

Social Inequalities and Inclusion

Event Report

Migration Management of Syrians in Turkey in the framework of the EU's Migration Policy



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20 October 2015 Mersin
Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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1. Introduction

Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation – TESEV and Friedrich Naumann Foundation have organized, in collaboration with the Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry a conference titled “Migrant Management of Syrians in Turkey in the Framework of the EU Migration Policy” on October 20th, 2015 in Mersin. The opening remarks were made by Burhanettin Kocamaz, the Mayor of the Mersin Metropolitan Municipality; Şerafettin Aşut, the Chairman of the Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Prof. Dr. Aydın Uğur the Chairman of the Executive Board of TESEV. During three panels entitled as Migrant management in Turkey in the framework of the EU migration policy, Management of Syrian migrants in Turkey, and Being a Syrian migrant in Turkey, public authorities, academics, and Syrians have discussed the challenges and policy recommendations to improve Syrians’ lives and migrant management in Turkey.

2. Panels

2.1. Panel 1: Migration Management in Turkey within the framework of EU Migration Policies

Executive Director of TESEV, Dr. Özge Aktas Mazman, moderated the first panel of the conference titled “Migration Management in Turkey within the framework of EU Migration Policies.” Delegates from the public authorities took the floor and contributed to the debate. Head of Civil Society Unit at the EU Delegation Dr. Michael Rupp discussed EU’s migration policies, Syrian migrant policies, collaboration between Migration Administration and the EU Delegation as well as the impact of these factors on EU-Turkey Accession Negotiations.

Mersin local DGMM Directorate General for Migration Management Hakan Kılınc, mapped out the main pillars of migration management and right of the migrants. He stated that Syrians are also subject to general migrant rights and regulations. He pointed out that data about Syrians is not open to public access and that research on this issue is subject to prior authorization from the public authorities.

Çukurova Development Agency Secretary General Dr. Lütfi Altınsu argued that regional management of migration would prove to be more efficient. Dr. Altınsu mentioned the regional priorities listed in the Çukurova Development Agency’s social-environmental strategy and the measurements which have to be taken to strengthen local governance

bodies' capacities to tackle this issue. He shared information on the three social analysis projects they funded to improve the migration management capacity of the city. He also shared preliminary results from another research that is due to be published soon. Dr. Lütfi Altınsu highlighted that it is crucial to kick start a joint study that involves all relevant local and national level stakeholders such as Directorate General of Migration Management, think tanks such as TESEV and universities.

The last speaker of the panel, Head of Mersin Metropolitan Municipality Strategy Development Berat Yerman, put forward the demographic change in Mersin after the influx of Syrian migrants and shared the outcomes of the regional workshop they organized on the subject matter.

2.2. Panel 2: Migration Management of the Syrians in Turkey

Assist. Prof. Dr Bediz Yılmaz from Mersin University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Public Administration moderated the second panel of the conference titled "Migration Management of Syrians in Turkey." In this panel academics who conducted field study on migration from Syria shared their studies. Assoc. Prof. Murat Erdoğan, Head of Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Center presented the limitations of data collection, registration, and sharing as well as insufficient burden sharing in migration management. He also mentioned certain concerns of the business circles. Assoc. Prof. Erdogan highlighted that Ankara should be collaborating with academia in migration management. Assist. Prof. Fulya Memişoğlu from Çukurova University shared her fieldwork at the regional level and Research Assistant Arzu Kaymak from Mersin University presented her findings at the local level regarding what challenges Syrians face in Turkey.

2.3. Panel 3: Being a Syrian Migrant in Turkey

TESEV Senior Expert Bürge Elvan Erginli moderated the third session titled "Being a Syrian migrant in Turkey". In this panel a young female Syrian women rights activist and a mid-aged male Syrian entrepreneur took floor. Speakers shared their migration experience and challenges faced by Syrian migrants. Speakers also put forward solution recommendations.

2.4. Panel 4: Policy recommendations for the Management of Syrian Refugees

Research and Communication Director of TESEV Dr. İtir Akdoğan moderated the last panel titled "Policy recommendations for the Management of Syrians". Challenges and policy recommendations regarding migration management of Syrians listed below have been shared and opened to discussion during the panel. Participants and speakers contributed to the analysis.

3. Syrian Migration Management Challenges of Syrians and Solution and Policy Recommendation Analysis

Challenges and policy recommendations that came forward during the discussions

3.1 Challenges of migration management

“Turkey’s shift from a transit country to a destination country is underestimated”

- **Ineffective registration:** those who arrive and those who are born in Turkey are not efficiently registered
- **Diverted focus:** public authorities focus on the crisis solely as a matter of international relations and not as migration management
- **Biased international perception:** Turkey is perceived as a country who is in conflict with Assad not as a country who manages migration. Therefore, the crisis remains regional with limited burden sharing
- **Alternative solutions:** Migrants fill in gaps themselves in untapped areas
- **Problematic data:** data is complicated, incoherent due to differences among resources, and inaccessible
- **Lack of interaction** among various stakeholders, and with Syrians. Academy and civil society are kept away from the crisis
- **Lack of coordination** both among central government bodies and between central and local public authorities, Syrian initiatives, international organizations, and local actors
- **Ambiguous legal framework:** Syrians hold temporary guest status and the rights given via this status are ambiguous

3.2. Recommended solutions

- **Collaboration with the EU:** a holistic policy framework especially with the European Union should be developed to avoid the perception of a regional crisis
- **Inclusion** principle should be adopted in developing an integration policy
- Ministry of **Social policy** shall be established
- **Participation:** Syrians should be able to participate in decision-making processes
- **Increased coordination among institutions:** Local bodies of the Directorate General of Migration Management and local governments/municipalities, should cooperate. Public authorities, universities, and NGOs shall collaborate. Public authorities shall facilitate field work
- **Accessible data:** data resources to identify demographic and socio-economic profiles of Syrians should be developed and be open to public access

3.3 Syrians' Problems

Since the main focus of this conference was migration management, throughout the panels the aim was to find solutions for the shortcomings of migration management in Turkey. However, challenges faced by Syrian migrants on a daily basis came out during the discussion. Following is what Syrians and academics listed as challenges:

- Health
- Education – Shortcomings in access to education – Only 1/3 has access
- Work life – the limitations of official working permit, child labor
- Human trafficking
- Language
- Syrians have to find their own solutions to their problems
- Fraud, human rights violations
- Concerns of the local population caused by the ambiguity of Syrian migrants status and future
- Prejudices, rumors
- Mobility problems
- Differences in procedures – ex: Difference in procedural arrangements in the airports
- Vehicle Import prohibition
- Insurance problems
- Discrimination – Impunity of racism and hate speech

4. Conclusion

We see from what public authorities, academics and Syrians have shared that there has been extensive work on Syrian migration management in many levels and institutions. There is however, lack of cooperation and lack of interface among various actors. This situation creates a number of challenges. In order to address these challenges there is an urgent need to develop a migration management policy and implementation plan that is participatory and inclusive.