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*Migration, displacement and education:
Building bridges, not walls*

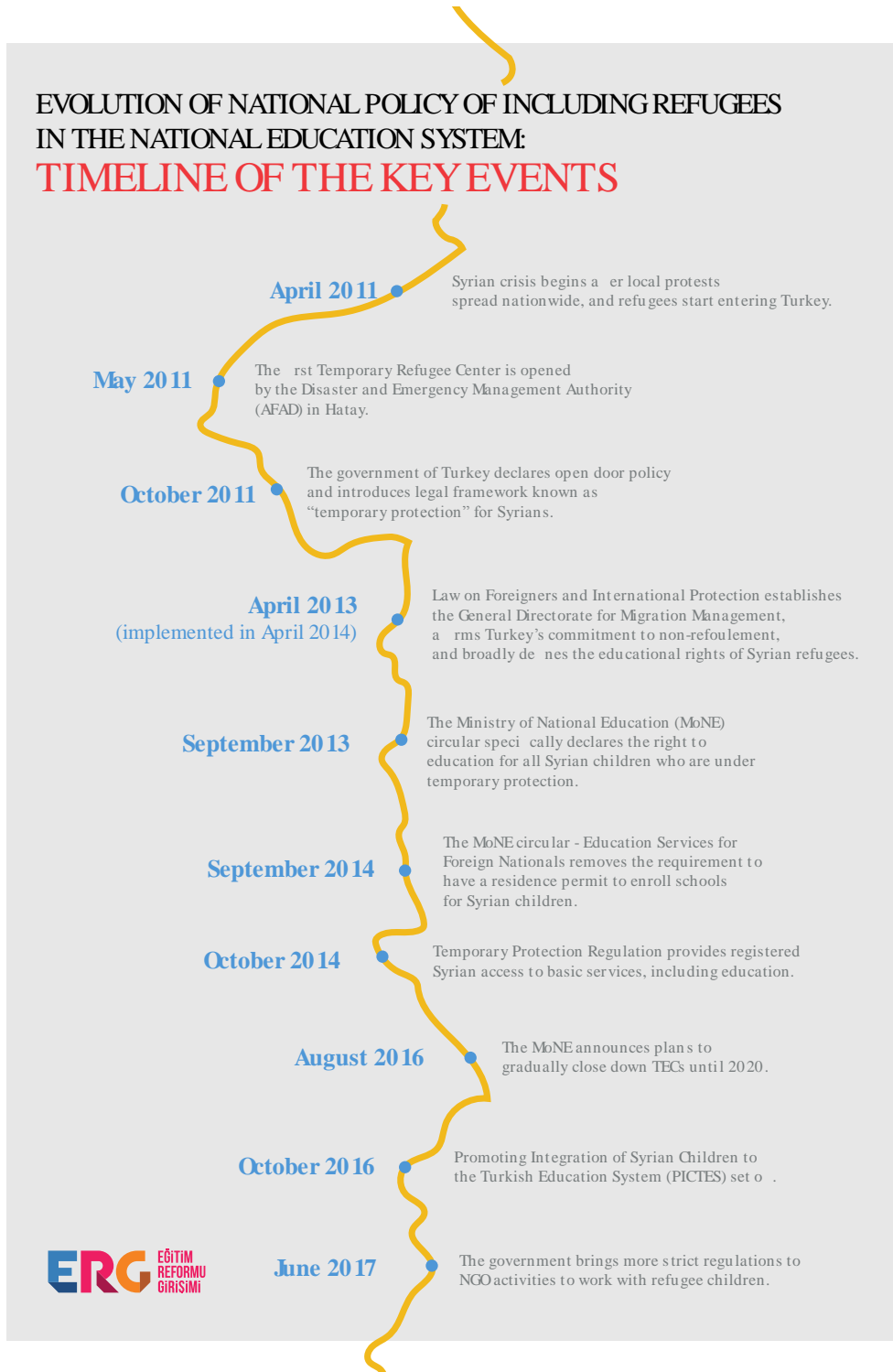
EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL POLICY IN TURKEY ON INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN CHILDREN INTO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This background report accounts the evolution of Turkey's national policy on the accommodation of Syrian refugees into its national education system from 2011 to present. Turkey's experience merits attention not least because the country has been host to a record number of Syrian refugees, close to a million of which are school-age children, and as such the country assumes the difficult task of integrating these children into education. Turkey's humanitarian response has faced changes since the crisis in Syria first took off in 2011. As it became clear by the end of 2015 that Syrian refugees were not "temporary guests", the Ministry of National Education declared that all Syrian children would be fully integrated into Turkish public schools who, until then, had been placed into temporary education centers to ensure that they could continue their education in the period they spend in Turkey before going back to their own country. There has been a considerable increase in Syrian children's schooling: The the number of enrolled students increased from 230,000 in 2014-15 to 608,000 in 2017-18. However, the percentage of children who do not go to school still remains high at close 40 percent. Most of the activities of the Turkish government in supporting the inclusion of Syrian children into the Turkish education system were carried out under the project "Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System" (PICTES), funded by the European Union's €500 million grant. These activities took place in 23 provinces with the highest concentration of Syrian population, and included Turkish language courses, provision of educational materials and transportation services. The role of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in providing psychosocial support and education has also been noteworthy, although the Ministry's regulations concerning NGO's field work at schools became more restrictive in the last year.

1. EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL POLICY OF INCLUDING REFUGEES IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM: KEY LAWS, POLICIES, PROGRAMMES, INSTITUTIONS AND MONITORING MECHANISMS



Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict started entering Turkey in April 2011 (Kirişçi, 2014). The first Temporary Refugee Center opened by the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) in May 2011 in Hatay

(AFAD, 2016). As the numbers of refugees began growing, the Turkish Government declared an open door policy in October 2011 and introduced the legal framework known as “temporary protection”. Through this legal framework, the Turkish government ensured there would be no forced returns or limitations on duration of stay for Syrian refugees in Turkey (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees [UNHCR], 2014). By 2012, 14,237 registered Syrian refugees were under temporary protection (Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management [MIDGMM], 2018). The Syrian refugees who were welcomed in Turkey as “temporary guests” were expected to return their country after the resolution of the conflict in the near future. Therefore, there was no intention of integrating Syrian children into Turkish national public school system in the first years of the conflict. However, starting from 2011, temporary refuge centers provided educational facilities and activities to Syrian children with support from UNICEF and in the coordination of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and AFAD. In the beginning years of the conflict, schools for Syrian children were primarily established in camps, however, as the numbers started rising, they started to open outside of the camps in cities where Syrian refugee numbers are particularly higher. Syrian refugees living in the cities began to open their private schools for their children.

In April 2013, Law on Foreigners and International Protection was published in the official gazette. This law brought the legal framework of the migrant and refugee right in line with the international human right standards; whereas Turkey used to maintain geographical limitations in 1951 Refugee convention, with this law, she accepted her obligations for all people in need of international protection (Asylum Information Database [AIDA], nd). It is the first “domestic law regulating the practices of asylum in Turkey since the Turkey’s ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention” (Soykan, 2012, p. 44). Through this law, Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) was officially planned to be established in 81 provinces and 148 districts (MIDGMM, n.d.), yet this was implemented in April 2014 after a 12-month transitional period (ReliefWeb, 2013). Also, the law broadly defined the educational rights of foreigners who have residence permit. For example, under family resident permit, the holder have right of education in primary and secondary educational institution until age of 18 without obtaining a student resident permit (MIDGMM, 2014a, p. 42).

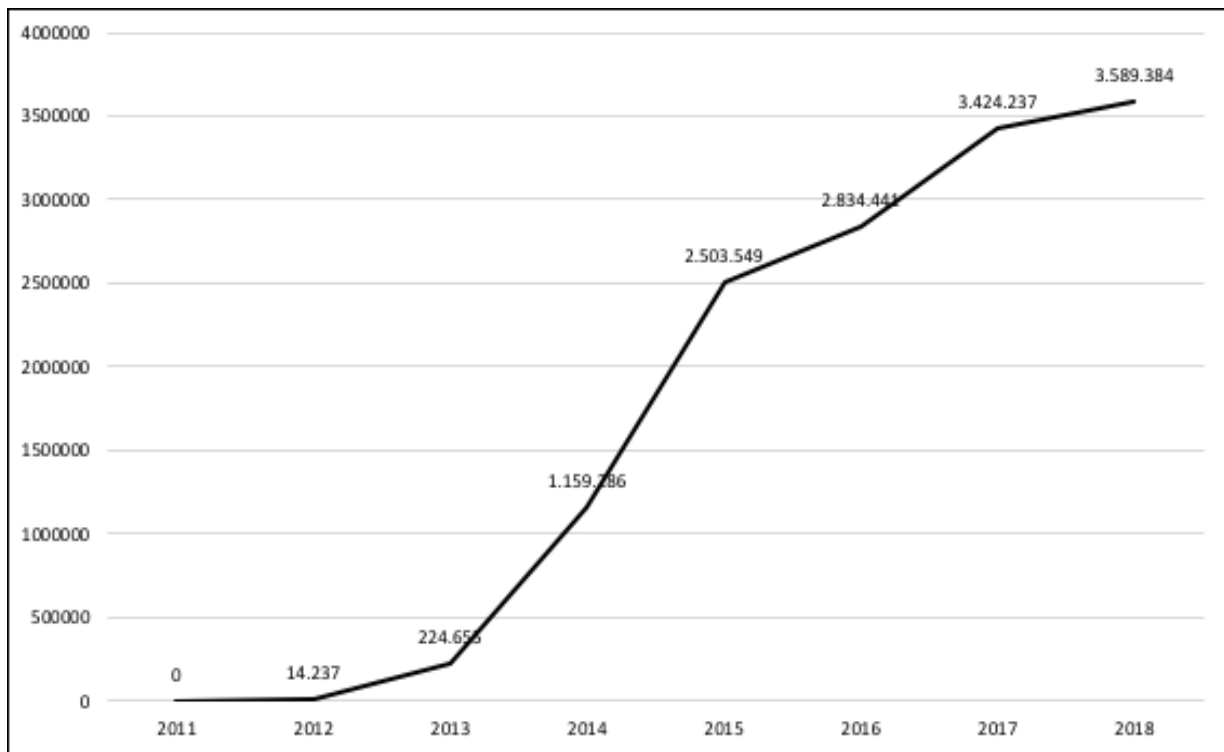
Between 2012-2013, 60 percent of primary school-aged children living in camps were enrolled in schools. However, access to education outside of camps remained much lower. For the same school year, it was estimated that only 14 percent of school-aged children outside of camps attended school (UNHCR, n.d.). This brought urgent attention to the risk of many Syrian children becoming a lost generation. In September 2013 Ministry of National Education, which is responsible for ensuring and managing refugees’ access to early childhood education, schools and non-formal education programmes offered by Public Education Centres,

declared the right to education for all Syrian children who are under temporary protection. Since then the number of the refugees under temporary protection escalated very quickly (Graph 1).

In 2013 there were 224,655 Syrian refugees under temporary protection whereas by 2014 this number scaled up to 1,519,286. With this quick escalation in numbers, MoNE announced new arrangements through its circular in September 2014 (MoNE, 2014) and removed the requirement to have a residence permit to enroll in schools for Syrian children. Based on the new arrangements, 'foreign recognition certificate' was sufficient for Syrian children to enroll in public schools rather than the 'residence permit'. Additionally, an accreditation system for TECs was also established. In October 2014, provisions were made on the *The Temporary Protection Regulation* to make public schools open and official for all Syrian students who are under temporary protection including early childhood education, K-12, higher education and non-formal education programmes (MIDGMM, 2014b).

In 2014, all non-public schools that provide education for Syrian children in and outside the camps accredited as Temporary Education Centers (TECs) so that Syrian children could continue their education in the period they spend in Turkey before going back to their own country. The education in TECs was based on a curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education of the Syrian Interim Government and modified by the Turkish Ministry of Education and it is in the Arabic language. TECs were required to have protocols with the Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of National Education. Those that were not in line with the legal regulations and did not fulfil the requirements were closed.

Graph 1: Syrian population under temporary protection in Turkey



Source: MoNE GDLL (2018)

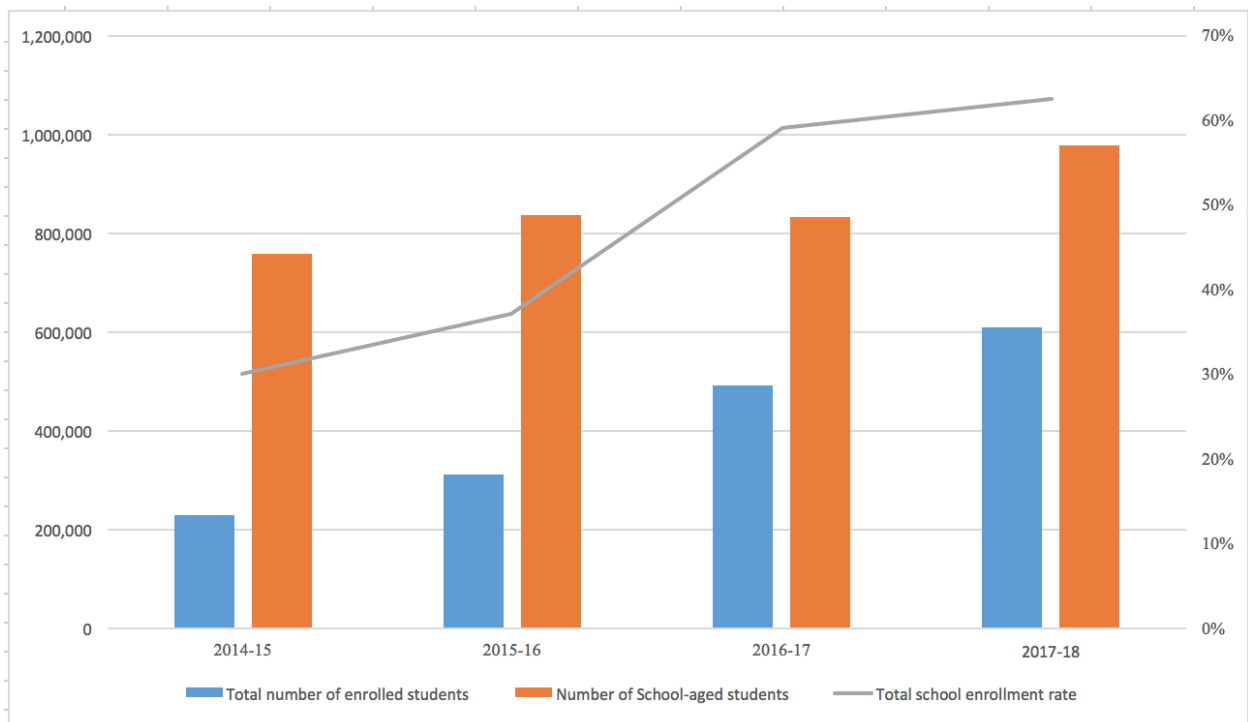
Table 1 shows student numbers and school enrollment rates in the academic years between 2014 and 2018. Although the percentage of Syrian students enrolled in school has doubled in the last four years, almost 40% of them remain out of school. Besides enrollment rate, student attendance is another crucial indicator that needs to be monitored. To monitor the registration and the attendance of the refugee children, the MoNE with the assistance of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), developed “Foreign Students Information Operation System”, referred to as *YÖBİS*, in 2014. This system is similar to the Education Management Information System (EMIS), referred to as *e-okul*, which has already been in use in public schools in Turkey (UNICEF, 2015). School attendance of Syrian children is currently being monitored via both portals; data is collected through *YÖBİS* in TECs, and through *e-okul* in public schools. As of March 2018, absenteeism emerges as more prevalent among primary and middle school students (Graph 3). Experience of the NGOs in the field shows that there might be problems with data collection regarding student attendance, especially if data is not entered by the TEC coordinator (Heyse, 2016).

Table 1: Syrian Students' Access to Education in Turkey

Academic Year	Number of Students in Public School	Percentage of Students in public schools	Number of Students in TECs	Percentage of Students in TECs	Total number of enrolled students	Number of School-aged students	Total school enrollment rate
2014-15	40,000	17.39%	190,000	%82.61	230,000	756,000	30%
2015-16	62,357	20.03%	248,902	%79.97	311,259	834,842	37%
2016-17	201,505	40.91%	291,039	%59.09	492,544	833,039	59%
2017-18	384,245	63.13%	223,049	%36.87	608,702	976,200	62.35%

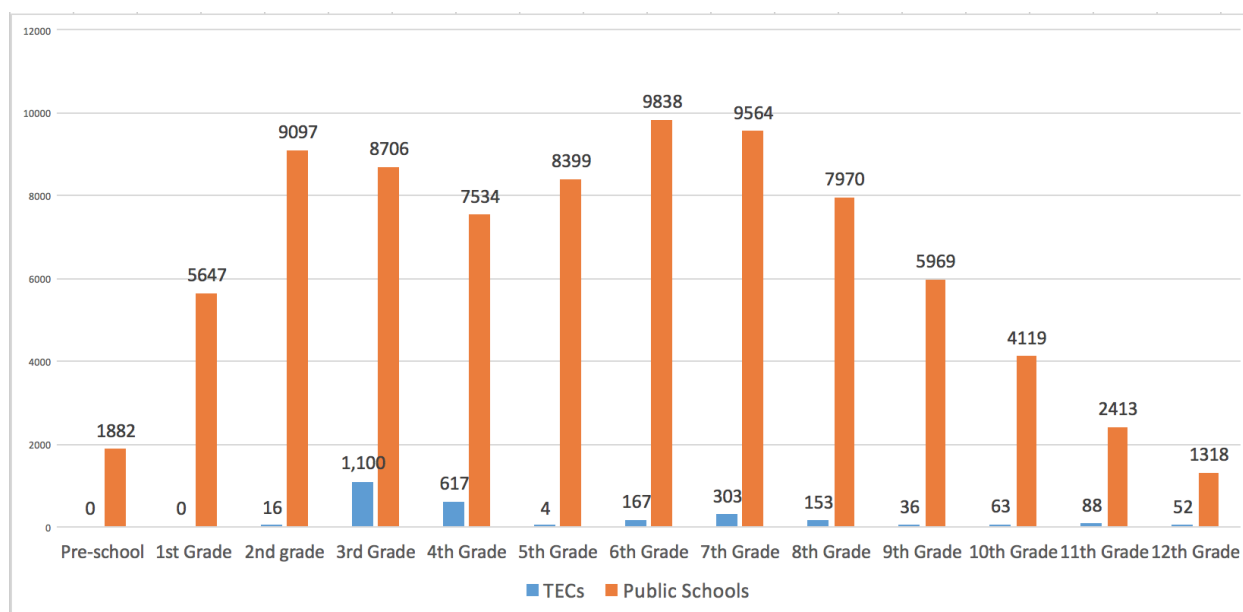
Source: MoNE GDLL (2018).

Graph 2: Syrian Children's School Enrollment in Turkey



Source: MoNE GDLL (2018).

Graph 3: Number of Syrian students with more than 10 days of non-attendance by grade level



Source: MoNE GDLL, 2018

It can be seen in Table 1, school attendance rates increased significantly in the academic year 2016-17. This was accompanied by a shift of Syrian students from TECs to Turkish public schools. This is because by the end of 2015 there was a clear understanding in the MoNE and other ministries that the Syrian refugees were not going back to their homes in the foreseeable future and started to view them as “permanent residents” instead of “temporary guests.” As it became clear that Syrian refugees would become permanent members of Turkey, the MoNE, in line with the shift in the Turkish government’s policy towards long-term development and integration, started to view temporary education centers as “transitional schools” in which Syrian children would receive preparatory education before eventually attending Turkish public schools with their Turkish peers. In August 2016 MoNE declared that all Syrian children will be integrated into Turkish public schools and announced plans to gradually close down TECs until 2020 (MoNE, 2016a). When this decision was made in 2016 there were approximately around 500 TECs in the country (E. Demirci 2018, personal communication, 29 March). Today in 2018 the number of TECs fell down to 318 (MONE GDLL, 2018). In the academic year 2016-17, Syrian children entering first, fifth, and ninth grades were not allowed to enrol in TECs; and in the academic year 2017-18 first, second, fifth, sixth, ninth and tenth grades were not allowed to enroll in TECs (Dünya Bülteni, 2016).

In September of 2017, Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education announced that all TECs would be closed down within four years (Hürriyet, 2017). During ERG’s meeting with MoNE officials on 29th March 2018, MoNE Deputy Secretary stated that in place of TECs, new centers would be established to provide

Turkish language and remedial classes to Syrian students who are academically behind their peers (E. Demirci 2018, personal communication, 29 March). Deputy Secretary expressed that integration decision in 2016 was a crucial turning point for the Turkish education policy regarding Syrian refugee children. Before then Turkish government did not see the need to integrate Syrian children into the Turkish national education system since they were expected to move back to Syria. It was after integration decision in 2016; 5 years after the first refugees arrived, MoNE started carrying out the key educational activities and providing support for the inclusion of Syrian children into the Turkish education system.

Most of the activities of the Turkish government in supporting the inclusion of Syrian children into the Turkish education system have been carried out in the scope of the **Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System** (PICTES) project under the framework of the European Union's Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) (Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, 2017). PICTES set off in October 2016 and is currently being implemented in 23 provinces of Turkey with the highest concentration of Syrian population (Figure 1) (Ibid). With a budget of €500 million (€200 million of which is allocated to school construction), PICTES grant constitutes the largest direct funding from the EU to an educational institution in Turkey (Ibid.) Although the project is normally expected to be terminated by September 2018, Turkey has communicated the need for the continuation of PICTES activities to the European Union and is currently negotiating to extend the project for another 3-5 years (E Demirci 2018, personal communication, 29 March).

Figure 1: Provinces where PICTES is implemented



Istanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa, Ankara, İzmir, Konya, Antalya, Kayseri, Adana, Mersin, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Siirt

The following are the main activities under PICTES project:

- *Turkish language courses for 390,000 in- and out-of-school Syrian children:* Learning Turkish is crucial for Syrian children; otherwise they inevitably fall behind their peers academically and feel alienated from school. This problem is acuter for older students, which is also reflected in the declining enrollment rates at the high school level. In TECs, Syrian students receive 15 hours of Turkish instruction both at the primary and secondary levels (Taştan and Çelik, 2017). As part of PICTES, 5,700 Turkish lecturers have been hired to teach Turkish to Syrian students at TECs (Ibid.). These lecturers were appointed on a temporary basis according to their KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Examination) and interview scores. The MoNE also hired 4,200 instructors, again on a temporary basis, for teaching Turkish as a second language to Syrian children in public schools. Public schools with a substantial Syrian population either offer extra-curricular Turkish language support classes to Syrian students or pull them out of some of the regular classes to teach them Turkish (YUVA and ERG 2017, focus group meeting, January, 9). However, Turkish language education provided in TECs and public schools should further be improved since there is a lack of educational materials, inadequate development of methodology, and the inexperience of teachers who are not trained to teach Turkish to non-native speakers (Coşkun and Emin, 2016). Moreover, the fact that most Syrian families cannot speak Turkish leads to communication gaps between families and schools since there are no translators in most public schools.
- *Arabic language courses:* Besides learning Turkish, it is also important that Syrian children improve skills in their native language. In line with this need, there have also been Arabic language courses for 10,000 in- and out-of-school Syrian children. Course materials for both Turkish and Arabic language courses were distributed.
- *Catch-up education and remedial/support classes:* For Syrian children at school age who for various reasons never enrolled in primary education or dropped out, catch-up courses based on Catch-up Education Program (CEP), a project implemented by MoNE and UNICEF in Turkey between 2008 and 2012, were prepared, from which 14,000 Syrian students have benefited (PICTES, n.d.). Apart from catch-up education, remedial/support classes were also launched for children who are enrolled at school but lag behind the desired level of performance for the grade they continue. The classes add up to 300 hours and run either after regular school hours on weekdays or during weekends. 20,000 Syrian children under temporary protection are reported to have received remedial classes (Ibid.).
- *Transportation services:* 40,000 students who live in the most disadvantaged areas are provided with free transportation to their schools (Ibid.). An important target of this service is girls, who because of their gender are at a double disadvantage in accessing education.

- *Provision of educational materials:* To determine the types of educational materials that students need, a needs analysis was carried out, and later approximately half million students enrolled in a public school or a TEC have been provided with stationery, textbooks and/or clothing (Ibid.). In addition to that, at the school level, educational equipment such as computers, projectors, printers and arts and sports materials were provided to around 500 schools with at least 90 Syrian students, with an expenditure of up to €15,000 per school.
- *Awareness raising for Syrian children about educational opportunities:* Meetings and seminars are held to inform children and their families about educational opportunities, who otherwise would not have been aware of the services and provisions available to them. This communication strategy involves preparation of a web site, TV spots, short films and other audio and visual tools to raise awareness.
- *Development of an examination system:* While it is important to have information regarding the level of education and performance of Syrian children and instructors, due to the conflict in their home country, many refugees do not have such necessary official documents, such as academic transcripts and performance reports. This makes it difficult to place the students to the appropriate grade at school, and also makes the recognition of the professional competency of Syrian instructors' problematic. To develop an evaluation mechanism, a protocol was signed with Directorate General for Measurement, Assessment and Examination Services; 400.000 exam kits were prepared and implemented.
- *Guidance and counseling programs:* For Syrian children who struggle with the trauma of war, guidance and counseling services at schools constitute an important part of their support mechanism. To support the mental and psychological development of children under temporary protection, 491 guidance counselors were appointed to TECs and public schools with at least 90 Syrian students. Appointed instructors were selected from among Guidance and Psychological Counseling graduates who upon their appointment received an additional training for two weeks (Ibid.).
- *Ensuring better learning environments:* For schools with at least 90 Syrian children, additional personnel were employed to ensure a suitable learning environment for all students. 900 cleaning staff were appointed in 16 provinces, and 300 security staff in 12 provinces.
- *Trainings for teachers and administrative personnel:* An orientation has been given to 15,000 instructors, Turkish and Syrian, on a variety of topics that policymakers think are important when teaching for Syrian children, such as psychological support, working with students who have experienced trauma, conflict resolution, instruction methods, guidance and counseling and other

relevant themes. Apart from the orientation program for teachers, there have also been training for the MoNE's administrative staff. Through two training sessions in Antalya province, one between 30 January and 3 February 2017 and the other between 27-31 March 2017, 2029 MoNE personnel in total were familiarised with the legal framework for Syrian children under temporary protection and other legislation that are relevant to the process of Syrian students' integration into Turkey's education system.

2. REASONS BEHIND THE GRADUAL APPROACH TOWARDS INCLUDING REFUGEES, COSTS OF DELAYS AND INCLUSION OF NON-SYRIAN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

There are number of reasons why Turkish government did not include Syrian refugee children in national public education system immediately. First of all, in the first phase of the refugee crisis starting in 2011, many analysts predicted the Syrian war would be short-lived. Therefore, Turkey's government welcomed Syrians as temporary guests and housed them in camps thought to be the best way to handle the situation. By the end of 2013, there were 20 camps on the southern border, and in those camps most children were attending school. The Turkish government led the response with support from United Nations.

When the integration decision was made in 2016, the process was decided to be gradual for a number of reasons and constraints. A major one was the inadequate infrastructure, i.e., lack of classrooms and buildings. As of May 2018, there are 976,200 school-aged children in Turkey (MoNE GDLL, 2018). Considering that there are already close to 16.5 million school-age children in Turkey (Turkstat, 2017), the inflow of close to a million Syrian children has put a big strain on the Turkish education system. This constitutes one of the reasons why the MoNE has been unable to immediately include Syrian children into the education system even after the shift in policy towards integration. It is to this end that, in addition to transferring €300 million to the MoNE for PICTES project (MoNE, 2016b), the EU has committed €200 million for education infrastructure. Lack of sufficient infrastructure has been one of the reasons why the TECs still remain open; the MoNE opt for gradually integrating Syrian students into public schools to ensure that public schools are not over-capacitated.

Lack of adequate Turkish language skills also remains one of the leading constraints that stand in the way of integration of Syrian children into the Turkish education system. Although Syrian kids who are born in Turkey have a chance to learn Turkish in a more organic way, students arriving from Syria come with varying levels

of literacy in Arabic, with many of them having little to no prior exposure to Turkish. Lack of Turkish language skills is one of the main reasons that Syrian families prefer to send their children to TECs. In order to integrate Syrian children into the national education system, the MoNE first tries to equip these students with the necessary language skills in TECs and/or via remedial and catch-up classes.

Additionally, a variety of socioeconomic and cultural factors, such as early marriage and child labor, also prevent Syrian children from accessing educational institutions in Turkey. These factors become more pervasive at the high school level, where enrollment rates plummet. Although there isn't much statistical information about early marriage, it is widely known that some families consider the early marriage of their daughters as "a way out" of their economic hardship (Guerin, 2014). Although a work permit law was regulated for international protection applicants and status holders in April 2016, the number of Syrian refugees who have been able to obtain a work permit remains very low. One of the main reasons for this is that applying for work permit also costs a considerable amount of 537.50 TRY, approximately 113 USD, which is a third of national minimum wage in Turkey (336 USD as of 19.06.2018). In order to make it easier for Syrian refugees to apply for work permit, General Directorate of International Workforce announced that work permit fees of Syrian Nationals under Temporary Protection are reduced to 200 TRY (Turkish Labor Law, 2017). Within the year of 2017 nearly 21,000 Syrians obtained work permit and started working (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018), although majority of the work permits granted are for definite time which means they need to be renewed after one year (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2016). Since majority of Syrian refugees still do not have work permit, many of them end up working in the informal sector, earn very little, and cannot afford to send their kids to school. Moreover, for such families, the extra income their teenage offsprings contribute to the overall family budget becomes crucial for survival. Thus, many Syrian children, once they become teenagers, stop going to school and work informally in order to support their families.

A program for increasing the enrollment rate of Syrian children in Turkey via a small payment, called Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE); is in place. The program implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the MoNE aims to encourage 230,000 children to attend school regularly, and as of November 2017, 137,000 Syrian had received conditional cash support through this program (UNICEF, 2017). According to the program, students attending both public schools and TECs receive 35-60 TL per month every two months depending on their gender and grade. Additionally, one-time payment of 100 TL is planned for each child per semester. Although this might boost enrollment in the short term, CCTEs must be implemented alongside strategies for increasing refugee families' total income, which constitute a more effective method for increasing school enrollment and attendance in the long term.

As MoNE Deputy Secretary stated, the biggest cost of not starting to integrate Syrian children into public schools immediately in 2012 has been the compromise on social cohesion (E. Demirci 2018, personal communication, 29 March). Due to this delay, there are many issues negatively affecting the climate in schools today such as peer bullying and discrimination rising from the social conflict between Turkish and Syrian children, inexperience of teachers in dealing with non-Turkish speaking refugee children and managing multicultural classrooms. If necessary prevention and social adaptation programs including teacher trainings had been implemented in schools starting from 2012, these issues could have been tempered. Yet as MoNE Deputy Secretary expressed there was no way to know the conflict would come to this extent and the government is caught off guard.

Although most debates on the education of refugees tend to focus on Syrian children, the situation of non-Syrian refugee and asylum seeker children in Turkey is also important. “There is very little public information regarding the educational rights and the challenges non-Syrian refugee children face in accessing education”, however (ERG, 2017). As of 2016 there was 42,221 children at school age from countries other than Syria, most of which are Afghani, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali (MoNE 2016c, personal communication, 12 December). It is important that these refugee and asylum seeker children too should be able to go to school regardless of their legal status.

3. ROLE OF NGOS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Even though the MoNE has been doing its best in order to accommodate the large influx of Syrian children whose needs vary widely, the immense size of the population at hand surpassed MoNE’s capacity in certain areas, particularly in the beginning years of the crisis, regarding providing the needed support for refugee children. This is to be expected, considering Turkey is host to 3.5 times more Syrian refugees compared to all of Europe combined (ERG, 2017). Due to the inexperience of Turkey in dealing with permanent migrants in the beginning years of the crisis, the role of local and international organizations was more prominent between the years 2012 and 2016, although non-religious or secular NGOs responded rather late when compared to faith-based NGOs, the reason of which could be that these NGOs shared the belief that Syrian refugees were only temporary guests in Turkey. Therefore until 2016 the government regulations were more flexible and open to NGOs and they were able to actively carry out education programs for Syrian children. During this time period major NGOs organized academic and psychosocial support programs for refugee children in multiple provinces. In summer 2016, Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) implemented an intensive preschool program in Istanbul to better prepare Syrian refugee children for the public school system

and integration in collaboration with the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education (Ibid.) They disseminated the program to 7 provinces in the south-east region where Syrian refugee population is high; 2.405 children, of which 1858 are Syrian, benefited from this program (AÇEV, 2017). Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (ASSAM) and Support to Life (STL) have been offering language classes in Turkish, Arabic and English in multiple cities where Syrian refugee population are particularly high. Save the Children and Maya Foundation focused more on psychosocial support and trauma-healing for refugee children through art and music. In October 2016, Maya Foundation also signed a protocol with the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Istanbul to provide psycho-art therapy to children in TECs and to organize support seminars for teachers and parents (MoNE Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education, 2016).

NGOs were able to get permissions to work with refugee children from local municipalities and sign protocols with provincial directorates of national education, however this has changed in 2017-2018 academic year when the government brought more strict regulations to NGO activities. Currently all permissions and protocols needs to be approved directly from the headquarters in Ankara. With this change many NGOs' provincial protocols were cancelled and their wide-scale activities were stopped. For example AÇEV's protocol to carry out intensive preschool programs and MAYA's protocol to organize psycho-art therapy to children in TECs were cancelled. Save the Children, which was active in TECs in Hatay, had to stop its educational activities with students and teachers. MoNE Deputy Secretary expressed that the reason NGO regulations are much more strict today is because starting with the decision of integrating Syrian children in public schools, now MoNE takes full responsibility for refugee children's education; and providing access to public schools, teachers or students to third parties is a highly sensitive issue (E. Demirci 2018, personal communication, 29 March). Therefore today many NGOs focus their activities mainly on psychosocial support rather than academic development through their small-scale, local after school programs in their community centers. There are several major NGOs such as YUVA¹, STL² and MAYA³ who were able to sign protocols with MoNE and are currently active working with refugee children and their teachers.

¹ <https://www.yuva.org.tr/en/>

² <http://www.hayatadestek.org/?lang=en>


³ <http://www.mayavakfi.org/en/>

4. CONCLUSION

Turkey's experience in accommodating Syrian refugees and integrating the children into the country's public education system is commendable. The humanitarian response in the field of education specifically is unique in two main aspects. First, the number of children under temporary protection who need to be enrolled at schools is considerably large. As such, the scale of the project aiming to integrate Syrian refugee children is incomparable to many other countries hosting refugees. Second, although the inclusion of Syrian children into Turkish public schools started rather late as they were perceived as temporary guests, once the integration project took off, the number of children enrolled at schools increased rapidly. The wide range of support activities, from Turkish language courses to catch-up classes, as well as provision of educational materials and transportation service, has been an important factor in the pace of this increase. The availability of a large, €500 million funding for these activities through the European Union can be seen as another key contributor. Together with financial support, Turkish government's open-door migration and asylum policy approach and its strong political will to welcome Syrian refugees (İçduygu, 2015) has been important for the inclusion of Syrian children in education, as this politics is reflected in the country's education policies. Lastly, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGO) in providing psychosocial support and education has also been vital.

While Turkish case represents good practice in several respects, there is still room for improvement in the process of the integration of refugee children. First, although the school enrollment rate of Syrian children saw a significant increase from 30% to 62% between the years 2014-15 and 2017-18, the number of children who are not in education is still high; as of May 2018, a third of Syrian children remain out of school. Moreover, besides enrollment, attendance is an equally important issue as children might easily be absent, or even drop out, for various reasons such as employment and early marriage. Therefore, it is important that student attendance be closely monitored via collection of accurate data.

Moreover, in addition to providing access to education, fostering an inclusive, positive school environment is equally important for children under temporary protection. This requires that Syrian children do not experience any type of discriminatory acts from administrators, teachers or peers. Yet Syrian children do report problems regarding their school environment, such as being exposed to mocking and bullying almost on a daily basis (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2015). Therefore, it is crucial that the efforts towards enabling access to schools also be made to improve the social inclusion practices in the classroom. It is not only school administrators, teachers and students that must be targeted in social integration efforts, however. Parents too play a significant role. Research showed that Turkey's welcoming approach to refugees appeared to be



unpopular among Turkish citizens living in provinces with high Syrian population (Erdoğan, 2014), which in turn led to problems in terms of social cohesion. This inevitably has implications for Syrian children's education; for example, teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms report that parents of other students do not want their children to sit together with Syrians (Istanbul Bilgi University Child Studies Unit, 2015). Therefore, efforts to integrate Syrian children into Turkish public schools should also include parents, so as to prevent the transmission of prejudice and discriminatory behaviours from these families to their children.

Last but not least, one must remember that the situation of refugee and asylum seeker children from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and other countries remains worrisome and that they too should be able to enjoy access to public education just as Syrian children under temporary protection do.

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