Law 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) of 2016 and follow-up regulations, although there are major improvements in the fields of basic access to education and healthcare services along with small procedural improvements to access labour market, there is no way for political participation for foreign citizens and access to nationality is called as halfway favourable (Ibid).

Considering access to nationality, Turkish citizenship is primarily based on the principle of jus sanguinis (by descent). A foreigner or stateless person can acquire Turkish citizenship after birth by the decision of competent authority based on several conditions. After five years, immigrants can apply for naturalization, by completing language, economic and other requirements. Although dual nationality has been allowed since 2017, it has still been criticized with discretionary and complex requirements (MIPEX, 2020)

In Turkey, all legally resident foreign nationals are assigned Foreigners Identification Number (*Yabancı Kimlik Numarası*, YKN) which serve to facilitate their access to all government services. International protection applicants and status holders within the framework of LFIP are also given such YKN. Currently, YKN assigned to all categories of legally resident foreign nationals, including Syrians who are under Temporary Protection Status (TPS). The Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014 envisages the issuing of Temporary Protection Identification Documents (TPID), categorically with a number starting with 99, to beneficiaries upon registration. Still, TPR (Art. 25) explicitly states that the TPID cards issued to beneficiaries does not serve as residence permit as such, may not lead to long-term residence permit in Turkey (AIDA).

For accessing services through TPID cards, residence location is an important determinant. The beneficiaries of TPS can only access the services in their province of residence. This conditionality is a major issue currently for Syrians under TPS in Turkey to enjoy their basic rights and to have full access to education, health, and employment. Almost all interviews mentioned the difficulties raised by requirement of registration in the province of residence in order to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians. In particular, Bursa, the Matilde region, is among the provinces in Turkey where permanent stay are no longer allowed under the legislation for any new international protection applications:

*"You know, the first condition for access to all public services and rights is being registered in that province. Bursa is a province that is already closed for registration. Namely, only in very delicate situations, in extraordinary situations, the Directorate of Migration Management can provide registration to Bursa, with the direction of us or other non-governmental organizations."* (National & Regional Levels, NGO, Informant 9c)

*"We only serve foreigners residing in Bursa. If he/she has a residence in a different city, he/she is supposed to be illegal in Bursa. We have an obligation to report. This is sometimes difficult."* (Regional Level, Public Administration, Informant 13b)

The requirement of registration in the province of residence has caused unregistered residence in many provinces throughout Turkey, including Bursa. Also, it has a direct effect on the scope and extensity of informal migrant labour. Since Bursa has a labour potential owing to its diversity of industrial, agricultural, and service sectors providing jobs, many migrants, although unregistered in the province, prefer to stay in Bursa. This does not only cause migrants to be employed as informal and makes them remain out of enjoying their rights to reach public education and health services.

*"One of the things that has placed them in a disadvantaged situation is these procedures. For example, Bursa has not received the first registration for a long time, as other fifteen provinces do. If he's not registered here anymore, he has to officially leave here. However, there are a lot*

*of people who are not registered here, but who have to continue their education here, who have to live here due to health problems. (…) They have to return to work, but they cannot. There is considerable labour potential here compared to other cities. Then, they start working informally and so at first this directly turns them into a cheap labour force, they cannot get their labour compensated. They cannot benefit from social rights and social guarantees in any way.* (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11a)

As procedural, those meeting certain criteria are considered to have the same rights as the local citizens (*Regional level, public administrations, Informant 12; and Informant 15*). In accessing the social assistance, it seems that the municipalities are more flexible in applying the rules and takes initiatives to provide social assistance to the migrants, especially to the Syrians not registered in the province where they have asked for social support:

*"(…) when he [a migrant] comes to us, I can't refuse to give a box of food supply to him because he doesn't have an identity card [registered in Karacabey, Bursa]. It is just 100/150 Turkish Lira-package of food. The situation is already obvious. You know, you go to his house and do social research. We already solved the problem [of providing social support] with the help of benevolent by taking the initiative. Municipalities are more flexible in this regard."* (Local level, public administration, Informant 14)

The Turkish education system, through several regulations especially since 2013, started to eliminate the barriers in front of the foreigners in accessing formal and non-formal education services, especially for the Syrians under TPS. Also, there are several projects concerning educational support for the Syrian children, e.g. PIKTES. Public Education Centres operates across the country and conducting age-specific Turkish language modules for foreigners as well as free vocational trainings. The health system in Turkey also guarantees primary healthcare services for all foreign residents, including the undocumented, asylum-seekers and persons under international protection status. By the adaptation of TPR in 2014, all Syrian migrants can also have free access to medical treatment, but only on the condition that they must be registered. Finally, to access the Turkish labour market, some improvements was made to grant Syrians under TPS increased access to labour markets by 2016, with a quota on temporary protection beneficiaries based on the needs of the sectors and provinces.

However, the main issue is how the existing rights and provided facilities turn into actual capabilities. The language barrier is among the serious obstacles to enjoying the rights for migrants. Either migrant students stay behind compared to the locals at the same age (*Regional, education and training institution, Informant 15*), or the decrease in schooling rate as well as school dropouts among migrant children are common cases due to the language barrier (*National level, research facility, Informant 16*). Although the migrants have somehow similar rights and opportunities with the local resident population, the interviews point out the disadvantages in utilizing these opportunities also in the employment sector in practice:

*"I think they have disadvantages. That is to say, I think they are more disadvantaged in the trainings and activities I conduct in my field [of expertise]. I have witnessed a lot of people working here as laborers in the textile sector, although they have a very strong background with sufficient career and [foreign] language [skills].* (Regional, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11b)

Especially for elder migrants (age 50+), finding a job in the labour market and competing with the locals are getting harder. Their age and language seem to be the major barriers:

*"In particular [migrant] people in the age group of 50+ are much more disadvantaged, it is much more difficult for them to find a job and to continue their jobs, which they experienced in Syria, here. Young migrants can somehow work in a workshop, but it is very difficult for others to even get a job and work in a factory. And it is difficult for us to integrate these people with local*

*communities in terms of social cohesion. Because it is not easy for these people to learn a language or a new profession after a certain age. There are big differences between local communities and the migrant groups at this age in particular."* (Informant 11b)

Beside to the obstacles raised by mainly residence location and language barrier among others in enjoying the rights properly, there seems to be found some alternative implementations to substitute the disadvantages and to facilitate in accessing services, especially in healthcare. There are health mediators who provide mobile services, especially in rural areas, with the coordination of the Ministry of Health and international umbrella organizations. They provide health services both local citizens and migrants, including undocumented and unregistered.

> *"We do not have a system like Migrant Health Centre or any other institutions. It [the status of the people] doesn't matter to us, it's enough for us to see [the case]and hear about that person. We do not have any control mechanism." (*Regional, health worker, Focus group 1a)

In terms of education, in order to have public education, as mentioned above, there is a strict regulation that obliges migrants under TPS, mainly Syrians, to be registered in the same province. Although there seem no alternative opportunities to access their education rights for those who do not have TPID registered in Bursa, Provincial Directorate of National Education still provide facilitating implementations for Syrian children whose families come to Bursa and Karacabey, the Matilde local region, as seasonal migrant workers:

> *"The population of Karacabey increases during the summer holidays. (...) the foreign population increases; they work in the fields there. When Syrians work there, so that their children may need education, we send school desks to Karacabey, we set up big tents similar to schools close to the fields, we assign teachers. We have been planning for this summer too, there will be lessons for the children of those workers."* (Informant 15)

Besides all the rights and facilities mentioned above with its pros and cons, the certain deficiency in having the right to access social services is mentioned about special education and rehabilitation facilities. Foreigners cannot benefit from the social assistance provided for those in need of special education and rehabilitation.

> *"For Turkish citizens who need special education and rehabilitation, this is covered by the state. But for foreigners, it [the state] does not meet in any way. You see the family cannot afford it. It has no financial situation that will ensure its continuity. We look at ourselves, we do not have any funds, no NGOs have any funding for special education and rehabilitation. Even if it does, it may meet just a month or two, but it is not sustainable."* (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11c)

## 5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The quality of services provided to the migrant population is primarily related to the available sources. Although the policy implementers seem trying to do their best and putting many efforts to meet the needs of the migrant population residing in locations in their responsibility, the scarcity of the resources is an issue pointed out during the interviews especially at the municipality levels. The problem is not only the limitations on the financial resources (*Informant 12*), but also it is related to human resources, i.e. scarcity of human resources delivering services (*Informant 11a; Informant 13a; and Informant 17*).

> *"It [the resource] was always scarce. But we have tried to provide high service despite scarce resources. If there are, for example, 100 garbage trucks in the municipality, it became 150 after this process [arrival of Syrians]. Cleaning, staff, plus the cost of the truck tour… The city's*

*infrastructure is also like that. (…) The budget is limited. (…) There is also an exhaustion issue. Our own staff are also getting exhausted. They have also experienced psychological and financial problems. You cannot allocate extra resources [to the newcomers]; resource is the common resource.”* (Regional level, public administration, Informant 12)

*“I look critically, in fact, we still do not have many resources in terms of budget, and we have limited personnel as staff, so I think it should be increased in this regard. (…) We have seen that we can meet very little of the need here.”* (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a)

Apart from the quality of services provided by the municipalities, in terms of civil society organizations engaging in immigration issues, the real problem is not the scarcity of resources, but the implementation and the methods. There must be an approach aiming at long-term solutions and root causes (*Informant 3a and Informant 10*) and allocating resources to the sustainable projects (*Informant 11c*) or to the right (efficient) ones *(Informant 9a).*

*“I think the resources are sufficient. I think some situations and methods should be changed in terms of implementation. In our country, daily solutions are being produced. (…) these solutions and applications do not shed light on the future. So, there are problems related to the efficient use of resources rather than resource adequacy.”* (Informant 10)

Regarding access to the services, the most important disadvantage for the migrants is mentioned as the language barrier, mainly for Syrians, beside to being undocumented or unregistered in the same province they reside.

*“With regard to bureaucracy and access to rights and services in general, being a foreigner is of course a very disadvantageous thing. It's very disadvantageous, especially if you don't know the language. (…) Not only being a refugee, generally speaking, to be a foreigner is very difficult in Turkey. Because it is very difficult to find someone who speaks your language once. (…) The issue of accessing services only in the place where you are registered is again the most important issue. There are especially a significant number of those unregistered, who live in provinces such as Istanbul and Bursa where registration is closed, because of the opportunities in the labour market. Therefore, they cannot access rights and services in any way.”* (Informant 9c)

At the regional level, in terms of the services, a livelihood development program officer engaging in asylum and refugee care also pointed to the fragmented structure of the social and other services:

 *“The scarcity of NGOs [operating in Bursa] is also a problem, but [the real problem is] there is no standard in Bursa. We need to run a standard education policy, health policy and cohesion policy.”* (Informant 11b)

Moreover, the main issue regarding accessing the services particularly does not seem about those who apply to the relevant stakeholders for their needs. Rather, it seems about those to whom the stakeholders cannot reach. Most of the services have been provided upon applications to migrants or newcomers. Many interviewees have a common notion that migrants, regardless their status but mainly Syrians, have no problem with reaching out the information about services largely owing to the informal channels such as WhatsApp or Facebook groups. Especially about the social aids, basic services like food supply, the news spreads so easily within the migrant communities. Particularly, for those residing in remote and rural places, informal communication channels make their access to the information about the services easier (*Informant 11b*). Nevertheless, there is a migrant population that still does not have any access to crucial services.

*"Of course, we can evaluate this [access the services] through the applications we receive, or through the groups we can reach. There is also a group we cannot reach; we do not know anything about them. That is because we cannot reach them, nor do we know how to reach them. Therefore, if we examine the process in terms of access, yes, anyone who want to access they can access, but there are also people in this country who do not have an idea about access [the services], do not want to access, have not taken any action about access. And their number is not small."* (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

In access to the specific services, e.g. education, health and employment, there have been several steps taken and regulations issued to eliminate the barriers in front of the foreigners in accessing formal and non-formal services.[2] Regarding the implementation, many different elements negatively affect the immigrants accessing the services and enjoying their rights. Beside the material conditions such as income and education levels of Syrian families, employment status of parents and language ability which play a role immigrant children's school access and participation to the education services, peer bullying has also a considerable impact on decrease in schooling (*Informant 11a*). According to the figures, obtained during the field research (*Informant 15*), as of March 2021, whereas an average of 4,000 foreign students, mainly Syrians, is enrolled in each grade at primary school level in Bursa province, it decreases considerably in the upper levels, which corresponds to the number below 500 for each grade in the high school level.

It is also stated that the main problem in terms of the education of migrant children is attendance rather than their enrolment. Therefore, it is a recommendation to take measures to change the conditions that weaken the children's ties with school after their enrolment in the education system (*Informant 16*). Another issue to be considered is then "the lost generation" (*Informant 11a*), i.e. a group of Syrian children who are between the age of 7-15:

*"Especially there is a lost generation here. That is, there are youngsters who left their education in Syria or did not complete their school, who are seven to fifteen years old, and came to Turkey somehow, who can speak their native language but do not have a graduation. Our target group should be these people to a degree, it's time to think about the socioeconomic situation. Because this person knows both Arabic and Turkish, but he does not have any competence, graduation, and profession. Because this person was a student in his own country. How can we give training for this age group, how can we adapt them to vocational training and then employ them? I think our aim should shift in this direction a little more now. Because I call this in some way 'lost generation'."* (Informant 11a)

In access to health services, it is also the fact that the health care for foreign nationals has gone through a comprehensive change over the last ten years with several regulations specifically for Syrian migrants. In this sense, the establishment of the Migrant Health Centres (MHC) has been an important step. However, residence location, lack of information, language barrier, mobility of the immigrants and some legal restrictions are among the factors that affect immigrants staying out of health services in some ways. Besides, rural areas have their own specific challenges for migrants having access to proper health services. Although there are some initiatives, such as mobile health service mentioned in title 4, sustainable treatment for chronic diseases is a big challenge for the immigrant population in remote places, particularly for the seasonal migrant workers (*Regional level, health mediator, Focus group 1e*). It is stated that any initiatives by civil society remain limited. The function of a state mechanism and civil society is not equal at that point. This problem can be overcome only if public institutions take the initiative through common means (*Focus group 1e*).

For the rural and remote places, especially regarding the places where seasonal agriculture activities are carried out, there are several factors affecting migrants' health such as electricity problem, environmental pollution, and special conditions like having a stream very close to the living area that

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[2] For the details please see the previous report: Baglioni S., Caputo M. L., Laine J., Membretti A. (eds.), The impact of social and economic policies on migrants in Europe, MATILDE Deliverable 3.1 and 4.1, January 2021. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4483950

can cause malaria. They all wait for solutions at the administrative levels (*Focus group 1a*). In addition, there are some issues such as family planning or birth control which stuck in the cultural barriers preventing healthcare professionals from bringing healthcare services to these people (*Focus group 1a; Focus group 1b, Focus group 1d*).

In terms of employment, residence location is the main issue in front of accessing formal employment. In addition to the limitations on employment of migrants in labour market, it seems to be even more difficult to employ immigrants with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic especially in the civil society (*Informant 10*). Also, during the pandemic, even if some regulations are made, that is, layoffs have been suspended or banned, since most migrants work in irregular jobs, they have faced layoffs primarily and been unable to access even informal sectors (*Informant 9c*). Besides, what else was emphasized during the field research is the vulnerable groups and the need to do something especially for the singular women having children at home in need of care (*Informant 13b*).

If it is necessary to make a general evaluation and a short analysis about the access to resources regarding the period after Covid-19 pandemic, the main issue emphasized in terms of all kinds of services is having no access to internet service, lack of smart devices such as phones and tablets. Especially for those in need of psychological support, it has been very challenging due to lack of privacy at home:

*"I am talking about foreign nationals, because they live in crowded houses and small houses, they could not create a suitable environment and the time period for these meetings to be healthy. There was always someone with them, it was disturbing, there were people accompanying and warning them. Therefore, the interviews could not be carried out properly, as I said, most of them did not have internet and devices."* (Informant 17)

However, it also requires making special reference to the education of migrant children during the pandemic. Children already represent a sensitive group, when the situation of being immigration or refugee is added, it becomes more vulnerable basically:

*"Families with limited socio-economic resources especially say that they do not have the necessary materials for their children to need distance education. The attendance of the children was also interrupted. The fact that their mother tongue is Arabic and learning a different language already indicates a difficult process. This also expresses inequality."* (Informant 9a)

As the gap between local children and refugee children has widened due to the pandemic, it is worrying that the school, which has an important role in the socialization of immigrant children, is out of their lives. In addition, the fact that the support mechanism for children was weakened in matters such as obtaining guidance service, detecting negligence or abuse, and health monitoring were also emphasized in the field study (*Informant 16*).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Syrians are still not regarded as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. Difficulties experienced in the field vary with respect to age, gender, and previous experience. Thus, with the pandemic, existent economic difficulties in Turkey increased and Syrians are there to be used as a scapegoat for continuous problems (Uyan-Semerci and Erdogan, 2020). The anxiety and the fear of the pandemic is no help.

Despite the improvements especially over the last five years in the fields of providing basic access to education, healthcare services, and to the labour market, the field research primarily points out the challenges caused by the "residence location" in implementation. Especially for the Syrians to whom foreign identification numbers are assigned, like all other legally resident foreign nationals, can utilize formal services only in their residence location. The interviews indicate the difficulties raised by the

requirement of registration in the province of residence to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians. This basic requirement primarily has a direct effect on the scope of informal migrant labour. Since Bursa is an important hub for agricultural, industrial, and service sectors, many migrants prefer to stay unregistered in the province to find a job. This then also causes immigrants to remain out of enjoying their rights to reach public education and health services.

Some alternative implementations have been applied to substitute the disadvantages and to facilitate accessing services, especially in healthcare and social support. Health mediators who provide mobile services, especially in rural areas, with the coordination of international umbrella organizations is among these implementations. They do not only provide health services to registered migrants living in remote places and working in rural areas, but also services to those unregistered in the province and even undocumented. In terms of social assistance, particularly municipalities at both regional and local levels, rather than public administrations affiliated with central administration, seem to be more flexible to meet the needs of the migrant population residing in locations in their responsibility, sometimes by putting aside the formal procedures to help especially those in more fragile situations. However, according to data provided in the field, the municipalities are still in need of additional resources to compensate for the burden which puts extra pressure on their budget due to the increase in the regional and/or local population they have to provide public services. Thus, the quality of services provided to the migrant population is primarily related to the available sources.

Nevertheless, the language barrier is still a considerable challenge for migrant children at school age to enjoy their given rights. This both seem to cause them to stay behind the locals at the same age, and to have an impact on the schooling rate as well as being bullied in the schools. With the emergence of the pandemic, the gap between local children and refugee children has widened. The pandemic has also had a dramatic effect on migrant children who do not attend school in different regards. The support mechanism for children has been weakened in matters such as obtaining guidance service, detecting negligence or abuse, and health monitoring; these all were emphasized in the field of study.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the field study is also there is a special need to consider the migrant population which still does not have any access to crucial services. It is obvious that particularly for those residing in remote and rural places, informal communication channels make their access to information about the services easier. However, some interviewees have still been worried about the groups they cannot reach. So, this somehow brings the issue to the subject of the implementation and the methods as well as the allocation of available resources to more comprehensive and sustainable projects. To imagine one's future in the society one is living in is vital for feeling secure and to imagine a common future for all the members who are living in that society is a symbol of social cohesion. However, in the case of Turkey, there is still a long way ahead, and acknowledging the political, social, and economic restrictions, mainstreaming the social cohesion for any and every project that is planned is necessary.

## SWOT ASSESSMENT

In the Turkish case, the country is home to the world's largest refugee population regarding the presence of the high number of Syrians. However, the registered Syrian population, more than 3,6 million in figures, is considered under temporary protection in legal terms due to the country's maintaining the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention. Therefore, the intensive policy-making process in the last ten years has focused mostly upon the policies and regulations on the Syrian population.

Although the social policies are based on a rights-based perspective, it does not result in social cohesion in the long run because of the logic of "temporariness". Many programs and projects and their implementation are still provided with the logic of emergency support. Such perspective is the most important hindrance to regard Syrians as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. Besides, the difficulties raised by the requirement of registration in the province of residence to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians, creates a considerable weakness and has a direct effect in enjoying their rights to reach social services, primarily public education and healthcare.

Concerning social inclusion, the design of public education can be regarded as a facilitator. Yet, this somewhat depends on individual endeavours and good intentions, whereas the difficulty is not only about learning the language, but rather, poverty, bullying, and exclusion. Social inclusion and active participation in some areas are better exemplified; still, in some areas, the lack of contact result in a situation as "living as two separate groups", where the locals and immigrants live in the same locality, region, country but with very limited contact.

Competition among the most vulnerable groups concerning social assistance and job opportunities carries the risks of further tensions. Whereas the fragile economic situation of the country has already been an important source of this competition, the pandemic makes the situation more complicated and makes social assistance to immigrants more visible in a negative sense.

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| Date of Interview and ID Study code | | Policy Level | Nationality | Stakeholder type/ Affiliation | Working position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TASK 3.1: DATA COLLECTION (FIRST ROUND INTERVIEWS, OCT-NOV 2020)** | | | | | |
| **Nov 3, 2020** | **Informant 1** | Regional | Turkish | Provincial Directorate | Expert |
| **Oct 30, 2020** | **Informant 2** | Regional | Turkish | Metropolitan Municipality | Expert |
| **Nov 13, 2020** | **Informant 3a** | National & Regional | Turkish | International umbrella organization | Field Associate |
| | **Informant 3b** | | Turkish | | Social Worker |
| | **Informant 3c** | | Turkish | | Nurse |
| **Nov 11, 2020** | **Informant 4** | National & Regional | Turkish | INGO providing humanitarian assistance | Programme Coordinator |
| **Nov 11, 2020** | **Informant 5** | Local | Turkish | Public administration | Local Governor |
| **Nov 11, 2020** | **Informant 6** | Local | Turkish | Public administration | Local Governor |
| **Nov 11, 2020** | **Informant 7** | Local | Turkish | Public administration | Local Governor |
| **Nov 12, 2020** | **Informant 8** | Regional | Turkish | Public administration | Department Manager |
| **TASK 3.3: DATA COLLECTION (SECOND ROUND INTERVIEWS, FEB-MARCH 2020)** | | | | | |
| **Feb 16, 2021** | **Informant 9a** | National & Regional | Turkish | NGO | Bursa Office Director |
| | **Informant 9b** | | Turkish | | Bursa Child Protection Officer |
| | **Informant 9c** | | Turkish | | Regional Coordination Assistant |
| **March 3, 2021** | **Informant 10** | National | Turkish | NGO | Project Manager |
| **Feb 25, 2021** | **Informant 11a** | Regional | Turkish | Asylum and refugee care | Beneficiary Relations Officer |
| | **Informant 11b** | | Turkish | | Livelihood Development Program Officer |
| | **Informant 11c** | | Turkish | | Protection Program Officer |
| **March 3, 2021** | **Informant 12** | Regional | Turkish | Public administration | Refugee Liaison Officer |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **March 16, 2021** | **Informant 13a** | Regional | Turkish | Public administration | psychologist |
| | **Informant 13b** | | Turkish | | sociologist |
| **March 19, 2021** | **Informant 14** | Local | Turkish | Public administration | Social Assistance Director |
| **March 11, 2021** | **Informant 15** | Regional | Turkish | Public administration/ Education and Training Institution | Project Coordinator |
| **March 17, 2021** | **Informant 16** | National | Turkish | Research facility | consultant, trainer and researcher |
| **March 16, 2021** | **Informant 17** | Regional | Turkish | Asylum and refugee care | clinical psychologist |
| **March 12, 2021** **(Focus Group)** | **Focus Group 1a** | Regional | Turkish | International umbrella organization | Nurse |
| | **Focus Group 1b** | | Turkish | | Nurse |
| | **Focus Group 1c** | | Syrian | | Health mediator |
| | **Focus Group 1d** | | Syrian | | Health mediator |
| | **Focus Group 1e** | | Turkish | | Health mediator |
| | **Focus Group 1f** | | Syrian | | Health mediator |
| | **Focus Group 1g** | | Syrian | | Health mediator |