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Post-2014 migrants' access to housing,
employment and other crucial resources
in small- and medium-sized towns and rural
areas

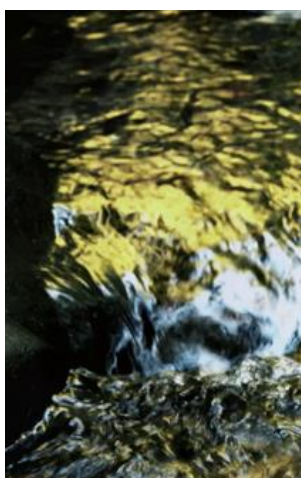
in Turkey

Country Reports on integration



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REPORT
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Abstract

This report looks at post-2014 migrants' access to housing, employment, and other relevant resources in different small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Turkey. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the three selected municipalities, it provides an overview of 1) the concrete barriers that post-2014 migrants are facing in relation to housing and employment; 2) the local actors who are involved in, and/or seen as responsible for, facilitating their access; 3) any concrete local measures or practices that help or hinder this access; and 4) the specific target groups of these measures, initiatives or practices. The report finds that there have been overarching similarities among these three localities in spite of their different characteristics in terms of size, political affiliation, experience of cultural diversity and structural factors. The national understanding of migration management in the course of rising centralization in Turkey seems to limit the responses of the local to the migration issue. However, at the same time, behind the overall passivity of the local authorities with different political affiliations, the motivations to be so are quite different as observed during the interviews. Based on the findings from the fieldwork, it is safe to state that in spite of different political affiliations, the active passivity of the municipalities has been found as common yet the reasons behind such active passivity may be diverse. Turkish examples make us also question the assumed positive relation between the diversity and the better integration in localities according to the Whole-Comm typology. The spheres of employment and housing in Turkey suffer from certain structural contradictions, such as high informality and super-exploitation or the lack of public policies for social housing. Nevertheless, the urban-rural divide in the Turkish cases is found to be significant for explaining the limited differences between the diverse migrant/refugee groups' access to housing and employment. We also believe that the differences in access to employment in the three cases seem to be closely related to the state of leading economic sectors in each locality. When it comes to housing, the right to property ownership emerges as a significant determinant in Turkey. While those under temporary protection are not allowed to buy houses for their own, those with other types of residence permits can buy real estate, mostly in return for citizenship. This brings us to the issue of class differences between migrant/refugee groups, as the class status may determine the migrant status in a very dramatic way in Turkey.



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Abbreviations

CCTE	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
HCWG	Harmonization and Communication Working Groups
HSA	Humanitarian and Social Assistance
IP	International Protection
PDMM	Provincial Directorate of Migration Management
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
RA	Rural Area
SASFs	Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations
ST	Small Town
TEC	Temporary Education Centers
TP	Temporary Protection



1. Introduction

Whole-COMM focuses on small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas (SMsTRA) in eight European and two non-European countries that have experienced and dealt with the increased arrival and settlement of migrants after 2014. More particularly, the research project explores how these communities have responded to the presence of “post-2014 migrants”¹, that is, which policies have been developed and implemented and how these policies shape and enable migrant integration. Taking an innovative Whole-of-Community research approach which conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making, Whole-COMM pays particular attention to the interactions between multiple actors involved in local integration governance (for example, individuals, public and non-public organizations, institutions and/or corporate entities). Moreover, the project looks at the embeddedness of local actors in multilevel frameworks in which regional, national and EU policies and stakeholders may play a decisive role in shaping local integration policymaking, considering both potential collaborations as well as tensions between actors at different government levels.

Work Package Four (WP4) focuses on local policies, initiatives, and practices addressing post-2014 immigrants’ access to housing, employment and other crucial resources or services.

Following the Whole-comm approach, we assume that the multiple actors involved in integration and community-making processes may have different interests, strategies, resources, and power positions; and that mutual adjustment (between newcomers and long-term residents) and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the only/overall rationale guiding their various efforts; instead, the interplay between different actors (and their various interests and rationales) may also lead to exclusion and inequality. This interplay and the resulting measures can thus be analyzed in terms of what Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer call the ‘politics of’, or ‘negotiation around’, ‘(dis)integration’². As these authors point out, integration/disintegration or cohesion/fragmentation should not be understood as simple

¹ The group of migrants that arrived in (Western) Europe after 2014 is very heterogeneous, “but mostly comprises migrants that left from areas of political and humanitarian crises” (Working Paper 1 2021, 1-2). The majority of ‘post-2014 migrants’ entered thus as asylum-seekers but may have obtained different legal statuses by now (see for more detail Working Paper 1 for the Whole-COMM project).

² Collyer M., Hinger S., Schweitzer R. (2020) Politics of (Dis)Integration – An Introduction. In: Hinger S., Schweitzer R. (eds) Politics of (Dis)Integration. IMISCOE Research Series. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25089-8_1



binary categorizations but as processes that are intertwined and often coexist within and across policies and everyday practices.

By looking at how a wide range of actors (private actors, civil society actors and street level bureaucrats) foster but sometimes also hinder migrants' access to adequate housing, work and other crucial resources or services, we hope to better understand (and be able to compare) these local politics of (dis)integration across different local and national contexts.

The choice of focusing on housing and employment follows two main rationales. First, they are key resources for granting fundamental rights and sustainable integration. Second, they are not exclusively dependent on local administrations but involve a diverse range of actors, thus allowing us to fully apply the whole-of-community approach. Housing is (partly or, in some cases, almost completely) in the hands of private actors, from big owners (including banks and international investment funds) to small ones. Work depends on employers, which again are very diverse ranging from big to small (including family) employers, from private to public employers and across different economic sectors. In both cases, between migrants and these private actors, we find a broad range of intermediaries (CSOs, trade unions, real estate agencies, civil society organizations, social networks, etc.) and a diverse (and sometimes even contradictory) set of policies and programs (at the national, regional, and local levels). Apart from housing and employment, WP4 is also interested in local policies, initiatives or practices that affect post-2014 migrants' access to other relevant resources and services, which might be specific to each national context.

To assess the role (and understand the interplay) of the different actors in relation to migrants' access to housing, work, and other services and resources, WP4 identifies and analyses:

- major **obstacles/challenges** that are reported to exist in each locality for post-2014 migrants, particularly focusing on those that are perceived as being particular to each locality;
- the **actors** (public, private, and civil society) involved, and their concrete role (e.g., as initiator, promoter, implementer, critic, etc. of a concrete policy, initiative, or practice).
- concrete **local policies, initiatives, and practices** that intend/help to overcome these obstacles. There might also be certain policies, initiatives and practices that have exclusionary effects (whether intended or unintended) and thus aggravate existing obstacles and inequalities in terms of access to adequate housing and employment.
- the **target groups of local policies, initiatives, or practices**: who is entitled to particular services and how is this entitlement justified³. This question will allow us to delve into

³ When explaining who is the target of a specific policy or practice, also those who are excluded (e.g., because they are covered by other policies or because they are simply left out or perceived as less vulnerable) are automatically identified (whether implicit or explicitly).



the main deservingness frames regarding migrants' access to housing, employment and other key resources and services.

1.1. Methodology

The cases for the research project were selected based on a set of variables, namely:

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Unemployment level	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARUN)
AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2005 and 2014
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: East / West or North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)

The variables 'SF2005', 'VARUN' and 'VARNI' were used to identify **four** types of localities:

Type	Characteristics	Selected cases in Turkey
ST East Marmara ("revitalizing/better-off" locality)	Recovering local economy and improving demographic profile, migrants' settlement before 2014	Small town in Eastern Marmara Region (ST East Marmara)



ST Central Anatolia (locality "in transition")	Improving economic and demographic situation, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Small town in Central Anatolian Region (ST Central Anatolia)
Type C ("marginal" locality)	Demographic and economic decline, migrants' settlement before 2014	N/A
RA Mediterranean ("left-behind" locality)	Economic and demographic decline, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Rural area in Mediterranean Region (RA Mediterranean)

1.2. Note on Turkish Cases

In this report we share the findings from research carried out in Turkey that has focused on three localities of different types, which will be introduced in Section 2.2. In Turkey the most important differentiation between municipalities with regards to size is whether they constitute metropolitan municipalities. According to the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities (no. 5216, dated 2004), provinces that host more than 750,000 inhabitants can be classified as metropolitan municipalities. The lowest population threshold for constituting a municipality for administrative purposes is 5000 inhabitants (Law on Municipalities, no. 5393, dated 2005). Other than that, there are no set administrative criteria to further classify municipalities with inhabitants between 5000 and 750,000. Given the average size of most towns across Turkey, especially those being impacted by migration, in the Turkish case the classification of population sizes used in the Whole-Comm project had to be slightly amended with 50,000-150,000 being considered a small town and 150,000-350,000 being considered a medium-size town.

Post-2014 migrants are diverse in terms of religious, ethnicity and country of origin as well as their migrant status in these three localities. In our research, the post-2014 migrants refer to Syrians under temporary protection⁴ who have arrived in Turkey before and after 2014 in massive numbers (2014 is not a breaking point for Turkey in terms of massive influx of migrants/refugees' arrival), and to asylum-seekers and refugees under international protection⁵ from different countries of origin, who have arrived after 2014 in Turkey. Post-2014 migrants can also be those with residence permits (short-term residence permit for those who have immovable property, for those who establish business/make trade or for

⁴ The protection that is granted to Syrian nationals who have arrived at or crossed Turkish borders in large groups is "temporary protection" defined based on the international literature. It gives Syrians the right to stay and the right to access to health, education, social assistance, psychological support and labor market.

⁵ Applicants and/or beneficiaries of international protection have the rights to access to education and health as well as the right to work with various types of work permit, including exemption certificates.



those who like to stay for touristic reasons). In other words, the 2014-migrants also includes those non-citizens with residence permits and those buying property in order to acquire Turkish citizenship, as this is the case for the ST East Marmara.

While Syrians in every ST East Marmara are mainly under temporary protection status, a small part of them has also residence permit. For instance, in RA Mediterranean, post-2014 migrants are only composed of Syrians under temporary protection. In ST Central Anatolia, Syrians under temporary protection, Afghans and Iranian under international protection form the majority of post-2014 migrants. While Syrians are the most crowded group, followed by Afghans and Iranians, foreigners with residence permit from other countries of origin are in small number in the ST Central Anatolia. In the ST East Marmara, it is Iraqi people who form the majority which is followed by Iranians, other Arab-speaking countries, Syrians and Afghans. ST East Marmara is also a host to different sects and religious groups from Arab-speaking countries while the ST Central Anatolia has a Christian Iranian community seeking for asylum.

We observe that the post-2014 migrants are generally not differentiated by their legal status in the public perception but mostly are understood wholesale as “foreigners”. This is how our interviewees framed their opinions about them during the interviews. We also use the term “local” to describe Turkish citizens living in the localities selected for the fieldwork. 45 interviews were made between December 2021 and February 2022. While there was only one interview made online, the rest was conducted face-to-face.



2. Context & Cases

2.1. General information on the relevant national and regional context/s

2.1.1. General Information on the Housing Issue in National Context

According to September, 2021 data of the National Address Database, TURKSTAT the total number of real estates in Turkey has reached 40.2 million. However, price increases (157.2 percent for luxury real estates and 163.1 percent for low-cost houses in June, 2022 compared to June, 2021) in the housing market in Turkey has been the major problem that comes to the fore.⁶ Published annually since 2014, the data revealed by the Income and Living Conditions Survey (TURKSTAT, 2020) point to the regular decrease in the rate of home ownership and the regular increase in the rate of tenants. The home ownership rate, which was announced as 61.1 percent in 2014, was calculated as 58.8 percent in 2019 and 57.8 percent in 2020. Likewise, the tenant rate, which was 22.1 percent in 2014, increased to 25.6 percent in 2019 and 26.2 percent in 2020. The number of tenants in Turkey was stated as 21 million 451 thousand in 2020.

On the other hand, TURKSTAT data also reveal a decrease in house sales. In this regard, house sales decreased by 0.5 percent in 2021 compared to the previous year and amounted to 1.491.856. Apart from this, house sales to foreigners in Turkey increased by 43.5 percent in 2021 compared to the previous year and were announced as 58.576. The rate of house sales to foreigners among the total house sales in 2021 was 3.9 percent. Foreigners who buy real estate worth a minimum of 400,000 USD are granted a pathway to citizenship.⁷

Bahcesehir University Center for Economic and Social Research (BETAM) report (2021) also reveals important data in terms of rent increase rate and rental housing supply. Comparing the data for July 2020 and July 2021 indicates that the average rental advertisement square meter value throughout the country was 15.4 TL in July 2020, while it reached 19.8 TL in July 2021. Finally, social housing constitutes another dimension of the housing issue in Turkey. As of 2021, the construction of 898.570 houses, together with their social and technical equipment, was completed by the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in Turkey. Again, within the scope of the Social Housing Program by TOKİ, 80.000 houses are planned to be produced by the end of 2021, while this

⁶ <https://betam.bahcesehir.edu.tr/2022/09/sahibindex-satilik-konut-piyasasi-gorunumu-eylul-2022/>

⁷ The phrase 250,000 in the 20th article of the regulation on the Implementation of the Turkish Citizenship Law, which was put into force by the decision of the Council of Ministers in 2010, has been changed to 400,000. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2022/05/20220513-20.pdf>



number is foreseen as 50.000 for 2022. Applicants for social houses *must be* Turkish citizens with low household income (not more than YTL 10.000, euro 561⁸) who do not have any other real estate. The retirees, the handicapped and the families of martyrs are the other categories privileged for application. Given that, post-2014 migrants have no access to social housing (apart from being renters) unless they become Turkish citizens.

In Turkey, there is no public policy to regulate housing issue for the migrant populations. Syrians under temporary protection are not eligible for buying houses. Foreigners except from those under IP have dispersed throughout Turkish provinces based on their own priorities (kinship ties, economic opportunities) leading to highly concentrated migrant population in certain metropolises and provinces. A recent change entitled the “de-concentration plan” was made in late February. The Ministry of Interior stated that foreign nationals will not be granted residency in locations where the number of foreigners make up more than 25 percent of the local population. The plan has now been implemented across Turkey to solve certain problems, such as ghettoization and segregation of refugees, their adaptation to social life, the coordination of social services and security issues. According to the new plan, except for newborn registration and nuclear family reunification, foreigners are not allowed to concentrate in certain neighborhoods, and if it happens those locations are closed to the further settlement of foreign nationals. Moreover, in areas where foreigners make up for a large portion of the local population, they will voluntarily be sent back to the province in which they were originally registered. ST East Marmara was among the first 16 provinces being closed to foreigners. Following that, the de-concentration plan started also being implemented in ST Central Anatolia and D. As of July 1, 2022, the Ministry announced that the number of closed neighborhoods has been increased to 1169 in Turkey.⁹ Even the de-concentration plan has been dubbed as “The fight against spatial concentration”, it is safe to say that migrants are used as a political tool by the government to ease the citizens’ reactions against migrants. **The lack of regulation for migrants/refugees’ access to housing on a national level and the de-concentration plan shape the general situation regarding housing issue for the migrants/refugees in three locations in a similar way.**

2.1.2. General Information on the Employment Issue in National Context

⁸ These estimates were calculated building on the currency rate in May, 2022.

⁹ <https://www.goc.gov.tr/mahalle-kapatma-duyurusu-hk2>



Turkish economy has been traditionally characterized by high rate of informality which pushes one out of three workers into informal labor force (Uysal, 2020)¹⁰. The pandemic and economic regression impact on unemployment rates leading to 700.000 job loss since 2018 (ILO, 2021) and unemployment in 2021 was worse than the first months of the pandemic (DISK-AR, 2021). While only three people out of ten have full-time and formal employment, broad unemployment rate is 22.6 percent. It is 29.1 percent for women and 41 percent for youth.¹¹ The number of young people who are neither in education nor in employment rose from 21.9 percent (2018) to 23.5 percent in a short time, and unemployment figures from 20.3 percent (2018) to 25.4 percent (2019). This picture, which has become more pessimistic with the COVID-19 epidemic, has increased the number of young people who are neither in education nor in employment to 27.1 percent (November, 2020). According to ILO, 77 percent of Turkish youth and 61 percent of refugee youth stated that COVID-19 negatively affected their job search. Young people say that the jobs they can apply for have decreased, and the negative feedback on their job applications has increased (ILO, 2020)¹².

Given this, access to employment remains as one of the main needs of the population at large (Sivis, 2021)¹³. Yet, high inflation and deepening economic crisis have been the new normal for Turkey that bring competition over the limited jobs between the host community and migrant groups. In other words, race to the bottom characterize the labor markets both for these two sides. In this context, the majority of post-2014 migrants/refugees work informally and under precarious conditions. **That is why, based on the preliminary findings, the major problem for migrant/refugee groups is not lack of access to employment but rather access to decent work with minimum wage, social security and basic workers' rights.**

Compared to the access to housing, access to employment has been subject to more regulation for the post-2014 migrants/refugees, though again on a national level. Regarding formal employment, Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees under Temporary Protection (2016) provides the framework for employment. Foreigners are required to obtain a work

¹⁰ Uysal, G. 2020/3. Informal Employment during the Covid Pandemic. TESEV Briefs.

¹¹ <http://disk.org.tr/2022/05/calisabilir-64-milyonun-sadece-208-milyonu-kayitli-tam-zamanli-istihdamda/>

¹² <https://www.ilo.org/ankara/areas-of-work/youth-employment/lang--tr/index.htm>

¹³ Sivis, S. 2021. Integrating Bottom-up into Top-down: The Role of Local Actors in Labour Market Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey. *International Migration*. Vol 59: Issue 4.



permit before starting to work. Work permit is provided by the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. Foreigners under international protection and temporary protection are entitled to apply for a work permit after 6 months have passed since their identity cards were issued. Application for work permit will be made by employers themselves. The application will be made online through the e-Government portal, by selecting the module reserved for foreigners under temporary protection. One can call ALO 170 or apply to Provincial Directorate of Turkish Public Employment Agency (TPEA) for more detailed information about work permit or the rules regarding working. The fee (TRY 372,20) for employing Syrian employees is relatively less than the fees (TRY 850,10) for other work permits issued to foreigners. However, the number of issued permits for Syrians between 2016-2019 was only 132,497 considering the large numbers of Syrians at working age, 2.1. million (Kirisci and Uysal Kolasin, 2019 in Sivis, 2020: 192). That is why, it is estimated that 750.000-1.000.0000 Syrians are in informal economy (Sivis, 2020).

Employment agencies nationally give exemption certificates to those (predominantly Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans under international protection) who are working in the agriculture and husbandry. These “exemption certificates” are issued by the TPEA in every province. The certificates guarantee these groups’ formal employment without getting the work permit. However, the migrants/refugees have to have for six months waiting period to be able to apply for exemption certificate (Revel, 2020) and the requirement on making an application from province where applicant is first registered de-motivate them to apply for the certificates. In addition, in the cases of formal employment with exemption certificates, cash assistance scheme (ESSN and CCTE) will no longer be available for these groups who are the main groups in practice receiving these assistances. Finally, the unclarity about whether workers with the certificate will have the right to the pension (in Turkey or Syria) is another discouraging factor (Sivis, 2020).

Yet the labor shortage has been quite problematic so that in 2021, Turkey Breeding Sheep and Goat Breeders' Central Union (TÜDKİYEB) announced that "50 thousand shepherds are needed and it is not possible to find a shepherd to work for a minimum of 5000 TL.". Association President said, “We want to import Afghan shepherds. We discussed the issue with the Minister of Agriculture. He is also very keen on the Afghan shepherd issue. So much so that they even discussed the issue of work permits with the Minister of Interior.”¹⁴

After six months of residence in Turkey, Syrians can also benefit from the services of TPEA, such as counseling, job matching and/or skills training. The Ministry of National Education provides vocational training and apprentices schemes to the Syrians. The language requirements for participation to vocational training and apprentices’ schemes are recently

¹⁴ <http://turkiyekoyunkeci.org/tr/HaberIcerikDetay/50-bin-coban-acigina-afgan-cozumu/60149>



omitted to increase motivation. Syrians under temporary protection can start and develop their own businesses. Those who run their own businesses have to follow the same tax policy as the Turkish citizens.

In order to foster Syrians participation to the formal employment, the Exit Strategy has been developed by national authorities in connection with the call for the second tranche of EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT). The Exit Strategy mainly targets cash support program entitled the ESSN (Emergency Social Safety Net).¹⁵ In this sense, the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services has made interventions through its international labor force directorate (DG ILF) and TPEA. The beneficiaries of the ESSN (167,000 Syrians) cash program are the main targets of the program to be adapted to formal employment while decreasing their needs for financial support. The exit strategy is composed of three main components: (i) active labor market programs, (ii) support the private sector and (iii) harmonization/social cohesion. Regarding the final component, the Eleventh National Development Plan (2019-2023) addresses harmonization¹⁶ based on “Harmonization Strategy and Action Plan” and therefore, defines one of the six thematic areas of the strategy as access to the labor market.

2.2. Small Town in the East Marmara Region

Our first case is in the North-western part of Turkey, the East Marmara Region, which has a population of over 8 million inhabitants, corresponding to almost 10% of the entire population. Of its 8 provinces, half have a population ranging from 900.000 to 3 million, the other half from 200.000 and 400.000. The region is located between Turkey’s two most

¹⁵ The ESSN Program provides cash assistance to more than 1.5 million refugees living in Turkey through a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society and with funding from the European Union (EU). Every month, each family member receives 155 TL (euro 8.3), enabling them to decide for themselves how to cover essential needs like rent, transport, bills, food and medicine. The program offers additional quarterly top-ups based on family size. The ESSN is the largest humanitarian program in the history of the EU and the largest program ever implemented by the IFRC. <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn>

¹⁶ Turkish authorities do not use the term “integration” yet instead introduce the term “*uyum*” (harmonization). The aim of *uyum* is to “facilitate mutual harmonization between foreigners, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and the society as well as to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be independently active in all areas of social life without the assistance of third persons in Turkey or in the country to which they are resettled or in their own country” (Article 96, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, no. 6458).



populated provinces, Istanbul and Ankara, and has been a dynamic region with its relatively vibrant economy. The East Marmara region is one of the wealthiest regions in Turkey and unemployment levels in 2021 stood at 9.6%, being below the 12% national average. Yet diversity in economic activities from manufacturing industry to agricultural production and tourism causes certain economic disparities among the provinces in the region. From the late 19th century onwards, the region has been hosting many migrants and refugees arriving from former Ottoman territories in the Balkans and Caucasus and has also attracted internal migrants arriving from Northern and Eastern regions of the country since the mid-20th century. In 2021, the region hosted around 150,000 foreigners, including residence and/or work permit holders and non-Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees under International Protection, which corresponds to 2.1% of the region's population, being the same as the national average. Syrians under Temporary Protection are reported separately from the national statistics on foreigners. By April 2022 the region hosted 275,000 Syrians, accounting for 3.3% of the regional population, which is below the national average of 4.4%.

Situated in the East Marmara region, the first case is a small size town with a population between 100.000 - 150.000 inhabitants. It is located in a province that over the course of the past 15 years, the period covered in this research, has observed annual population growth rates that are substantially higher than the national average. Unemployment levels remained slightly above the national average in 2008 and 2013. Local politics in this case is characterized by a clear divide, with the social democrats (Republican People's Party, hereafter CHP) and the conservative ruling party (Justice and Development Party, hereafter AKP) having very close votes. Over the last decade, the province has seen a significant rise in the share of foreigner residents. While in 2007 this share was very close to the national average, in 2021 this figure peaked to almost 10 times the national average. The province is also host to different refugee groups, including Syrians under the status of Temporary protection and more significantly diverse national groups of asylum-seekers under the status of International Protection (IP), being among the provinces hosting the highest concentration of IP status holders in Turkey. ST East Marmara has had a dynamic housing sector in which foreign investors seeking for citizenship overlaps with citizens selling real estates. The majority of the foreign population has been the Iraqis, while Iranian follows as second.

Diverse foreigner groups with different class backgrounds live in the ST East Marmara. Such diversity marks spatial differentiation too. The ST East Marmara has been one of the destinations for foreigners who want to become Turkish citizens via buying real estates which must be worth minimum \$250.000. Recently, the property value threshold for citizenship acquisition rose from 250 thousand dollars to 400 thousand dollars¹⁷. In this sense, the locality

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-61432863>



is different from other two cases, as its dynamic housing market has been primarily dominated by wealthy foreigners who can afford such purchases and who mainly come from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The foreign real estate agencies (some work informally without legal permit to run a real estate agency) have strengthened their position in the housing market in return too. One should say that such dynamism does not bring investment to the city, it has rather created a rentier economy.

Such demand in the housing market triggers locals to change the neighborhoods they live in, as they sell their houses located especially at the coast. Local landowners selling their old houses located at seacoast move to the new buildings in the neighborhoods away from the city center. Many interviewees agree on the fact that the sales have been overpriced. Even though, some of the buildings are old and not renewed according to earthquake legislation¹⁸, they are still sold from three times to five times more than the market price. Nevertheless, the buyers think that they are making a good business, expecting urban renewal projects would double their investments.

Middle and upper-middle class foreigners (generally with residential permit/citizenship) live in one single neighborhood (referring to A neighborhood), the locals call it “Arabistan (Arabs’ Land in Turkish), Iraqi Neighborhood or The Republic of Iraq”. The residents of the neighborhood come from different countries (Iraq, Iran, Gulf Countries and Syria). As mentioned, the real estate market is dynamic, for example, there are currently no houses left for sale in A neighborhood. The average rent is YTL 3000 (euro 178). A Neighborhood is quite different from another one called “Migrant Neighborhood” located in the city center. It was a social housing project funded by European financial sources for Balkan migrants who arrived in several waves to the ST East Marmara, while the biggest wave was during the 1980s. There were negative local reactions against these migrants acquiring houses at the time.

While wealthy foreigners buying real estate tend to live in the city center, other migrants/refugees, who are not able to afford high rents, search for places to live either in the districts of the ST East Marmara or in the peripheral neighborhoods of the province, such as the one where the Roma community lives. This collapsed neighborhood, under the scope of an upcoming urban renewal project is now hosting alongside its Roma inhabitants the migrants/refugees who are economically struggling. There is no homelessness in the city,

¹⁸ ST East Marmara is located in the earthquake region where the 1999 Earthquake happened killing more than 17.000 people and leaving 500.000 homeless. However, not all of the residences have been renewed, yet making accommodation risky in the locality.



nevertheless the housing conditions for these segments of the migrant population are not always decent.

On another note, the research team was also told by several interlocutors that refugees under international protection may prefer to live in the ST East Marmara, even though being registered to Istanbul, because it is less expensive to live and thanks to the ferries, it is easy to travel between the two.

According to the national de-concentration plan, the ST East Marmara has been closed to registration of new foreigners/migrants/refugees due to the existing high numbers of foreigners that exceeds the determined quotas. For instance, *A Neighborhood* is one of those closed neighborhoods. Apart from the implementation of national legislation, several interviewees underline the problem of rising rents in the locality. Several interviewees further stated that rising rents push local people out of city center and into the peripheries of the province.

2.3. Small Town in Central Anatolian Region

Our second case is in the Central Anatolia Region, which is considered as the heartlands of Turkey and has a population of over 4 million, making up 4.9% of the entire national population. The region is the fourth least populated one among the 12 statistical regions of Turkey. Of its 8 provinces, only one has a population close to 1.5 million, with the remaining ranging between 200.000 and 500.000. Although the pace of rural-urban internal migration has relatively slowed down, the region continues to observe both rural-urban and inter-urban migration for economic and educational purposes. Services, construction, and agricultural sectors are among the leading economic activities in the region, while the industrial sector is concentrated mainly in the Kayseri province, the only metropolitan area in the region. Unemployment levels in the region in 2021 stood at 13%, being just above the 12% national average. The Central Anatolian region hosts 66,000 foreigners and asylum-seekers/refugees under IP, making 1.6% of the population, being under the 2.1% national average. It also hosts just over 120,000 Syrians under temporary protection, making close to 3% of the regional population, which is also below the national average of 4.4%.

The second case examined is also a small size town with a population between 100.000 - 150.000 inhabitants. The annual population growth rates at the provincial level reflect the broader trends in the Central Anatolian region, which had mostly remained well below the national average over the last 15 years, though in 2021 it rose closer to the national average. In contrast, unemployment levels have remained lower than the national average in 2008 and 2013. In terms of local politics, the conservative AKP party has a stronghold in this case, which is closely followed by the nationalists (Nationalist Movement Party, hereafter MHP, currently



the coalition party of ruling government). Over the last 15 years the share of foreigner residents in the province has remained consistently just slightly above the national average. The percentage of Syrians under Temporary Protection is almost the same as the national average and asylum seekers with IP status also have an important presence in the province, which like ST East Marmara was among the earliest satellite cities in Turkey for hosting asylum-seekers.

In ST Central Anatolia, post-2014 migrants/refugees have access to accommodation yet in precarious conditions. While there is limited settlement in the villages as well as in the districts, the majority stays in the city center. Post-2014 Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans live in city center but in segregated slum areas scheduled for urban renewal, especially in five neighborhoods. The owners of these houses had previously moved to other neighborhoods with better housing conditions. Today, the poorest strata of the locals and migrants share the same neighborhoods. Post-2014 migrants/refugees tend to live together as extended families in different flats of a single building or as two families sharing a single flat.

While no official real estate agency helps post-2014 migrants/refugees to find housing, but migrant networks and support of pro-migrant NGOs do so in finding houses. Landowners seem to take advantage of renting derelict flats to migrants that are not in good conditions at all. Some interviewees comment on that if the houses were not rented to migrants, they would be empty since no local people would accept to live under these conditions.

Several interviewees state that there exists a pattern of spatial concentration in ST Central Anatolia. The migrant neighborhoods are in central areas that have not undergone urban renewal yet and are therefore derelict. The pre-existing presence of relatives and a local community is the reason for them to choose these areas. Besides the presence of relatives/networks, being close to city center where one may access to daily job opportunities and schools, cheaper rents and socialization are the other reasons for migrants/refugees to stay in deteriorated areas. For instance, overall rent is around YTL 400-500 (euro 23-29) in migrant neighborhoods, while it is YTL 2500-3000 (euro 146-176) in other relatively better neighborhoods. The rents in better neighborhoods can rise up to YTL 5000 (euro 293). Or instead of living in the TOKI houses (social houses not located in the city center) with better heating and accommodation conditions, refugees prefer living in the city center. The rents are relatively higher at the TOKI houses (YTL 600-700, euro 32-41), the number of migrants/refugees living there is low and finally, they are away from Workers' Bazaar (day labor/er markets) to find daily jobs.

2.4. Rural Area in Mediterranean Region



Our third case is in the Mediterranean region, covering the entirety of Turkey's southern coastline and with a population of close to 11 million, corresponding to 13 % of Turkey's entire population. The region has 8 provinces, 5 having a population between 1 to 2.5 million. The region's provinces are diverse in socio-economic development levels and the average annual equivalized household disposable income is the fourth lowest within the 12 regions. The services, agriculture and industry are respectively the main economic sectors. There are three free trade zones that make the region a dynamic hub for export. Its eastern provinces are among the primary agricultural regions of Turkey with significant seasonal labor migration, including also increasingly more foreign migrant groups. Still unemployment levels in this region in 2021 was also 13.2 percent, being just above the 12 percent national average. There are close to 220 thousand registered foreigners residing in the region, which accounts for around 2% of the total population as in the East Marmara region, though the vast majority (60%) are settled in Antalya province. Also, the Syrian refugee population is considerably much higher in this region. In April 2022, just over 1 million Syrians were registered in the region, accounting for 10% of the regional population. At the regional level, it hosts the second largest number of Syrians after the Southeast Anatolia region, bordering Syria.

The third case is situated in the rural countryside of a mid-size town in the Mediterranean region. The population of the mid-size town is close to 350.000, while the focused areas for our research are limited to the certain villages hosting large numbers of Syrians as seasonal agricultural laborers. The mid-size town is located in a province in which over the last decade the annual population growth rate has remained very close to the national average, while unemployment levels have steadily remained slightly above the national average in 2008 and 2013. In terms of local politics, at both the provincial and district level, the nationalists (MHP) have maintained a stronghold in this locality. Over the last decade however, the social democrats (CHP) have also been ascending in power. Over the last 15 years, the share of foreigner residents in the province has remained close to the national average. However, as noted this figure excludes Syrians under Temporary Protection, who constitute today more than 10% of the provincial population, being among the highest concentrations in Turkey. Asylum-seekers under IP status, on the other hand, remain much lower than the national average as well as in comparison to the two other regions.

Fertile land and rich sources of water make possible a year-round production in RA Mediterranean. Availability of employment opportunities historically pulls migrants to the locality, as happened in the case of post-2014 migrants. Housing conditions, showing again historical continuum, are poor in rural areas for seasonal agricultural laborers, therefore, for Syrian seasonal agricultural laborers too.

Syrians do not live in the villages, one may find only one or two people with their families employed as permanent farmhand to take care of the household and land, while the vast



majority doing agricultural work live in tent areas. “Rural ghettos” (Pelek, 2020)¹⁹ are characterized with lack of infrastructure (water, electricity, sewerage). Even though Syrians in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean primarily and dominantly deal with agricultural work for 12 months a year, they live in tent settlements. In other words, while their work is permanent there, their housing patterns are quite precarious. Syrian labor force replaced with the Kurdish one after massive influx of Syrians to Turkey, and they generally share the same housing conditions. In the rural areas of RA Mediterranean, there are 16 tent areas. Where they exactly locate can show difference: on private land; next to irrigation channels belonging to State Hydraulic Works (DSI), in the fields or next to the main roads. Regardless of the ownership of the lands, a street level bureaucrat states that each household is required to pay YTL 1000 (euro 53,8) to the village headmen to be used on behalf of the local community.

Housing conditions as such refers to an isolation or very limited interaction with the local communities as (1) the fields where the Syrian workers are employed are far from the public places (far from hospitals, markets, schools) (2) local people’s reactions towards the Syrians are not welcoming and inclusive (3) migrants cannot overcome the language barrier, as they live in isolation, a very limited number are able to speak in Turkish. Housing patterns deepen the inequalities in access to education (low rate of schooling) and health (right to vaccination is not known). Some of the interviewees comment on the identification card issue too, saying there are unregistered Syrians among the workers living in tent areas.

On the other hand, those leaving tents (if they succeed certain accumulation) to move to the peripheral neighborhoods of RA Mediterranean rent flats in bad conditions from Kurdish landowners who previously migrated to the RA Mediterranean due to their forced migration. The rents there change from YTL 300-500 (euro 17-28). Shanty town areas developed through Kurdish migrations before and after the 1980s, is today occupied by Syrians. Syrians live in previously empty, ruin-like houses in shanty town areas where Arabic minority lives too yet there have been sect-based conflicts (Sunni migrants vs. Alevi locals).

Finally, wealthy migrants (mostly come from Middle Eastern countries) generally prefer to live in provincial center via renting or buying real estates that is geographically located on the west side. They can be foreign partners to the local companies or establish their own. The province, therefore, overlapping with geographical division, is also divided by the lines of class through which poorer strata on the east side work hard to be able to move to the west side. In other

¹⁹ Pelek, D. 2020. “Ethnic residential segregation among seasonal migrant workers: from temporary tents to new rural ghettos in southern Turkey.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2020.1767077



words, class difference intersects with spatial difference: wealthy foreigners in provincial center (West side of the province), while poor/seasonal laborers live in peripheral neighborhoods and tents (East side).

When it comes to access to employment, the general situation in the locality is as follows: The rural areas in the RA Mediterranean have been a significant hub for agricultural seasonal laborers due to a-year-round production of fresh fruits and vegetables on fertile lands. Small-scale production, mostly based on family farming still persists yet faces with many challenges in contemporary agri-food relations in Turkey. Lack of state subsidy, increasing costs of agricultural production overlapping with current economic crisis and high inflation force many producers to leave agricultural production. The number of small farmers decreases, while aging rural population is another challenge. Small-scale production co-exists with large commercial farms based on domestic and export-oriented production. The latter is also related to packaging and processing units for the products.

High informality, cheap/unskilled labor force, precarious working/living conditions and unequal power relations between employer/intermediary and workers characterize agriculture and husbandry (such as lack of written contracts, unregistered intermediaries, high control of intermediaries over workers). Before the arrival of Syrians as seasonal agricultural laborers, the dominant group used to be Kurdish IDPs in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean who arrived in 1990s as a result of forced migration from southeast region of Turkey. Today, the majority of the seasonal laborers is composed of post-2014 Syrians. The daily wage for an agricultural seasonal laborer is determined as YTL 167 (euro 9,5). However, the amount can be changed on the basis of gender and ethnicity. Few numbers of Syrians work as permanently in village houses to take care of land and house in rural areas. They also work at the greenhouses. In the center of the RA Mediterranean, the post-2014 migrants are employed in construction, care and service sector. Some are lorry drivers. Packaging businesses provides informal employment opportunities to workers with the daily wage of YTL 145 (euro 8). Migrants are active in other sectors too: garbage collecting/recycling, begging, street vending or small retailing. They work as plumbers and porters.

On the other hand, according to Chamber of Commerce wealthy foreign members form 5-10% of the total members. They can also establish companies. Provincial Organized Industry Zone includes foreign wealthy businessmen from Iraq and Syria who transferred their capitals before the Syrian Crisis to the Turkish business markets. The RA Mediterranean is very close to Provincial Organized Industrial Zone (POIZ), Free Zone (first free zone in Turkey) and harbor. The companies based on export-oriented production are from textile, manufacture (clothing),

iron and steel industry. The main market is Middle Eastern countries for these companies, while the POIZ is well known for its informal employment practices.

3. Access to Housing

3.1. Main Challenges/Obstacles

1.1.

ST East Marmara

Locals selling their estates and lands to the foreigners in overrated prices creates the dynamism in housing. For instance, an employer (a contractor) says he sold 55 flats out of 80 to Iraqi and Yemeni customers, adding that surviving the 2018 economic crisis in Turkey was only possible because of the wealthy foreigners buying real estates for citizenship in ST East Marmara. Such dynamism makes the ST East Marmara expensive city in terms of living conditions too.²⁰ Sales of real estates is significant, according to the PDMM the number of foreigners with real estate ownership is more than 3000.

ST East Marmara has been a destination for wealthy Arab community (Iraqi, Saudi, Egyptian and those from the UAE) and Iranians. Some members of these groups rent the estates they have previously bought to make a living. Wealthy foreigners also establish companies as partners with Turkish citizens. According to employers' organization, out of 6400 members, 574 companies have foreigners as business partners (116 Iraqis, 83 Syrians, 60 Saudi Arabs, 23 from UEA and 15 Iranians) in ST East Marmara. 80% of the companies are limited companies without commercial activity. However, the dynamism in the housing sector does not turn into real investments creating employment opportunities but rather motivates a rentier economy. The only exception can be seen as the increasing number of the foreigners working as real estate agencies in the ST Central Anatolia both in formal and informal ways.

In some cases, Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans (irregular and under international protection) who live in the peripheries have **poor housing conditions** characterized by crowded households in a single flat and cheaper rents. For example, while some of them employed as construction workers stay in the construction sites after work, others do so at other workplaces. The rents are comparatively cheaper in the peripheries (for instance YTL 750-1500 – euro 44-89 in Roma neighborhood). Due to lack of economic means, Afghans mostly live in a neighborhood where the Roma community lives. The houses they live

²⁰ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Regional-Purchasing-Power-Parity-2017-27847>



can be those used to be bunkers for keeping coal or neglected buildings with high humidity. Some of the buildings where they stay are old and risky buildings without proper maintenance for earthquake. In this case, their rents are even cheaper. In the districts and villages, they stay at ruin-like and collapsed places as extended families. Landowners in these peripheries/districts are blamed for asking overrated rents for poor houses: “If you are a foreigner, the landowners put an extra YTL 500, 1000 (euro 30-60) to the rent”. While some Syrian families live in relatively better neighborhoods, their houses are not in good conditions.

Two extreme sides of foreign population (one without economic means while others buying real estate to get citizenship) has been a hot topic underlined during the fieldwork. Devaluation of Turkish Lira is another dynamic for housing sector, increasing gap between the wealthy foreigners vs. impoverished locals. That brings further racism/discrimination of the migrants/refugees by the locals. A trade union representative just ignored the researcher’s question about migrants/refugees’ access to housing saying “How can we talk about *their* access to housing, while we are struggling in poverty here?”

Discrimination takes many other forms in housing. For instance, living next to each other in the apartments raises social tension. Migrants/refugees are frequently accused of living too many people in a single flat, besides damaging the houses. Locals complain that “Their [foreigners’] life style is not compatible with Turkish one” and tend to leave the city center to live in newly-built residential areas”. However, the locals are still not comfortable with the idea that “leaving the city center to the foreigners” even though they take the advantage of highly profitable sales. In addition, the interviewees comment on discrimination of the real estate agencies/landowners against foreigners, especially Iranians and Afghans, while Iraqi people are considered as having economic means and occupation to afford renting a place, therefore, not discriminated.

Buying houses alongside the coastline by foreigners in order to make investment, be a citizen or settle down have affected the use of public space. Foreigners spending time at the seaside creates tensions with the local people. Spatial homogenization in one single neighborhood raises social tension and discriminatory behaviors in schools, main business road (known as F. Road by the locals, mostly composed of Saudi Arabs, Iraqis and Syrians opening their barbers, markets, real estate agencies and so on) and at the parks in the A neighborhood. For instance, the real estate agency interviewee says that “Especially in the A Neighborhood [they are dominant]. It is the place where it is dense in terms of both trade and residence. So, we can say there is a real Arab neighborhood. I mean, the Iraqi neighborhood, the Iraqi republic (...) A part of society does not like Arabs in ST East Marmara. But they are compelled to bear it, as they contribute to the economy. There is such a situation. So, what can we say about this... Locals in the city center have actually moved out of the city. They left the city center to the Arabs. I think this harmony will not happen easily. I'll say so.”



LGBT+ migrants living in the city center but without their families, rather individuals/with partners in the locality. However, neither UNHCR nor the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) accept the concept “chosen family” for the LGBT+ migrants. Therefore, they cannot benefit from unconditional assistances in cash provided by the ESSN program, part of that is generally used by the migrants to pay their rent. They generally live with a friend to share the rent or living together with cisgender individuals who already rented a place. It is common that they are being discriminated while looking for a place. They cannot benefit from cash assistances as they are not with a family.

Our interviewees comment on the prevalence of single mothers/widows, they generally get social assistance in order to support their rent. Children, sick spouses or migrants without IDs form vulnerable groups too suffering from poor housing conditions in the peripheries/districts/villages. No unaccompanied children were mentioned during the fieldwork.

Syrians under temporary protection are not eligible to buy houses. The number of the wealthy Syrians with resident permit/citizenship is not too many in the ST East Marmara, compared to wealthy foreigners from other ethnic groups. In the peripheral areas, Afghans are mainly in two neighborhoods, while Syrians, Afghans, Turkmens are in the rural areas. Syrians dealing with begging, as stated by some of the interviewees, live together with the Roma community in collapsed neighborhood in the city center. Districts are ethnically dominated by different groups, such as Syrians live in X or Iraqis are mostly based in Y districts.

Pandemic impacted on the number of the foreigners who wanted to buy real estates and be Turkish citizen. While the means of transportation were blocked, the number of sales decreased too. It has been recently under recovery. Increasing rents is a major problem; it pushes the poor migrants/locals away from the central neighborhoods to the districts and the villages. Therefore, in certain districts, the migrant population has been on rise.

ST Central Anatolia

Except for few numbers of wealthy migrants/refugees living in better neighborhoods, the majority in ST Central Anatolia stays at collapsing places where nobody wants to live in under poor housing conditions has been the major issue for post-2014 migrants/refugees. Given the hard winters in the locality, heating is another problematic issue. The lack of economic means for access to better housing seems to confine them to stay in these neighborhoods. Yet, easy access to daily jobs without using public transportation which is costly for those households seems to be an advantage. In this sense, employment patterns matter in housing. For instance, Syrians dealing with seasonal agricultural work tend to live in the districts of the ST Central Anatolia, while Afghans under international protection with a relatively permanent stay live



in the city center where they can access to daily jobs. Housing conditions in the rural areas are poor too. The post-2014 migrants/refugees live in previously empty/non-used buildings (such as, schools and primary health center). The rural jobs offered with accommodation to the worker and his/her family create further problems: as the employer dismisses the worker, s/he then loses her/his home too.

Some interviewees comment on **landlords taking the advantage of those in need of accommodation**. For instance, the landlords may divide the derelict houses into two so they can be rented to two different families, while doubling the rent. At the same time, there is a discriminatory discourse against the migrants/refugees referring to their “backward culture” or “different way of life” when it comes to how “badly” they use the rented places. Several interviewees underline the landowners do not want to rent their houses to them since they damage the houses (e.g., cleaning carpets inside houses, burning any plastics for heating) and to recover the houses costs more than the rents they get. It is said that after renting a flat to a migrant family, it is hard to re-rent it to a local family. The presence of university students as renters strengthens landowners’ position.

General political atmosphere in the province composed of conservatist, Islamist and nationalist in extreme forms brings further discrimination against migrants/refugees. For some interviewees the high rate of post-2014 migrants/refugees, when compared to the local population of a small city is an obstacle to adequate housing. In a discriminative sense, member of opposition in the municipal council argued that the ST Central Anatolia has no “capacity” to host such high number of migrants/refugees: “the ST Central Anatolia is not a place where too many refugees/migrants can be accommodated”. Or Syrians living in the villages of the ST Central Anatolia are found “dangerous” because they can be “spies” according to anti-migrant group.

Spatial concentration raises social tension. Some interviewees express their discontent as “they [in those neighborhoods where they live] have exerted their hegemony, these places are under their control” or “we cannot walk in those neighborhoods”. Spatial homogenization further triggers segregation in schools in return of which locals move from those neighborhoods to be able to send their kids to the other schools w/out foreign students (89%, 62%, 42% and 44% of students in primary schools located at migrant neighborhoods are migrant/refugee children).

Pro-migrant CSO underlines **the vulnerability of single mothers and widows in access to housing**. Another interviewee states that women whose husbands are currently fighting in Syria can also face with difficulties in housing. These disadvantaged groups, including unaccompanied children, generally live with their relatives/kin as an alternative way for access to housing. This makes the number of people living in a single house increase. Several interviewees comment on ethnic concentration in certain neighborhoods, e.g., Neighborhood



B is generally composed of Syrian, Iranian and Iraqi inhabitants. Rising number of Afghans in ST Central Anatolia has also impacts on housing issue as the demand for housing may rise.

RA Mediterranean

Precarious housing conditions for those living in the tents have been the major issue for the majority of the interviewees. Prevalence of contagious diseases due to lack of water, living next to garbage, burning tents related to illegal electricity consumption, washing clothes down at the river or cooking on the fire characterize the daily life in the tent areas (Development Workshop, 2021a, 2021b). As stated before, precarious conditions for accommodation show historical continuum too as the Kurdish labor force live in the tents next to the Syrians' (Pelek, 2020).

Spatial segregation of internally displaced Kurdish migrants, Syrians under temporary protection and the local communities make several interviewees comment on the **prevalence of discrimination against migrants** in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean. In addition to very limited social contact with the local community, the source of discrimination can be village headmen too. As observed during the fieldwork, some village headmen who are "opposed to the presence of Syrians in the villages" are very determined not to give permission for these groups to be settled within the borders of the villages or nearby. Moreover, a street level bureaucrat said that the sect difference between Arab-Alevi villages and Sunni Syrian migrants once forced the latter to move to another tent area as the social tension there became unbearable. Except for a few Syrian families permanently residing in the villages, the remaining Syrian workers are not welcome as the local population does not want their population to be less than Syrians. Several interviewees comment that Syrians are being "tolerated" in rural areas just because of the labor shortage in agriculture and husbandry. Being far away from schools, health centers, supermarkets add another layer to migrant groups' isolation. The isolation overlaps with language barrier (lack of Turkish) and registration issues (a pro-migrant CSO states that almost 60% of those working in the fields are registered to another city, in collaboration with the PDMM some of them get their IDs but there are still many left).

On the other hand, according to interviewees, Syrians want to live together not to lose their network, kinship/family ties, they feel empowered as they stay next to each other. They also want to avoid from possible tensions with locals (for example, children fighting can turn into families fighting, which can increase social tension and force them to leave). However, one should note that tent areas are not mixed; each ethnic group has its own separate area, seasonal agricultural laborers avoid conflict within themselves too. In addition, labor intermediaries prefer workers staying together too to be able to control the labor force.



When it comes to those living the shanty peripheral neighborhoods of the city, poor housing conditions again are the major issue. Having lack of economic means to access better housing, migrants pay cheap rents to these houses where two-three families live together. However, considering the ruinous conditions of some of these flats, some interviewees state that landowners take advantage of migrants asking for expensive rents. This goes hand in hand with discriminatory discourses against Syrians ("They have different culture, lack hygiene, we do not want to rent our property to Syrians") are at work.

Discrimination continues in the peripheral sphere too. As a street level bureaucrat says that rising social tension led to Syrian houses being set on fire by the locals in one of those peripheral neighborhoods in the last years. Syrians had to move to another neighborhood afterwards. The PDMM said that locals collect signatures in order to force Syrian renters move out of the apartment just because of insignificant reasons (such as "they throw away garbage"). He says there are many complaints (in oral and written forms, such as phone calls to the PDMM or petitions) coming from locals, demanding that authorities "send them to their countries, deport them, [as] we do not want them in our apartment/neighborhood".

Syrians under temporary protection are the dominant group in the tent areas, almost no one under international protection has been observed by the interviewees. Child labor has been a major challenge in rural areas of RA Mediterranean (not specifically for migrants, but also for internally displaced Kurds). Unaccompanied children and/or single mothers find their relatives and move into their tents. Another smaller tent is built in order to host them next to the main tent while most of the children have to work as agricultural labor. Children under 10/12-year-old and old women generally are left as watchers when the adults go off for work. This makes the children open to any exploitation/sexual harassment as they are alone in an isolated settlement. The reproductive burden is on the shoulders of the girls who are responsible for taking care of their siblings, making beds and feeding their siblings and so on. LGBT+ migrants are not observed by pro-migrant CSO working in the tent area but it is considered that they hide themselves.

When the Syrian groups first arrived, they had to stay in places determined by the municipality or in the tents. In the last couple of years, some have moved to the peripheral neighborhoods to live in or opened a small-scale business. In the last five years, Syrian population has become more permanent in the tent areas. The Kurdish permanent population have become official residents with a proper postal code in the tent areas. Some of the Kurdish tents have evolved into adobe houses whose status is higher than tents. Yet before 2018, the municipality was not allocating the checkmarks to Syrians' tents preventing their residential registration. The municipality's attitude has changed since 2018. SASF has started checking the addresses of the migrants living in the tents in a very restrictive way, the officers of the SASF have to find



Syrians (under temporary protection) in the exact place they are registered, otherwise the SASF cancels Syrians' humanitarian/social assistance.

The Comparative Section

Poor housing conditions, spatial segregation and discrimination by the locals (citizens, long-term residents, IDP groups) are the major issues in these three localities for the poor segments of the groups of Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans under or seeking international protection, when it comes to access to housing. However, rural and urban areas are different from each other in their degree of discrimination and spatial segregation. In RA Mediterranean, in this sense, where the Syrians under temporary protection has been the dominant migrant group, they experience extreme difficulty to access to decent housing as they live in the tents without infrastructure and basic hygiene/safety. Poor segments of Syrians under temporary protection and other migrant groups in ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia live in collapsing, peripheral neighborhoods under the threat of urban renewal projects. ST East Marmara forms a unique example while some part of the post-2014 migrants with a wealthy class background (mostly coming from Iraq) with residence permits face no obstacle in access to housing as they are able to afford to buy real estate and invest in housing sector due to their high economic capital.

3.2. Actors Involved

ST East Marmara

Zoning and Urbanism Directorate in the municipality is responsible for preparation of projects to serve the city and all kinds of zoning plans, especially urban transformation/renewal and making changes, besides its other responsibilities. According to its 2019 Action Report²¹, the municipality initiated a tender for the preparation of the Urban Transformation Strategy Document for renewal of central district, municipality and adjacent area (covering the neighborhoods where the migrants/refugees live). While the 2020 Action Report²² states less than one-tenth of the budget for urban renewal was used, it does not say which

²¹ This builds on the activity report of the respective municipality.

²² This builds on the activity report of the respective municipality.



neighborhoods are renewed or will be renewed in the ST East Marmara. That is why, the most vulnerable segments of the migrant population who live with the Roma community has been under the threat of eviction, when the renewal plans realized.

Interviewees differently comment on whether access to housing is an issue or not for the migrant/refugee groups. Significant local actors in the sphere of housing, such as the PDMM, real estate agency or the Chamber of Commerce state that there is no housing problem in the ST East Marmara. Headman of A Neighborhood (the neighborhoods whose inhabitants are mostly composed of Iraqi or Arabic-speaking people in ST East Marmara) mentions that he works in collaboration with the PDMM to be updated regarding the latest changes in the legislation, e.g., how the de-concentration plan works in the ST East Marmara or which neighborhoods are closed to the registration. On the other hand, pro-migrant CSO details the differences between various groups, in terms of class or ethnic background, when it comes to housing conditions.

Migrants seem to solve their housing problems mostly on their own. Many interviewees mention that they have a strong network through which they can find a place to stay. Social media/WhatsApp groups are commonly used for these purposes. Besides, the role of community leaders played in solving the housing problems is critical. For instance, in 2020, after decreasing the tension on the borders raised by Erdogan previously declaring the opening the border and inviting the migrants to cross to Europe²³, Afghans, by their preferences, arrived at the locality with buses in large numbers caused unexpected housing problem in the ST East Marmara. It was solved by the PDMM in collaboration with the community leaders²⁴ from the Afghan community living in the ST East Marmara. Two pro-migrant CSOs were also invited to solve the crisis. With the help of the community leaders, every Afghan family already living in the ST East Marmara become host for those new-comer Afghans for a short term. Then they found places to stay on their own.

²³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/world/europe/turkey-migrants-eu.html>

²⁴ One of the significant means used by PDMMs to reach out to the migrant populations and also increase local social cohesion is collaborating with community leaders (defined as *kanaat önderleri* in Turkish) who are believed as wise, notable and respectful people by their own community. Community leaders are determined by the local authorities in each province and are regularly invited to meetings with PDMMs. They take on responsibilities such as spreading new and relevant information among their communities, solving daily tensions and crises between migrants and locals, and delivering information to the local authorities about their community's needs and problems.



ST Central Anatolia

Zoning and Urbanism Directorate and Urban Transformation Directorate in the municipality are the responsible for preparation of projects to serve the city and all kinds of zoning plans, especially for urban transformation/renewal. According to the municipal legislation on urban renewal, developing social housing projects in public lands in the city in order to meet the housing needs of the low- and middle-income population living within the borders of the municipality is one of its primary aims.²⁵ As stated in 2020 Action Report of the Municipality of ST Central Anatolia, one of the aims of the Zoning and Urban Directorate Plan Unit is to establish an urban database at the municipal scale and specifically on; migration movements, housing stock, housing need and deficit and irregular housing. However, as stated during the interviews, urban database has not yet been established.

However, as stated by deputy mayor, **the municipality is not willing to take action for the access of migrants/refugees to housing**, while again not willing to collaborate with any international bodies (such as UN). The deputy mayor further says that the municipality's perspective is shared by the governorate. And finally, according to local officers from the municipality, there is no housing problem for post-2014 migrants/refugees in access to housing. This also legitimizes the municipality's passive attitude against migrants' access to housing.

Other local actors in ST Central Anatolia reveal different views for post-2014 migrants/refugees' access to housing. For some of them, housing is not an issue in ST Central Anatolia for these groups. According to an employer, there is no housing problem for migrants in ST Central Anatolia, while a street level bureaucrat acknowledges the issue yet renders the migrants/refugees responsible to some extent reminding bad usages of the houses by the renters.

On the other hand, the PDMM stresses that housing issue has been problematic during the provincial coordination meeting, not only for migrants but also for others, such as university students. Action (such as inspections on rented places) is needed by local public authorities against landowners renting their flats to more than one renter. The PDMM asks the municipality to increase their inspections on the landowners/unauthorized buildings but the municipality keeps its passive attitude.

One of our interviewees, working as street level bureaucrat explains that in the beginning, he used to serve post-2014 migrants/refugees like a (pro-bono) real estate agency. Due to the

²⁵ This builds on the activity report of the respective municipality.



problems raised by landowners and renters, his personal relations started to deteriorate, therefore, he gave up finding houses for them: “No. We used to be (about finding a house) before. Even for their subscriptions... when they first came, they could not get their electricity and water subscriptions. We even got them. Families were so helpful. Of course, after those problems we had later on... we never get involved in such matters. (What kind of problems did you have?) In other words, there is material damage to the house... We take the bill in our own name, when that man does not pay, we have to pay it. So, these kinds of problems. But, of course, mainly the damage done to the house. Because we became the guarantor of that man. That's why it's about finding a house, etc. If we don't know people in person, I definitely don't help. (How do they find the house in general?) So, the houses are already empty. They find the houses by walking around. So, they find it by walking around the streets. Once a house is rented out to a refugee, it is difficult to give it to a local citizen easily. Seriously, the guy needs to do some renovations inside.”

The Chamber of Commerce attends to the problems of early marriages of Syrian women or Syrian women's becoming a second/third wife to the local men. According to the interviewee from the Chamber that is why the Chamber “primarily takes care of single women and finds them proper accommodation”. The Chamber makes regular announcements and organizes meetings to give the message to the women “You are not alone, you can come here and ask for help, e.g., job, house, etc.” However, the announcements and meetings are not effective, as the interviewee says.

When refugees/migrants seeking accommodation apply to the pro-migrant CSO, they can be either directed to the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF)²⁶ or Family and Social Services Provincial Directorate²⁷ for further options. However, one should note that the PDMM (in coordination with pro-migrant CSOs) finds short-term accommodation (3-5 days at a hotel). Or another pro-migrant CSO helps to the refugees/migrants with their own means (such as providing furniture to those in need). The philanthropist businessmen may also provide charity. Yet these are all short-term solutions. Therefore, several interviewees draw attention to the lack of capacity of the public authorities/institutions in responding to housing emergencies.

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²⁶ SASFs are the nationally established foundations by the Ministry of Interior and operated under the Provincial/District Governorate in Turkey.

²⁷ Family and Social Services Provincial Directorate operates under the Ministry of Family and Social Services in every province.



RA Mediterranean

The municipality provides basic services to those tent areas, such as improving the roads, provision of food, clean water, cleaning facilities or other humanitarian assistances. The fences are made by the municipality to protect children from falling into the irrigation channels. Village headmen inform the municipality on the accommodation conditions in the tent areas. During the flood crisis in 2020, the municipality and the governorate helped the Syrian agricultural laborers when the flood damaged the tents. People were taken from there by shuttles and settled down in a sports hall for ten days. After that, they returned to the tent area.

Many actors, such as the governorate, street level bureaucrats, pro-migrant CSO and real estate agency have detected problems in housing in relation to (post-2014) migrants. All of the actors agree on the precarious conditions underlying the tent life. In this sense, pro-migrant CSO states that it holds meetings with other pro-migrant CSOs and ICSOs to discuss the problematic issues. SASF tries to convince the landlords to rent their estates to the migrants in the district neighborhoods. A platform composed of religious charities deals with the housing issue too (providing furniture, finding rented places, etc.).

However, there are other actors drawing attention to Syrians' own desire to stay together in an isolation in the tent areas (showing Kurdish labor force living in the tents as an example), therefore, stating these are all factors in Syrians' housing patterns saying that are more important than structural obstacles to their housing. In addition, real estate agency acknowledges the poor housing conditions for the migrants yet is not willing to work professionally for them. He thinks that it is bad for his reputation, therefore, whenever he is informed about an empty house in such neighborhoods, he delivers this information to Kurdish real estate agencies.

There seems to be conflicting views between the PDMM and the municipality: according to the PDMM, providing basic services to the tent areas slows down the social integration process for the Syrians living there. An isolated tent life also strengthens the role of labor intermediary as his control over workers continues. At the same time, the PDMM claims that the municipality does not provide basic infrastructure to the tent areas, what it has done there is just "improvement", not "a real development". It becomes even more problematic when the tent areas are on private property (as the disputes with the owner may arise).

The Comparative Section

The units of the Zoning and Urbanism Directorate and the Urban Transformation Directorate in the municipalities in ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia have not started implementing urban renewal projects yet in the collapsing central or peripheral



neighborhoods where poor segments of the migrant groups live. Local authorities do not appear as significant actors in the housing issue. In addition to that, the interviewees in the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia depicted migrants as mostly solving their housing problems on their own. ST East Marmara differs from the other two examples in having a dynamic, profitable housing market where real estate agencies come forefront as significant actors. Rural vs. urban divide again brings differences between the localities. RA Mediterranean has its own particularities as village headmen, small-producer employers and intermediaries play a determining role in the access of Syrians under temporary protection to accommodation in the tent areas. The interviewees from the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia also underline the critical role the community leaders play in access to housing for the migrant groups. These leaders appear to have more power in urban localities compared to the rural one.

3.2. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access

ST East Marmara

The municipality shows a passive attitude towards migrants' access to housing. Apart from providing the basic services to all neighborhoods located within the borders of the municipality, there is no particular intervention of the municipality for housing issue. Likewise, the Chamber of Commerce previously discussed on their meetings what the Chamber can do about the problems of the migrants in ST East Marmara yet they decided not to intervene as they believe that there are programs, projects or assistances provided to the migrants more than needed (He refers to the national interventions). Pro-migrant CSO criticizes local public actors for their passive attitudes in general in the sphere of migration. Even though provincial coordination meetings regularly gather different actors in the ST East Marmara, interviewees do not state that access to housing for migrants has been a topic in the meetings. A recent regulation comes from national authorities that can impact on housing market in ST East Marmara. In order to control and decrease the dominance of foreigners in housing market in the ST East Marmara (both as customers and real estate agencies), the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning has recently made a change that prohibits foreigners buying houses not to sell for three years. It also aims to break the closed foreigner network who trades between each other.

ST Central Anatolia

While the urban renewal plans are not realized yet for the migrant/refugee neighborhoods, there is limited progress in this issue in rural areas. According to the Chamber of Commerce, municipality and governorship pay attention to the housing situation and try to provide better



accommodation conditions for migrants. Therefore, the municipality and the governorship built several container-houses for seasonal agricultural laborers. However, checkmarks for the container-houses have not been assigned by the municipality that limits migrants' access to social assistance.²⁸

Provincial coordination meetings are the regular meetings established to discuss the issue of migration with the participation of diverse local actors in ST Central Anatolia. They are organized under the leadership of the governorate rather than municipalities. The municipality in ST Central Anatolia points to the governorate too as the main address for the issues of migration to be discussed, while defining its role as "more complementary". Finally, as stated during the interview, the municipality does not consider the general meetings provincial coordination meetings effective: "Is there any policy that we have implemented? I do not know what we implement. Main address is the governorate and the PDMM, while the participants are changing from gendarmerie to the municipality... But what we discuss remains on paper, we are informing each other, that's all."

RA Mediterranean

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security implements the project titled 'Improvement of Work and Social Lives of Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers Project' (METIP II) to eliminate the seasonal agricultural workers' living and working problems. METIP II aims to facilitate the delivery of public services to the workers and their families. Within the scope of the Circular No. 2017/6, 81 provincial governors were asked to send their action plans for seasonal agricultural workers. Geographical locations have been determined for the creation of temporary settlement areas in selected provinces. The RA Mediterranean is selected as one of the locations for improving workers' living and working conditions. In 2012, certain number of containers which facilitated as common laundry, kitchen and bathroom were located by the governorate. However, the number of beneficiary families were only 300 from the facilities in RA Mediterranean (the exact number of seasonal laborers is not known yet the local authorities, i.e., the officials from the municipality and the governorate estimates the number of Syrian seasonal laborers as more than 40 thousand).

As part of national legislation, in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean, the village headman writes a stamped petition stating that this person lives in this tent by his/her handwriting.

²⁸ Checkmarks are used to determine the addresses of the migrants living outside the urban areas (for example for tents or container houses). Only the migrants with proper addresses can benefit from the cash assistances. The checkmarks are allocated by the local municipalities yet it is hard to find a standard implementation not only among the municipalities but also in one certain municipality's practices (such as for the case of RA Mediterranean, which will be explained in the next section).



While the headman does it so in coordination with the municipality to validate tent addresses, the critical role of headman becomes crystal clear as writing the petition depends on his/her own initiative, as many interviewees comment on. After the stamped petition, the district municipality assigns a number called *checkmark* to each tent. After these two steps, the PDMM registers the address of the tent. In spite of checkmarks assigned by municipality, non-profit service provider told that not every municipality act in the same manner in this issue in the rural areas. Even the municipality of the RA Mediterranean itself used to have a different attitude before 2018. There has been lack of standard in assigning checkmarks to tents. Having a residential registration is a primary must step for migrants/refugees in order to apply to social assistances provided through SASF in each province/district. Therefore, it has the utmost importance for the migrants.

Especially in rural areas, residential registration functions as a tool by local authorities to manage and control the mobility of the migrant/refugee groups. In RA Mediterranean example, as the majority of the population works as seasonal agricultural laborers, they move from one place to another without giving notice to local authorities. As stated by the PDMM in RA Mediterranean, the goal behind such a complex procedure of residential registration linked to the social assistance/general health insurance is “to make foreigners stable/immobile in the same addresses”. In this sense, the access to the humanitarian/social assistance/general health insurance connected to residential registration is used to force the migrants to be registered. In the rural parts of RA Mediterranean, because of the fake addresses discovered by SASF, the assistances given to the hundreds of migrants were recently cut. As stated during the fieldwork, migrants without residential registration/IDs are also problematic for non-profit service providers and I/NGOs. Because it makes it impossible for these bodies to prove the existence of beneficiaries to the sponsors.

In rural areas, several interviewees point to **the critical role of village headmen**. As stated, headmen’s discriminatory attitudes against Syrians matter in Syrian agricultural laborers’ housing practices. For instance, even though the area where the Syrians live belongs to the State Hydraulic Works (DSI) or the Treasury, i.e., public land, the laborer groups can be asked for rent by the headman/locals or exposed to discrimination by the locals. If the two sides do not agree on an amount or Syrians refuse to pay, there can emerge conflicts that end with the village headman ordering the migrants to leave. The street level bureaucrat interviewee says there is never an official rental contract between two parties, yet, it is, for 2022, YTL 1000 (euro 56) per tent per year. Even though the locals/headmen do not have the right to ask rent yet it is still the case. In some cases, the migrants themselves do not want to stay more to avoid social tensions.

When it comes to the district neighborhoods, in a passive way, the PDMM protects Syrians from discrimination by the local residents signing petitions to force the Syrians to leave their apartments, they do not put the petitions in formal process. Apart from these, as summarized



above, long and expensive procedure of formal registration process for those living in the neighborhoods hinders their access to housing. Finally, economic crisis makes housing problematic not only for migrants but also for locals. As the representative of the employers' organization says "To have a house [own a house/rent in a reliable amount] is impossible now even for local people, let aside the migrants. There is nothing we can do."

There are regular district coordination meetings which have started with the governorate's own initiative. The local public actors including the municipality, the directorates and CSOs participate to the meetings. The district governorate holds separate meetings with the community leaders from each different migrant community.

The Comparative Section

In ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia, the municipalities provide basic services to all living within the borders of the municipalities, yet take a rather passive attitude towards migrants' initial access to housing. They have different motivations to do so. The municipality in the ST East Marmara argues that the migrants are not the voters, at the same time it acknowledges the economic contributions of the wealthy segment of the post-2014 migrants. The municipality from ST Central Anatolia expresses a much more hostile attitude through which it clearly underlines that the migrants are not welcomed in the locality. The municipality points to the PDMM and the Governor as having the primary responsibility for migrants' access to housing. The passivity is criticized by two pro-migrant CSOs interviewed in the locality. Finally, in RA Mediterranean, national policies/projects are implemented with the aim of improving the living conditions of seasonal agricultural laborers most of whom are composed of Syrians under temporary protection. These interventions appear to be significant but with limited success. Recently, the municipality has also changed its attitude in a positive direction and begun providing checkmarks for the tents to facilitate Syrians' access to formal address registration.

3.3. Specific target groups

ST East Marmara

The migrants are not specifically included in general housing policies and the provision of related services and resources. They have access to social housing only through renting these places from the landowners (Social housing in Turkey is not owned by the state whose only role to build the houses and sell them to the poor citizens). The support those under temporary protection/international protection get from the ESSN is only in the form of cash assistance and does not refer to housing support. Lack of targeted policies is generally justified by political reasons by public local authorities stating "Migrants are not voters".



ST Central Anatolia

Post-2014 migrants are not included as target population in general housing policies and the provision of related services and resources, yet the urban renewal plan in the ST Central Anatolia and its possible implementation in the collapsed neighborhoods would have impacts on them. The post-2014 migrants are not eligible for accessing social housing or housing support yet they generally convert the in-cash assistances into the latter. There have been no policies designed specifically for (post 2014) migrants in ST Central Anatolia regarding housing and this has been justified in several ways by the actors. First of all, ignorance of the housing issue has closely been related with the general political atmosphere in the province which can be described as conservatist, Islamist and nationalist. Even some of the public figures during the fieldwork have displayed discriminatory approaches against refugee/migrant “presence” in the city and in Turkey and wished them all to return to their countries of origins. In addition, local people’s reactions against migrants shape local authorities’ attitudes who claim they “cannot act against local people’s will”, while some others are just waiting for guidance from higher authorities and not wanting to take initiative on their own.

RA Mediterranean

Post-2014 migrants are not included as target population in general housing policies and the provision of related services and resources. The post-2014 migrants are not eligible for accessing social housing or housing support yet they generally convert the in-cash assistances into the latter. There have been no local policies designed specifically for (post 2014) migrants in RA Mediterranean regarding housing and this has been justified in several ways by the actors. The municipality refers to the blurred legal status of Syrians under temporary protection saying it makes their job difficult, they are not clear which services they should provide to the migrants and in what forms. The governorate agrees with the municipality saying the issue of migration remained unaddressed as no actor would step in to intervene. The lack of budget to create and implement policies also limits local actors’ capacity, when it comes to migrants’ access to housing.

The Comparative Section

In none of these three localities, migrants are taken into consideration as specific targets in the housing policy domain. The municipalities of ST East Marmara and D are generally disinterested because migrants are not voters. The municipality of ST East Marmara underlines its political concerns for the future, while the latter claims that migrant presence

is bound to be temporary, using Syrians’ temporary protection status as proof. According to the municipality in the RA Mediterranean, this is a blurred category leading to institutional confusion in the municipality. The municipality in the ST Central Anatolia has discriminatory attitudes towards migrants’ problems in general. While the PDMMs do not undertake any special intervention for the refugees/migrants in the access to housing, the pro-migrant CSOs help those in need informally and randomly.

Table 1: Case-by-case summary of results/findings regarding the area of Housing

CASE	WholeCOMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Actor(s) involved	Measure(s)	Target group(s)
ST East Marmara	Revitalizing	Spatial concentration (Foreigners who buy property to acquire TR Citizenship concentrate in the coastal area. Those under temporary/international protection concentrate in decaying neighborhoods because of cheaper rents)	Causing actors: Real estate agencies Migrants’ networks Intervening actors: Ministry of Interior; PDMM	De-concentration plan (refusing to register newcomer non-nationals in specific neighborhoods/districts)	Syrians under temporary protection
ST East Marmara	Revitalizing	Poor housing conditions in decaying neighborhoods. These are also subject to indeterminate urban renewal, leading to imminent threat of eviction, and insufficient infrastructural services.	Municipality; PDMM; Pro-migrant CSOs	Governmental actors remain passive.	Syrians under temporary protection; other groups under or seeking international protection
ST Central Anatolia	In transition	Spatial concentration in decaying neighborhoods subject to impending urban renewal	Municipality; PDMM; Pro-migrant CSOs	Governmental actors remain passive.	Syrians under temporary protection; other groups under or



					seeking international protection
ST Central Anatolia	In transition	Lack of rent control	Municipality; PDMM; Pro-migrant CSOs	PDMM and pro-migrant CSOs advocate for better control on landlords, who may charge over-priced rents	Syrians under temporary protection; other groups under or seeking international protection
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Living in tents on/close to agricultural fields Away from public institutions such as schools, hospitals etc	Municipality; PDMM	Municipality provides address registration checkmarks as a prerequisite for social assistance. Yet, infrastructural services in tent areas remain insufficient.	Syrians under temporary protection
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Conflict between Syrians under temporary protection and local villagers + headmen	Village headmen; locals; PDMM	Village headmen may not allow Syrians to remain in villages or tent areas. Locals and village headmen may charge illegal fees from Syrians for their tents in the area. PDMM is unable to know or control such cases of abuse.	Syrians under temporary protection

4. Access to employment

4.1. Main challenges / obstacles

ST East Marmara

Dynamic economic sectors in the ST East Marmara are mainly tourism/service, construction and real estate sectors, while there is limited manufacturing due to the lack of organized industry zone. In the districts of the ST East Marmara, flower and fresh fruit and vegetable



production at the greenhouses are common. While labor markets do not provide many job opportunities, especially in the provincial center, migrant groups still have their employment niches. Migrant network is so strong that they inform each other about the job positions through social media (WhatsApp or Facebook groups are common).

As mentioned before in the housing section, the presence of wealthy foreigners characterizes the ST East Marmara leading to dynamic housing market. When it comes to others who need to work, there are differences in access to employment for migrants. Some interviewees underline that migrants primarily are employed at the greenhouses as seasonal laborers. **Agricultural production at the greenhouse appears as the most accessible sector for migrants.** It is further said that, when a migrant first starts working, s/he goes to the greenhouses where his/her integration to the labor market is most easy. In the urban centers, migrants again dominate the recycling sector²⁹. ST East Marmara is also known as a place for retirees and summer vacationers. Migrants may work as cleaners and gardeners at the (summer/permanent) houses of locals.

Migrant groups can run their own small businesses (some of them are run informally) as grocery, barber, restaurant/cafe owner, real estate agency or smart phone dealer. Foreigners who have their own vehicles run small-scale transportation business in the locality, which could be easily recognized by their vehicle registration plate “MA” (guest vehicle). Unlike ST Central Anatolia, they informally take place in the service sector in a visible way (such as waitress at tea/coffee shops) as cheap labor without social security.

Skilled members of Iraqi community work as graphic designer, painter, officer (in Iraq) or businessman while there are others who previously used to work as bureaucrats. Iraqis who got citizenship can work as doctors in private hospitals. Tourism sector provides limited formal employment opportunities for those with language skills at boutique hotels or hotel chains run by foreigners.

Yet, it is safe to say that **the majority of the migrants/refugees are unskilled/semi-skilled working without social security on a daily basis.** They primarily deal with jobs that are physically demanding (being porter, construction worker, carpenter, apprentice or greenhouse worker). For instance, Syrians/Iraqi groups mostly work as mechanic, plumber or cabinetmaker. They fill the gap for semi-skilled workers in the local economy. While some of the local textile workers quit jobs for higher wages at other factories located at different cities, migrants are employed in small-scale textile ateliers to some extent.

²⁹ Migrants/refugees dealing with the recycling sector sort out the garbage to gather the plastics, papers and metals and later to sell them.



It is important to stress that **informality has mainly taken place in small-scale businesses** (such as at the greenhouses), while employing migrants in an informal way is generally not the case for those large-scale, well-known, established businesses/firms.

Finally, one needs to mention that the social mobility the previous migrant groups from Balkans have experienced, those primarily from Bulgaria in the ST East Marmara have now reached a level of economic wealth and gained social status after being exploited for many years. Now they have formal employments and occupations while being previously employed as semi-skilled workers and replaced the local semi-skilled workers during 1980s.

One of the major issues for access to formal employment for post-2014 migrants (for Syrians under temporary protection, other migrant groups under international protection or with resident permit) is **long and complicated bureaucratic procedure of getting the work permit**. Several interviewees expressed that migrants employed with work permits make only a small minority in ST East Marmara. An employer complains that he has to wait for couple of months to formally employ an Afghan worker, which is not sustainable for his business in construction. The lack of financial support to the employers employing migrants to improve migrants' participation in the labor market is another dynamic that de-motivates the employers. Finally, **implicit discrimination against migrants** can shape employers' employee preferences: "If it is possible to hire a local, I would not hire a migrant". At the same time, some interviewees claim that the migrants themselves do not want to be in formal employment. Since they get paid higher (social security payment is added to the wage) and still benefit from the in-cash assistances (as they are unemployed on the paper).³⁰ On the other hand, several interviewees point to informal employment of post-2014 migrants in which exploitation of cheap migrant labor (YTL 200 vs. 50, euro 11 vs. 2 or one-third of minimum wage) in a tough working regime (for instance performance system with a stop watch at work) seems common.

Limited job opportunities at the labor market seems to be another challenge for the migrants. It also brings confrontation and competition with the locals leading to social tensions. While competition can be with local small shop owners (barbers, real estate agencies, groceries etc.), those working daily confront each other too. In the amid of rising unemployment, migrants easily become targets in the eyes of the locals for their impoverishment. Some interviewees express this in a discriminatory way saying "They took over our trade."

Deskilling is another issue that was observed during the fieldwork. An employer said that it raises tension at workplace when she is required to pay higher wages to an educated migrant worker for a manual job according to the deal with a pro-migrant CSO helping employers with

³⁰ One needs to mention that this mostly happens when an employer cannot find any migrant worker who works informally. Then there emerges some deals between employer and migrant laborers. For instance, pro-migrant CSO interviewee says that employers can offer half of the insurance pay in addition to their wages.



the acquisition of work permits.³¹ Accordingly, the employer has to pay more than minimum wage to the migrant worker, even when the job is unskilled. This creates discontent both for employer (needs to pay more) and workers (paid less even though making the same job.)

Gender dynamic shapes access to employment. Gender division of labor allocates male and female migrant labor force into different sectors. Men take the jobs in heavy industry and construction, while women are primarily employed in textile, service and care sector. Some interviewees underline the low participation of women into labor market saying it is even much lower for Arab women.

Gendered labor market further overlaps with certain ethnic identities. For instance, Iraqi and Yemeni males are seen in real estate sector, while Afghan men dominate the construction sector or Syrian men run small-shops. Workers' Bazaar (day labor/er markets) where the workers wait for daily job opportunities is mostly used by Afghans. Iranian women run beauty shops, while Turkmen and Uzbek women primarily work in care sector and take cleaning jobs. Some interviewees mention the presence of Iranian women in sex industry at night clubs. Single women (single mothers/widows) take the jobs as care-takers and cleaners.

The migrant status linked to class status has an impact on access to employment too. While wealthy female foreigners with residence permit/citizenship have low rate of employment, asylum-seeker women work as babysitter and greenhouse worker. Or the members of the same ethnic group yet with different migrant status can have differences in access to employment. For instance, the Iraqi community is composed of those with resident permit, those on touristic visas and finally those who are asylum-seekers. As a street level bureaucrat states, the last one has particular difficulties in access to employment as they can be hesitant to be visible to the other members of Iraqi community due to sect-based conflicts.

The number of foreigners working in certain sectors has increased, for example furniture making, construction work, agricultural production, service sector. Competition starts between the locals and migrants as the latter start running their own business that decreases the profit of local small markets, barbers, but also furniture shops, shops selling electronic equipment and real estate agencies. Especially the loss of the local real estate agencies is striking.

The Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning has a new regulation for foreigners buying real estate. Accordingly, the buyers are not allowed to sell the real estates for three years. The

³¹ This pro-migrant CSO has a specific collaboration with the employers to help to regulate the migrant labor in the textile sector. The CSO primarily works with international labels which committed to base their production through subcontracting in Turkey to be formal and decent regarding basic workers' rights. This is not a common practice for other pro-migrant CSOs in the locality.



employer interviewee approves the new regulation as “it protects local building contractors and real estate agencies from foreign domination”. In addition, buying real estate to get citizenship rise from 250 thousand dollars to 400 thousand dollars based on a recent national regulation.

Pandemic has hit the tourism sector; especially high-class tourists were not able to come to ST East Marmara. This has negatively affected local businesses. Concomitantly, the districts of the ST East Marmara significant hubs for tourism lose their importance. The districts used to be a primary destination for wealthy Arabs from Qatar, Kuwait or Saudi Arabia spending large amounts of money. These groups have also found other tourist/residential destinations in Turkey and their decreasing spending negatively affects the local business.

ST Central Anatolia

The main economic sectors in the ST Central Anatolia are tourism and service sectors. Besides agricultural production and small-scale husbandry in the districts of the locality, its industry is rather limited yet the construction sector has recently expanded. There are few numbers of brick factories providing the main supply to the construction, in addition to small manufacturing. The post-2014 migrants take the majority of cleaning and construction jobs while working on a daily basis as cheap labor without social security. Migrants find these informal daily jobs in **Workers’ Bazaar (day labor/er markets)** where those looking for jobs and workers meet. While the majority are employed in “invisible jobs” (as dishwasher, room attendant at hotels or horseman at horse farms), the skilled migrants seem to have more decent jobs in the tourism sector (such as receptionist) due to their language abilities (with the exception of tour guiding which foreigners are not allowed to make in Turkey). Tourism sector mostly provides seasonal unskilled jobs to the migrants/refugees.

Those whose Turkish are advanced and with higher education tend to work in the provincial center. The employers want to hire these migrants too as this expands their customer profile (such as an Arabic speaking waitress can attract potential migrant customers). Some migrants themselves run small shops, such as cafes or groceries. Yet migrants are generally workers rather than being employers. In the districts of ST Central Anatolia, migrants are employed as shepherds and do the agricultural work. Those taking care of the animals in the rural areas are mostly male. In the agricultural sector, potato production as well as sorting and packaging of citrus fruits stored in cold storage are the main employment possibilities. While the large-scale firms avoid informal employment, the small-scale ones use informal migrant labor. Finally, the migrants partially fill the gap in the local economy for semi-skilled workers too (e.g., welders and foreman in the organized industry zones).



Some interviewees draw attention to **rising drug trade in the locality**. Afghans and Syrians are generally two groups blamed by the locals as they are accused of bringing the drugs and selling it.

Several interviewees comment on **ignorance and unwillingness of both employers and workers on work permits**. To have work permit takes long time, while the employers' lack of knowledge about the application procedure is another obstacle. Some post-2014 migrants (poor segments of Syrians under temporary protection and diverse migrant groups under international protection, such as Iranians and Afghans) themselves are not willing to have work permit with formal employment as their in-cash assistance then needs to be cut. High fines for those informally employing migrants distance employers from hiring migrants too. Migrants can also be not aware of the necessary procedure. The interviewees from the municipality give the example of those who started their own business right after applying to a work permit but without waiting to actually receive it.

One should note **the role of local intermediaries** who take care of the paper work necessary for work permit. The migrants hire intermediaries to follow the paper work and in some cases, to communicate with the municipality (for instance, deputy mayor states that the businesses run by the migrants are closed down by the municipality's inspections due to the lack of work permit; when it happens, an intermediary for that business owner gets in touch with the municipality in an informal way asking to reopen the business).

Informal employment of the migrants/refugees as cheap labor (less than minimum wage in some cases) under precarious conditions **has been the major obstacle to formal employment**. They end up having to take unqualified jobs not wanted by the locals. Deskilling leads part of migrant labor force participating into semi-skilled and unskilled labor force. **Language barriers** are another obstacle for access to employment. A street level bureaucrat from the Employment Agency told us that a headman employed Afghan workers for improving street infrastructure for which he could not find anyone to work for a long time. In a similar sense, almost all of the shepherds in the rural areas of ST Central Anatolia are Afghans. As pro-migrant CSO underlines, it is hard to defend workers' rights in the cases of work-related injuries when the migrant informally works without basic workers' rights. The street level bureaucrat from the Employment Agency mentioned an Afghan shepherd who died while working. His body was sent to his country of origin without making proper inspections.

Pandemic and current economic crisis have lessened the employment opportunities at the job market which used to be already limited for migrants. For instance, tourism as main economic sector has shrunk in the ST Central Anatolia. As interviewees state, unemployment rates have increased, especially during the pandemic but now it has been under recovery. However, it **brings confrontation and competition between locals and migrants** when they look for (especially daily jobs), open their own business or work in different jobs. Regarding



the final one, the unskilled migrants/refugees move from one job to another, such as shoe-shining to street vending. This raises social tension as the locals feel threatened by the visibility of migrants in diverse jobs.

According to some interviewees, the cheaper labor of migrants sometimes leads to them replacing the local labor force. For instance, a local taxi driver talked about an employer who recently hired two Syrian women as room attendants while dismissing her wife. Now, two Syrian women work for half of minimum wage. Although daily wages of migrants have increased in the last years, in the beginning, the migrants used to work for less than half the wages of locals (YTL 100 vs. YTL 30-40, euro 5,7 vs. 1-2). The daily wages are now not less than YTL 200 TL (euro 11). It is YTL 250 (euro 14) for daily construction jobs. Afghans are still paid the least, an Afghan worker gets YTL 140 (euro 7), while a daily local worker gets YTL 180 (euro 10).

In this sense, locals react to decreasing wages too. They are forced to work for less payment which increases the anger against the migrants. This overlaps with the local authorities' discourse referring to that "locals are unemployed because they are so picky". The deputy mayor blames the locals for being not willing to work, even though they are unemployed. He further claims that locals are "picky" while some migrants/refugees are hardworking and do not separate one job from another one but only are dedicated themselves to work. On the other hand, such discourse hinders the exploitation of the both local and migrant/refugee workers who are forced to work for less wages

Gender, ethnicity and age shape migrants' access to employment. As there are limited job opportunities for women outside home, women are being stuck at home. Very few numbers of Syrian women are considered as working as dishwasher or cleaner at houses or room attendant at the small hotels located at the districts of the ST Central Anatolia (not at famous chains or well-known ones). Afghan women do babysit, while there are Syrian women who engage in piecework producing touristic souvenirs as well as rolling cigarettes. Iranian women appear to work in public most; they are found as hairdressers, tattoo makers, masseurs and aestheticians. Afghan and Iranian women also work as tailors in the locality. Yet, Syrian women form the majority of agricultural seasonal workers, mainly in the districts of the ST Central Anatolia as a famous location with its potato production and natural caves for cold storage for citrus fruits. Women do the harvest besides the sorting and packaging of citrus fruits for the companies and small-producers. They work formally in those jobs as they are exempted from work permit. The exemption certificate is issued by Employment Agency. When it comes to the jobs in the construction, industry and tourism sectors (horse farms only), they tend to be male jobs.

Age is another important dynamic in access to employment. Younger people with language abilities can find a place in the labor market, especially in visible jobs; like waitresses though



in limited numbers in the province. On the other hand, older people are not preferred as they do not meet these qualifications.

There are finally **ethnic niches** in the labor market that also match with different types of jobs. For instance, Iranians are considered as skilled labor regarding their high education levels and language and intellectual skills. Therefore, they primarily work in tourism sector, at reception desks at hotels. In addition, Iranians and Syrians work as semi-skilled workers in the organized industry zone. The small shop owners, such as groceries or bakeries employ Afghans as apprentices. Almost the majority of seasonal agricultural workers and shepherds are composed of Syrians and Afghans. Afghans are employed as horseman at horse farms too. Afghans working in the heavy industry sectors (recycling plastics, coal) deal with most physically demanding jobs. They are the cheapest labor force.

RA Mediterranean

Agriculture and husbandry are the most accessible sectors for the migrant labor in rural Turkey. As mentioned before, the low-skilled feature of the jobs, high informality and cheap wages are the prominent characteristics of the sectors. Given that, the migrants/refugees have no obstacle in access to employment in rural areas. In contrast, they are the demanded labor force by the employers. Although Syrians dominate the seasonal agricultural work, some of them may not have the required skills, as underlined by several interviewees. The small producer, non-profit service provider (who is farmer himself too) and the trade union representative say that Syrians do not know techniques for harvest without harming trees and products. Especially citrus is an export-oriented product, that is why the harvest should be gentle to make the product long lasting during its transportation. These interviewees state that the lack of guidance (job trainings, technical knowledge) is a problem.

One of the issues mentioned during the fieldwork is the unprofitable state of rural activities aforementioned above. Small producers running family businesses have difficulties in overcoming rising costs of agricultural production. They also look for additional non-farm incomes leading to internal migration. In this sense, the small producer interviewee draws attention to rising number of Syrian sharecroppers³² in the rural areas of the RA Mediterranean. He further claims that aging rural population and unwillingness of the local

³² Sharecropping refers to a split of the profit of the harvest between two parties, i.e., the landowner and the sharecropper. The latter is responsible for production and taking care of the fields/groves, the house and the like, while the former only gets his share from the profit.



youth in sustaining the production will affect Syrian labor force too in the long run. He thinks that it may decrease the job opportunities for them.

Small producer interviewee also reveals the striking level of unemployment in the district.³³ The interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce has an even more pessimistic view about migrants' finding jobs under such high unemployment. He further says he "cannot even confidently expect the full labor market participation of local people [citizens], let alone migrants". Small producer says many local people have started to take the daily jobs in agriculture too, despite the fact that they used to avoid these kinds of jobs for their extremely low pay. There are reactions from locals against migrants who are blamed as scapegoats for unemployment, as stated by a street level bureaucrat. Real estate agency interviewee further argues that **the locals and migrants/refugees working on a daily basis (such as seasonal workers, porters and the like) compete with each other**. Apart from the jobs in agriculture and husbandry, there are quite limited job opportunities in the labor market for the migrants/refugees.

Many interviewees underline that the presence of the migrants/refugees depresses the wages. Trade union representative argues that as the number of Syrians as seasonal workers in agriculture rises, the wages tend to decrease. He gives the example of Hatay province (where massive Syrian population live) where the daily wage is as low as YTL 100 (euro 5,6). Non-profit service provider interviewee underlines the problem of lack of standard daily wage which changes from one location to another very dramatically.

Two interviewees (an official from the municipality and the expert interviewee) mention **precarious working conditions under exploitative labor regime in rural areas** of RA Mediterranean.³⁴ The interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce further claims that such

³³ The Chamber of Commerce explains that closing down of significant industrial businesses in the RA Mediterranean has led to unemployment too: "In industrial enterprises of C., two thousand people were working, one thousand five hundred people were working in B. enterprises. When both of these were closed, three thousand five hundred people were suddenly unemployed. If you consider a family of four or five... The number of people affected is around fifty thousand."

³⁴ The expert interviewee even claims that such labor regime exists not only in fields but also in workplaces at the free zone. Employees work for long working hours (12-15 hours), while the overtime is not unpaid. Informal employment without social security as cheap labor is also the case for migrant workers in the packaging businesses/houses that finalize the agricultural product to be exported before the transportation.



regime prevent Syrians from integration as they work and live in an isolation.³⁵ Informal employment without social security as cheap labor is the most common characteristic of rural migrant labor force. The majority work as day-laborers, even workers in the rural areas who are hired for long term (for example for a year with his family) to take care of the fields and the farmhouse are paid daily. Their daily wages are lower than the others who work as regular seasonal laborers since they have “job security” that only guarantees year-around work (again in an informal way without written contracts). The small producer interviewee says daily wage is YTL 120 (euro 6,8) for long-term workers, while it is YTL 167 (euro 9,4) for regular ones. It is safe to say that migrant labor force in seasonal agricultural work is unorganized³⁶, like the Kurdish labor force.³⁷

Deskilling in the fields is another problem for migrant laborers. An official from the municipality says that he observes that skilled Syrians are employed in agricultural jobs. They cannot practice their own occupation (due to the requirement of the certificate of equivalence and non-acceptance of Syrians under temporary protection for certain white-collar jobs, i.e., officers or doctors).

An officer from the municipality and pro-migrant CSO points to **intense use of child labor** as a major issue in seasonal agricultural work. The latter says that the children get the same amount of money, therefore, they are expected to work hard like adults in the fields, which rises exploitation. Workers’ commute to work is also dangerous, non-profit service provider interviewee and trade union representative interviewee explain that the minibuses carry too

³⁵ In this sense, he says integration would be easier for those employed in furniture sector or working as technician/carpenter in the district center of RA Mediterranean.

³⁶ One needs to mention the problematic nature of labor associations. They are organized by and primarily composed of intermediaries who represent the workers in an implicit way. Trade union representative interviewee says that intermediaries do not want workers to become members of associations not to lose control on workers.

³⁷ The expert interviewee claims that “organized” employers in the packaging sector take advantage of “vulnerable” migrants/refugees and especially women who are the easiest to exploit. Deskilling in the Provincial Organized Industrial Zone or Provincial Free Zone is another issue for those skilled but employed in unskilled jobs for low wages.



many workers leading to accidents with serious casualties. In this sense, the intermediaries working informally do not have permits to transport workers.

Rural migrant labor markets have **a complex structure based on ethnicity and gender**. While Syrians dominate the seasonal agricultural work, Afghans and some Syrians (in very few numbers compared to Afghans) are employed as shepherds. According to the experience of a pro-migrant CSO, there is no Afghans (22,600 in the province) or those under international protection (31,334 in total) observed in the fields, the labor force is almost completely composed of Syrians.

Syrians live generally with their families, yet Afghans tend to be single males in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean. Gender division of labor boldly defines women's and men's work, while making the former cheaper compared to latter one. For instance, pruning is considered as male work, yet harvest is mostly associated by women's labor. The daily wages for pruning are higher than wages for harvest (YTL 180 vs. YTL 167, euro 10,2 vs. 9,4). Women seasonal workers are never free from the reproductive work which doubles their burden. Overburden of production and social reproduction are on the shoulders of women and girls. High numbers of unaccompanied children (as they are "eligible" for fieldwork by the age of 9-10) and single women are stressed by the interviewees too.

Many interviewees mention the harsh ethnic confrontation of laborers in the beginning of Syrian influx (2013-2014). On the issues of job loss or decreasing/depressing wages, Kurds had reactions against Syrians. According to a non-profit service provider interviewee, in 2014-2015, the half of the labor force in the fields was composed of Syrians. In 2014, daily wage for a local woman worker was YTL 50-60, while it was YTL 20-30 TL. for a Syrian woman for the same job. However, he further claims, now out of 7000 seasonal workers in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean, 90% of them are Syrians. Even though many years have passed since then, the differences in the daily wages based on ethnic origin still persists. Today, the difference in comparative wages is not as wide as it used to be but the gap has not closed either.

When it comes to how the obstacles/issues mentioned above have changed over the last five years³⁸, the general strike in 2020 of the intermediaries and laborers come to forefront. As the trade union representative interviewee states six labor associations united together which

³⁸ In the district center, a street level bureaucrat draws attention to the impacts of the pandemic that hit the service sector (small-scale) cafes and restaurants. The number of Afghans and Syrians working in the sweatshops (such as in textile ateliers or shoe production) has increased. The Chamber of Commerce draws attention to strengthening position of wealthy businessmen from Iraq and Syria in Provincial Organized Industry Zone that brings change in employment patterns too (hiring educated migrants/refugees in higher numbers).



increased the bargaining power of the laborers (app. 110 thousand workers). One of the presidents of the intermediary associations was detained for three days. Then a deal was reached with Exporter's Association for the daily wages of seasonal agricultural laborers. In line with that, a women's organization in the district of RA Mediterranean organized a protest with women worker members employed in the packaging houses "against mobbing and harassment". Even though it took public attention and was on the local news, public local authorities did not take any action (such as an investigation).

Maybe the major change has been the replacement of Kurdish labor force with the Syrian one leading to drastic changes in the labor profile. It has triggered internal migration too. As non-profit service provider interviewee says some Kurdish workers left the region and started working as seasonal laborers in the Inner Anatolia Region where the numbers of Syrian workers are not many. Some Kurds tended to work in construction sector, while others became small-scale business owner/trader/retailer. Some of those who stayed in the region started working as intermediaries who employed Syrian workers.

While the first comers suffered from the lack of Turkish speaking skills, especially in accessing to the employers, it has changed, and the younger generations, especially the children seem to overcome the language barrier, as the small producer interviewee states. As such, he further claims that Syrians have strengthened their position in the rural labor market: "they are not like in the beginning, they used to accept every job now they are confident to refuse if they do not like". However, there are other actors who are skeptical of this saying there are too many laborers for a limited number of jobs. This increases job insecurity, "If you do not accept employers/intermediaries' conditions, you are dismissed from work", as pro-migrant CSO interviewee says.

In general, the seasonal labor population has become more permanent in the rural areas of the RA Mediterranean, even though their work is still defined as "seasonal". In line with that, the number of those (who are mainly Kurdish) with cyclical movement (coming from their city of origin to work for a certain period of time and returning) has decreased.

The district governorate also underlines "Syrians' unclear situation" and the question of "if they are going to stay or leave". The governorate draws attention to locals' reaction against Syrians in the RA Mediterranean saying targeting them as a specific group becomes impossible. The local authorities also underline the lack of budget, even if they have plans/programs for these groups to implement.

The Comparative Section

In all three localities, it is observed that the majority of the migrants/refuges access employment under precarious conditions without social security on a daily basis as cheap



labor. Rural sectors, even in the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia are the most accessible sectors for especially Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans under or seeking international protection. The lack of decent and formal employment with a work permit has been a common point for all of the localities. However, there are major differences between the localities as their prominent sectors are different from each other. In this sense, in ST East Marmara, some Syrians under temporary protection as well as Iraqi migrants operate small businesses serving their own communities. Or they can be visible in the service sector as they are considered to be an asset to attract Arabic-speaking customers. However, this is not the case for the ST Central Anatolia where especially Afghans have access to daily jobs which are not visible to the public (dishwasher, porter, and the like). In RA Mediterranean, precarious working conditions in the agricultural production, abuse and exploitation by intermediaries as well as depressed wages for the seasonal agricultural laborers are the main challenges.

4..2. Actors involved (WHO)

ST East Marmara

Pro-migrant CSO focuses on the employers in textile sector to motivate them in formal employment of migrant workers. It informs the employers in the textile sector on the procedure for work permit and deals with the paperwork. The fees that have to be paid by the employers for employing migrant workers are paid by pro-migrant CSO. The employers in collaboration with the pro-migrant CSO are working for large textile firms with export-oriented production. Because of export-oriented production, the large textile firms are responsible for "decent conditions at work" based on international agreements. Therefore, small ateliers that they work with are required too to have formal employment. However, one should note that paying the fees on behalf of the employers is not a common thing for all the CSOs but unique for the CSO interviewed for our research.

The PDMM defines its role as coordinator between different local actors. The PDMM also directs the migrants/refugees to vocational trainings provided by the District Directorate of National Education at the local level. The trainings target migrants to be employed as semi-skilled labor force in the local labor markets. As a street level bureaucrat working in an employment agency states, the employment agency he works at has active/passive programs with the aim of training skilled labor force³⁹. However, in order to access the programs

³⁹ Active labor force programs refer to vocational training courses, on-the-job training programs, programs for the benefit of society and other courses, programs, projects and other courses, programs, projects and services within the scope of active labor force services to help protect and increase employment, improve the

mentioned, a migrant/refugee has to have a work permit. In this sense, such condition can be seen as a bureaucratic obstacle to access employment. One should also note that none of these trainings has the guarantee for employment.

There are other local actors who have rather passive attitude towards migrants' access to employment. For instance, the representative of employers' organization, real estate agency, the employer in construction sector and union representative are not willing to take action in employment issue for migrants. Their unwillingness takes discriminatory tones, even the presence of the migrants in ST East Marmara becomes an issue to them. On the other hand, street level bureaucrat from employment agency and non-profit service provider drew attention to the conditionality of bureaucratic processes (**the requirement of work permit and ID**) required to help the migrants looking for work. Finally, **the municipality does not provide any special program/plan targeted for migrants/refugees** yet it also avoids implementing rules or making inspections (such as on foreigner real estate agencies) that can damage their work as "their contribution [meaning wealthy foreigners] to the local economy is significant".

ST Central Anatolia

According to the Action Plan of the municipality⁴⁰, it aims to improve the employment and trade in the province while providing vocational skills to the locals (referring to the citizens) for access to employment. Even though employment of the disadvantaged groups has been among the municipality's aims for 2020, there was no progress. With a specific focus on **women's participation to labor force**, the municipality, in collaboration with Women's Studies and Education Centre (a unit within the municipality), starts running vocational trainings and courses for female citizens in the locality. The municipality, in collaboration with Employment Agency, provides courses to women for employment. Women participants are paid YTL 30 (euro 1,7) on a daily basis with social security. In this context, the number of courses given to the local women is 7, while there are 134 women participated in total. Vocational courses local women get from the actors generally cover carpet weaving, mask producing, crocheting and preparing house decorations. One should note that these provisions are not guaranteed with employment and it is generally small number of women (around 25 women) who benefit from such courses/trainings. A recent project of the

professional qualifications of the unemployed, reduce unemployment and bring groups requiring special policies to the labor market. special applications are organized. Passive labor force programs including passive employment policies aim to maintain the living conditions that the person is accustomed to during the unemployment period.

⁴⁰ This builds on the activity report of the respective municipality.



municipality that focuses on women' employment under Support to Social Development Program⁴¹ is different from previous ones as it covers higher number (178 women) of participants with employment guarantee yet only for 50 women.

Many actors can be identified in relation to migrants' employment, such as the municipality, the PDMM, pro-migrant CSOs, local headmen, employment agency and the Chamber of Commerce and the experts. According to the municipality, the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey is the main address for the problems related to migrants' employment. At the same time, it does not agree with the idea that the municipality should play a role for migrants' access to employment. That is why there is no action taken by the municipality in this manner. While the deputy mayor acknowledges that the migrant labor has been the backbone of the economy, the municipality is still unwilling to take initiative. At the same time, pro-migrant CSO states that public authorities do not struggle against informal employment, e.g., not making inspections on employers to control if they have informal employees. However, the Directorate of the Women and Family Services is open to any collaboration in the sphere of employment but does not take initiative on its own. The Chamber of Commerce identifies the employment problems in the locality yet it does not make differentiated plans for migrants. For instance, both local and migrant women entrepreneurs are given mentorship by the Chamber. Officers from Employment Agency say that they personally warn and, in some cases, "threaten" employers who are known for informal employment at their workplace. There are other actors, for instance, the employer and the street level bureaucrat, who think that there is no obstacle to employment for migrants/refugees, if they work hard enough.

RA Mediterranean

The district municipality in the RA Mediterranean has provided agricultural vocational trainings (mushroom farming) to the citizens. With the aim of increasing women's participation in employment, the municipality has recently opened textile ateliers in which 140 local women are going to be employed. Like the previous examples, **the municipality's services are limited with the citizens. There have been no policies/practices/services for migrants' access to employment.**

The district governorate is another significant local actor yet in line with the municipality, migrants/refugees are not the specific targets. For improving the employment of the citizens, the governorate evaluates and reviews several projects under Support to Social Development Program. Public Education Centers open agricultural trainings/vocational courses for the locals. In addition, the interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce again drew attention to

⁴¹ The Ministry of Technology and Industry is responsible for the Support to Social Development Program which aims to increase the capacity for employment, social entrepreneurship and innovation, social inclusion and social responsibility. Development Agencies implement the program in provinces.



the newly opening organized zone for its capacity to offer employment opportunities. One needs to mention that these actors focus on the district centers to plan and implement their policies and programs, while the rural areas of the RA Mediterranean are not the main focus. The fact that there is no PDMM in the RA Mediterranean (as the PDMMs are organized at the provincial level) brings further limitations in the issue of employment.

In this sense, the pro-migrant CSO and non-profit service provider interviewee point to the isolated status of the rural areas, when it comes to creating and implementing policies.

The labor intermediaries play a critical role in production. They gather groups of workers in return of certain amount of commission cut from workers' daily payments. Recent change requires the registration of the intermediary to Employment Agency in order to work formally while gathering workers for agricultural work. S/he also needs to sign a contract with the workers. The labor associations in the ST East Marmara are generally composed of the intermediaries. They have rigid control over the workers, while, as in the case of the head of the Labor Association whom we interviewed with, the associations may have the exclusionary attitudes towards the migrants in the agriculture sector.

The Comparative Section

The main national actors for access to employment that are effective at the local level are the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the PDMMs and the Public Employment Agencies. Even though the Chambers of Commerce are also significant actors as nationwide employers' organizations, their interest in migrants' employment differ from each other in these three localities. The only active one working in collaboration with the Governor and the Municipality in employment issue is the Chamber of Commerce in ST Central Anatolia, in spite of the general discriminatory attitude in the ST East Marmara against migrants. The municipalities hold rather passive attitude with a sole focus on the citizens' access to employment. Yet, the municipal work-place inspection units in the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia come forefront as significant actors as they make (or refrain from making) inspections on small businesses, shop-owners and real estate agencies. In addition, trade unions are either ignorant (ST Central Anatolia) or explicitly discriminatory (ST East Marmara and D), when it comes to migrants in the labor market and their employment. Intermediaries in the RA Mediterranean reveal the difference of the rural areas as they play a critical role to bridge the producer and the worker in an unequal power relation.

4.3. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access



ST East Marmara

Except from some mainstream services from which the migrants can benefit too (such as “service desks” with counselling service), **the policies, initiatives and practices of the municipality for improving employment possibilities targets Turkish citizens.** According to Action Report of 2021⁴², the municipality determines its duty in area of employment as improving the capacities of the locals (i.e., Turkish citizens) through vocational courses/training for access to employment within the borders of the municipality. For instance, municipality makes projects to foster local women’s participation in employment. Women and Family Services Directorate, in collaboration with a local CSO provides vocational courses to the local women. Or the municipality creates limited employment opportunities for handicapped individuals in ST East Marmara. Likewise, trade union representative says the union deliberately concentrates on employment issue only for locals given unemployment rates for local population. Employers’ organization acts in a similar way saying that they have discussed the issue of access to employment for the migrants in the locality yet they “decided not to take any action” since “more than needed has been done for them”: “We have not taken any steps in this regard. We didn't do anything. At the same time, at our meetings were discussed a lot, but as I said, we decided not to do anything. Previously, vocational training courses were opened with the support of the EU, and those who attended these courses received money. If it were up to me, I wouldn't do anything (related to harmony/integration). For example, there is this another brand of ours, you know, they have established a Syria Desk to facilitate service procurement. But I think they (migrants) should learn Turkish, I don't have to serve them in Arabic. This is social responsibility (having a desk for migrants), but first they have to adapt. They have to make an effort. They have to follow the manners and knowledge of this place (ST East Marmara). I think that the state does a lot in this sense, even more is given. We are meeting with the PDMM, but we have never talked about migrants/refugees. Our board of directors has a distribution of duties, one of our friends is also responsible for immigration (but we didn't do anything).”

Street level bureaucrat from employment agency draws attention to the **national project “Wage in Return of Work”** implemented by several public institutions including employment agencies at the provincial levels and several I/CSOs in 2018. The agency in ST East Marmara was responsible for implementing what was planned on a national level. The target group was Syrian mothers. While they were having vocational trainings, their children simultaneously got pre-school education. 70 Syrian women participated to the project in ST East Marmara.

⁴² This builds on the activity report of the respective municipality.



Besides pro-migrant CSO working on formal employment in ST East Marmara, **the PDMM**, through the channel of community leaders, **gives information on employment (such as formal procedure) to the migrants**. The PDMM also states that during the pandemic, migrants who lost their jobs applied to the PDMM. Based on their vulnerability, the migrants got in-cash assistances after they were being directed to the SASF to get social assistance. It was especially the case for single women (mostly Iranian) or from LGBT+ community looking for work. In a similar way, a pro-LGBT+ CSO helps unemployed LGBT+ migrants with cash assistance (YTL 1000, 57 euro per month). Finally, the PDMM organized a general meeting on the problems of migrants in 2022. A part of the meeting was about access to employment with the participation of employment agency. During the meeting, general information about the work permits and work life was given.

The Provincial Migration Meetings are the regular meeting with the participation of public institutions, and CSOs. The PDMM argues that these meetings can provide a ground for problems (such as employment) to be discussed and to improve the coordination between public institutions.

ST Central Anatolia

Local people looking for jobs was one of the hot topics stressed by the interviewees during the fieldwork. The deputy mayor states that in order to increase the employment in the province, the municipality collaborates with Employment Agency to open temporary positions (for six months) for the citizens. He also mentioned the role of municipality as intermediary between those looking for jobs and employers. In this sense, **the municipality functions as facilitator but only for the citizens** in the sphere of employment. As stated above, it makes projects to foster local women's participation in employment.

Migrants/refugees appeal to pro-migrant CSO in order to find a job as it functions as a hub of information for migrants looking for jobs. The PDMM takes regular meetings with different stakeholders including employers on the issue of work permit. Employment Agency gives exemption certificate to those working in agriculture and husbandry (mostly Afghans) who work as seasonal workers and shepherds. The Chamber of Commerce gives mentorship to women entrepreneurs and trainings to youth but migrants are not specifically targeted.

The Chamber of Commerce in coordination with the municipality provides vocational courses, however it is stated that participation is low, meetings and trainings have limited effects. As the interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce states, when only the migrants were targeted, there was a reaction from local groups and increasing tension. Employer, on the other hand, puts a work ethic ("hardworking workers regardless of their origin") at the forefront, making the workers' migrant identity invisible. And finally, pro-migrant CSO and the



governorate cooperate for local women to receive vocational training in the Women's Cooperative but recently begun to include migrant women though in limited numbers. Provincial coordination meetings are regularly held to discuss the issue of migration in general.

RA Mediterranean

Employment Agency provides exemption certificates for Syrian groups under temporary protection working in agriculture and husbandry in the RA Mediterranean, as a part of national policy. Exemption certificate guarantees these groups' formal employment in these sectors without need of work permit. Yet, there are no controls on whether the worker is underpaid or not and/or on violation of workers' rights by the authorities in the RA Mediterranean. The exemption certificate seems to strengthen the already informal structure of the labor force in rural sectors in the RA Mediterranean.

In order to eliminate the regional and provincial differences in daily wages of the seasonal workers, **the Ministry of Labor and Social Security has increased the daily wages with a national legislation.** It is equalized to YTL 167 (euro 9,4) for every worker regardless of their country of origin.⁴³ As the new daily wages are calculated based on gross amount and do not require the provision of social security, it has limited benefits to the workers. It is again the Ministry's responsibility to control whether there is a worker underpaid yet, as stated by many interviewers which has limitations on the ground. The Ministry needs to control and enforce that workers are not underpaid, yet, as stated by various interviewees, the Ministry is unable to/does not have the capacity to fulfill this responsibility. Currently the daily wages differ from YTL 80-90 YTL (euro 4,5-5,1) in Sanliurfa province, YTL 70-80 YTL (euro 3,9-5,1) in Hatay province to YTL 110 (euro 6,2) in Tuzla, Adana province. The trade union representative interviewee states that their union investigates these situations and declares them when observed to the Ministry. Although there are deviations in the implementation of the regulation for standardization of daily wages, it is still considered as important, as expressed by the non-profit service provider, since it declares that all workers regardless of ethnic background have the right to get the same amount of money.

In addition to the regulation, as the official from the municipality states, **the municipality plans to give financial support to the small producers in mountainous areas** with land up to 1 hectare yet it again targets only the citizens. The interviewee from the Chamber of Commerce is preparing a project for increasing migrant women's participation in employment

⁴³ Prior to this legislation, the daily wages used to be determined by different actors in the RA Mediterranean, such as Turkish Agricultural Chamber, Mediterranean Exporters Association, farmers' association, intermediaries, intermediaries' and other labor associations and provincial governorship.



in collaboration with other branches of the Chamber of Commerce in different provinces. In addition, as the Chamber of Commerce mentions, the new Organized Industrial Zone has now offered 15 thousand job opportunities. Established in partnership with provincial governorship, metropolitan municipality, district municipality, Chamber of Commerce and other local association, the zone is considered as a potential hub for migrants/refugees looking for a job.

Seasonal agricultural laborers' precarious working and living conditions have been an issue before the arrival of the post-2014 Syrian migrants. Many projects (by public authorities/I/CSOs) are developed to improve working/living conditions of seasonal laborers, such as METIP I and II. There have been other projects against child labor in agricultural production. They also focus on the right to education for children (for instance, a pro-migrant CSO underlines, remote education during the pandemic did not work for these children in the fields). However, none of these mainly target migrants as a specific group.

There are **practices/attitudes observed during the fieldwork that hinder migrants/refugees' access to employment**. One of them comes from trade union representative saying they "initially" avoid Syrians' membership to the union. He further states he officially declared to the provincial governorate that Syrians are not welcomed as intermediaries, drivers (transporting the workers from one place to another) or workers: "No. We...even try to prevent it [having Syrian members]. For example, we said to the governorship that we certainly do not want Syrian intermediaries and drivers in our region. In fact, our associations in other provinces are making moves not to employ them. So, we don't want that. No [legal] obstacle [to employment for Syrians]. But we say that 5-6 Syrians are enough for a worker-team of 30 people. Others should be local. They [Syrians] cause problems when they are numerically greater. So, they are causing a lot of trouble. They find an excuse out of the air and attack [other workers]."

During the information and guidance meeting, as the interviewee from the provincial PDMM states, he tries to convince the citizens that the migrants/refugees contribute a lot to the local economy as they take jobs otherwise unwanted by the locals. According to him, saying they constitute a cheap labor force, and therefore, decrease the cost of products eases the tensions in between. Finally, district coordination meetings, initiated by the district governorate (then it has also recently become obligatory at the district level by a regulation of the Ministry of Interior) are the main forum for the local (public and non-public) actors to discuss the issue of migration in general.

Regarding the downtown area in the RA Mediterranean, a street level bureaucrat says that the number of Syrians who finalize the registration to run their own businesses has increased in the last year after regular inspection made by the municipal officials in the district center of RA Mediterranean. Yet, the dominant attitude with regards to informality is summarized by



the district governorate in an explicit way underlying the unwillingness of the public actors to make inspections on workplaces with informal employment: “We, as state officers, are aware of the situation over there [dominance of informal employment in factories, workshops etc.] yet we do not want to go there to check, because State says [to the employers] produce with the minimum cost.” On the other hand, the PDMM has been in coordination with Provincial Directorate of Labor and Employment institutions in order to organize on-the-job-training programs. Foreigners are also directed to Turkish Employment Agency to improve their skills in the labor market, such as learning how to prepare a CV or how to better look for a job. Particular attention is paid to the immigrant group between the ages of 15-18 and they are primarily directed to vocational courses with the aim of meeting the needs of the labor market for semi-skilled workers.

The Comparative Section

Application and evaluation of the work permit/exemption certificate is found to be the main obstacle for the formal employment of especially Syrians under temporary protection and other migrant groups under or seeking international protection. The policies and practices of the municipalities in three localities focus only on citizens. Fear of public reaction (ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia), the lack of budget (ST East Marmara and RA Mediterranean) and the unclear/temporary legal status (RA Mediterranean) are the main reasons behind the local authorities’ inaction. While some local actors also acknowledge that cheap labor of migrants has been the main driver of the economy, discriminatory attitudes of the trade unions hinder migrant workers’ participation in the unions. While the pro-migrant CSO in ST East Marmara has pro-labor projects to formalize migrant labor in textile sector, this is not a common thing. The other CSOs in ST Central Anatolia and D draw attention to precarious working conditions of different migrant groups but do not have a systematic project. Public employment agency offers vocational courses, job training and the like yet migrants/refugees need to have work permits in order to benefit from these.

4.4. Specific target groups (FOR WHOM)

ST East Marmara

Post-2014 migrants are included in general employment policies and the provision of related services and resources, only if they have recognized legal status in Turkey registration. Work permit regulation (for all the groups formally registered), exemption certification for agriculture and husbandry (Syrians under temporary protection and those under international protection) or recent regulation on access to formal employment, namely the exit strategy are



national policies. Apart from these, local public authorities take very limited action in employment issue. As summarized, other actors have diverse views, while the majority is passive/not willing to take action, few actors are open to intervene or collaboration.

According to Employment Agency, the primary conditions for access to unemployment insurance is being an employee on a contract base with social insurance. Foreign nationals who apply to the agency to meet the eligibility conditions for unemployment insurance and benefit from unemployment insurance services can apply for unemployment benefits by registering as job seekers with the agency. It is possible for those who meet the application and premium payment conditions to benefit from unemployment insurance services, provided that they have a residence permit. The amount of unemployment allowance cannot exceed eighty percent of the gross amount of the monthly minimum wage (YTL 2862, euro 162).

Lack of targeted policies is generally justified by political reasons by public local authorities stating "Migrants are not voters". Discrimination against the migrants overlapping with devastating effects of economic crisis push local actors into a passive and ignorant attitude against employment issue of migrants in ST East Marmara. At the same time, maintenance of the presence of wealthy foreigners and their (possible) investments seem to be another reason behind the passivity of the local public actors (such as municipality not making inspections on real estate agencies). The deputy mayor stated that: "There are two sides to the immigrant/refugee issue: those with the populist/racist rhetoric and those who defend the basic rights of immigrants. But there is also the public reaction (against migrants). For example, we had a sign issue. There were many complaints (by the citizens). The municipality required that the signs were translated into Turkish. If the municipality wants, it can make a strict control, then things will change. But this event was resolved as the signboard will be written in Arabic with six small fonts in Turkish. We did this in 2019 with a city council decision. It was said that 70% of the sign should be in Turkish and 30% in Arabic, and the font size is 1/5. You know A Street (in the A Neighborhood), there are a large number of tourism companies, real estate agents and agencies (run by the foreigners). As a municipality, we did not go too far on these for their contribution to the economy. But as I said, there were a lot of complaints from the citizens. There is also B Street, there are hookah cafes there, too. Problems there too. (...) Public parks are problematic areas. Recently, we opened a park as a municipality. But after the opening, we started to receive a lot of complaints from the people of ST East Marmara. There were statements such as, "You made a pact with the Arabs, so do it for us". But of course, we didn't make that park just for Arabs. What should we do? We built a second park. This time, they started to complain that "Arabs are coming here too". After all, these groups (foreigners) are not our voters. I'm not racist but that's how it is. After all, these people are not voters."



ST Central Anatolia

The policies designed specifically for (post 2014) migrants are not designed at the local level but rather on a national level, such as work permit, exit strategy or vocational trainings provided by Employment Agency, Directorate of Ministry of National Education and so on. The blurred status of the post-2014 migrants (temporary or permanent), political concerns (locals' reactions against any service provided to the migrants and migrants as "not my voters") and finally "waiting for the Presidency for the guidance" explain the passive attitude of the municipality in ST Central Anatolia. Especially the final one appears as quite determining that reveals the strong reflection of the centralized regime in Turkey: "Our leader... Our president right now... I haven't heard anything about it (migration issue) from our president. He did not say that (immigrants) is our problem. It is not our problem. [If so] I don't try to find solutions where there is no problem. I follow standard procedures; I do my job. (...) Something that doesn't come from the top [from the Presidency] is not effective here." Discriminatory attitudes and perspectives of the public officers in the sphere of integration in general are another factor that legitimizes the ignorant and passive attitude. For instance, while the oppositional member of municipality council says, "We try not to employ foreigners as much as possible", public officers suggested during the provincial coordination meeting that those migrants who still cannot speak Turkish should not benefit from social assistances any more during the provincial migration meeting. And finally, the PDMM underline its lack of budget and personnel to improve its capacity in problematic areas related to migrants.

RA Mediterranean

There seems to be no local policies for these groups' access to employment. As mentioned before, agriculture and husbandry are the most accessible sectors for such labor force, therefore, there is no major obstacle to employment yet many barriers exist to access to formal and decent employment. In this sense, the deputy mayor underlines the ambiguous legal status of temporary protection. He further claims that it is the major obstacle for the municipality to plan and implement its policies for those specific groups. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce says that the locals' access to employment is their priority under high local unemployment rates.

The Comparative Section

The three municipalities in these localities focus on their citizens in the issue of employment. There are no plans/policies/projects targeted at migrants as a specific group by the local authorities. However, the ST East Marmara, due to "foreigners' contribution to the local economy", referring to migrants with residence permit or on their way to Turkish citizenship via buying real estate, the municipality appears to ignore to certain extent if the signs are

written according the municipal legislation or those working as real estate agencies have the work permit or not. Trade unions' discriminatory attitudes are common across the three localities. Chamber of Commerce in ST Central Anatolia states they intentionally not to focus on only Syrians or other migrant groups as it raises social tension. That is why these groups are not defined as specific targets. In a different way, Syrians under temporary protection working as seasonal agricultural laborers have become part of a national project (METIP) that aims to improve agricultural laborers' working and living conditions. However, because the project does not differentiate the laborers on the basis of ethnic origin and/or migrant status, Syrians are not formally marked out as a specific target group.

Table 2: Case-by-case summary of results/findings regarding the area of EMPLOYMENT

CASE	Whole-COMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Actor(s) involved	Measure(s)	Target group(s)
ST East Marmara	Revitalizing	Access to formal work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Chambers of Commerce; PDMM	Work permit regulation, however, very few apply for a permit, and employers are unwilling to follow the procedure	Syrians under temporary protection
ST East Marmara	Revitalizing	Access to decent work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Municipal Work-Place Inspection Units	Not enough intervention due to fear of general public reaction, lack of capacity and implicit acknowledgment that cheaper labor supports economic growth	Syrians under temporary protection; other groups under or seeking international protection
ST Central Anatolia	In transition	Access to formal work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Chambers of Commerce; PDMM	Work permit regulation, however, very few apply for a permit, and employers are unwilling to follow the procedure	Syrians under temporary protection



ST Central Anatolia	In transition	Access to decent work (Predominance of day labor and precarious working conditions)	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Municipal Work-Place Inspection Units	Not enough intervention due to fear of general public reaction, lack of capacity and implicit acknowledgment that cheaper labor supports economic growth	Syrians under temporary protection; other groups under or seeking international protection
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Access to formal work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Chambers of Commerce; PDMM	Work permits; Exemption certificates for those working in agriculture and husbandry	Syrians under temporary protection
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Access to skilled work/ Deskilling	Public Employment Agency	Trainings	Syrians under temporary protection with existing work permits
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Access to decent work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security; Municipal Work-Place Inspection Units; Trade unions; Intermediaries	Not enough intervention due to fear of general public reaction, lack of capacity and implicit acknowledgment that cheaper labor supports economic growth	Syrians under temporary protection; Afghans under or seeking international protection
RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Depressed wages in seasonal agricultural work	Ministry of Labor and Social Security	Attempt to standardize wages among different migrant groups (including internal migrants) by declaration of a common daily wage	Syrians under temporary protection



RA Mediterranean	Left-behind	Abuse and exploitation by intermediaries	Ministry of Labor and Social Security	Attempt to establish further fines against /requirements for intermediaries through METIP II	Syrians under temporary protection
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5. Conclusion

In Turkey, **there is no specific public policy that regulates housing access for the migrant populations.** Given that there is lack of planned settlement of the **post-2014 migrants except for those under international protection**, they **have dispersed throughout Turkish provinces based on their own priorities (kinship ties, economic opportunities) leading to highly concentrated migrant populations** in certain metropolises and provinces.⁴⁴ However, the recent change entitled the “de-concentration plan” declared by the Ministry of Interior in late February 2022 has closely been related to the housing issue. According to the plan, foreign nationals will not be granted residency in locations where the number of them make up more than 25 percent of the local population. As a result, many provinces and neighborhoods are closed to new address registration and rental/sales, except for newborn registration or nuclear family reunification.

Nevertheless, three localities still differ from each other with respect to access to housing. The ST East Marmara is a unique case in which sharp class differentiation of the foreigners overlaps with particular migrant status. Wealthy foreigners with touristic visa/resident permit buy real estates and play a critical role in the housing market both as buyers and real estate agents thanks to the legislation that enables the acquisition of Turkish citizenship in return for a set amount of investment or real estate ownership in the country. Spatial concentration of such real estate purchase in the provincial center pushes out the locals who sell their property to foreigners in overpriced amounts. On the other hand, poor segments of migrants/refugee population live in collapsing neighborhoods, which are subject to urban renewal in the indeterminate future, next to the disadvantaged Roma community. The local authorities have a rather passive attitude against migrants/refugees’ access to housing; community leaders are revealed as problem-solvers in the emergency situations in coordination with the PDMM. The fact that migrants/refugees are not voters legitimizes the passivity of the local public authorities.

In the ST Central Anatolia, the spatial concentration of the post-2014 migrants/refugees living in ruin-like houses under poor housing conditions also come to the fore. Many interviewees comment on that the employment patterns (most migrants/refugees engaging in day labor, temporary jobs accessed at the Workers’ Bazaar located in the city center) matter in housing preferences of these groups. These migrants/refugees’ neighborhoods have also been slated for under urban renewal yet there is no information on when the renewal plans will be realized by the local actors or what the case then will be for these groups’ access to housing. Spatial

⁴⁴ The applicants for international protection are still sent to certain “satellite” cities in Turkey; they are not allowed to move as they wish.



segregation enhances the segregation in schooling. The locals leaving these neighborhoods move to other neighborhoods with the aim of sending their children to schools without foreign students. The municipality expresses its exclusionary attitude against the post-2014 migrants/refugees in a clear way, while the PDMM points to its lack of budget and human resources to take action. The municipality explicitly states that a top-to-down intervention is needed, i.e., a final decision by President Erdogan on post-2014 migrants/refugees' stay in Turkey (determining whether it will be temporary or permanent), for the municipality to take action. In this context, some interviewees underline that migrants/refugees have created their own ways to deal with the housing issue (forming WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups or social networks to inform each other about housing options).

The rural areas of the RA Mediterranean reveal a completely different picture compared to the two other, urban examples. Post-2014 migrants/refugees in the rural areas mainly engage in seasonal agricultural work and husbandry. Those working as seasonal agricultural workers are predominantly composed of Syrians who live in the tent areas close to the fields. Even though Syrians seasonal workers work for 12 months due to the variety of the agricultural work options and stay permanently in the rural areas of the RA Mediterranean, temporary housing conditions that take a permanent form is the primary feature of their accommodation.

One can say that there has been a historical continuum when it comes to poor housing conditions which internally displaced Kurdish seasonal labor force has also experienced in the same rural areas since the 1990s. The tent areas are generally located on the public land (next to irrigation channels belonging to State Hydraulic Works (DSI), on land owned by the Treasury or next to the main roads), but sometimes also on private land (in the fields). Regardless of the ownership of the lands, a street level bureaucrat states that each household is required to pay YTL 1000 (euro 53,8) to the village headmen to be used on behalf of the local community. However, the deal between these two parties is not legal, therefore, there is no written/signed contract which can, from time to time, lead to abuse of the Syrian groups in order to force them to move elsewhere. The intermediaries who make the deal with the village headmen play a critical role in access to housing for their migrant worker groups. The tent areas are generally in poor housing conditions; there may be lack of access to clean water/water at all, electricity or infrastructure. Linked to limited access to clean water, interviewees draw attention to the presence of the contagious diseases especially affecting children and newborns.

Having limited funds that support the CSO's work is another common dynamic for the CSOs in all three localities yet many interviewees underline the isolated and remote state of the rural areas that makes it difficult to intervene in the housing issue in a sustainable way compared to urban areas of RA Mediterranean. For example, a pro-migrant CSO draws attention to their projects in the rural areas as effective but at the same time short-term. On the other hand,



the municipality provides limited services to the tent areas, such as improving the village roads, provision of clean water and utilities. However, they do not lead to fundamental changes in the abovementioned housing patterns for the Syrian migrant groups. The PDMM describes what the municipality has been done as “improvement”, not as “development”. Since 2018, the municipality’s attitude against migrant settlements in tents has also changed. The municipality started to distribute checkmarks confirming the addresses of each tent so that the migrants can benefit from social assistances that are linked to having a formal address registration. Apart from that, there is no fundamental policy/plan improved/implemented at the local level. The municipality admits that the blurred legal status of migrants confuses them about what to do. The lack of budget is underlined as another obstacle for local authorities. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security is currently implementing the ‘Improvement of Work and Social Lives of Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers Project’ (METIP II) to eliminate the seasonal agricultural workers’ living and working problems. METIP II aims to facilitate the delivery of public services to the workers and their families. Nevertheless, Syrian migrants are not a specific target group.

The work permits for foreigners and the exemption certificates for those working in agriculture and husbandry, and several services/programs (trainings, courses and the like) provided to those with work permits by the public employment agencies in each province are the main regulatory tools in this domain. However, Turkish economy has been traditionally characterized by **high rate of informality**. In addition to this historical trend, high inflation and deepening economic crisis have been the new normal for Turkey that leads to **competition over the limited jobs between the host community and migrant groups**. In other words, race to the bottom characterizes the labor markets both for both sides. In this context, the **majority of post-2014 migrants/refugees work informally and under precarious conditions**. That is why, based on the preliminary findings, **the major problem for migrant/refugee groups is not lack of access to employment but rather access to decent work** with minimum wage, social security and basic workers’ rights. This is the general context that shapes the access to employment for post-2014 migrants/refugees in all three localities in our research. In line with that, we see **concentration of the migrants/refugees in certain sectors such as agriculture, husbandry and construction which are highly informal, therefore, easy-to-enter sectors**. One needs to mention that the form that migrants/refugees’ jobs take tends to be day labor jobs: temporary, invisible, “dirty” and physically demanding. Migrant status, class background and skilled/unskilled labor for a post-2014 migrants/refugees are the other significant features that shape post-2014 migrants/refugees’ access to employment. We also see that **certain ethnic groups tend to overlap more with certain sectors/jobs**, such as Afghans as shepherds or construction workers and Syrians as seasonal agricultural laborers. **Gender dimension** shapes the labor market while allocating different sectors/jobs to women and men too. For example, the tendency for women seems to be non-involvement in the labor market due to the reproductive burden and rigid gender codes is observed in ST Central Anatolia.



Migrant/refugee women who participate in paid labor in the labor market either work as laborers (mostly in agriculture, textile, care and service sectors) or run their own business, such as beauty shops or hairdressers (in a very limited number).

In the **ST East Marmara**, the most prominent sector is the housing sector in which the foreigners (Iraqi, Iranian and Gulf country citizens with residence permit and/or getting Turkish citizenship via buying real estate) play a significant role as real estate agents in the housing market. Such dynamic housing sector triggers the construction sector where mainly Afghan and Syrian males are employed as construction workers. Service sector is another address for the post-2014 migrants/refugees, unlike the ST Central Anatolia, especially those speaking Arabic and Farsi can find themselves a position in the service sector (mostly as waiters and waitresses) due to the presence of wealthy foreigners from Iraq, Iran and the Gulf countries. The interviewees further states that the presence of migrants/refugees (especially those under temporary protection and international protection) satisfies the need in the local labor market for the semi-skilled labor. While the municipality acknowledges the “contribution” that the wealthier segment of foreigners makes to the local economy, it ignores the other, poorer groups of migrants/refugees who work in high informality for cheaper wages. The municipality underlines the negative reactions of the locals in the ST East Marmara against the foreigners and therefore, says the municipality prioritizes its own citizens and is not willing to take action for the sake of the migrant/refugee groups who are not their voters in the last instance. Interviewees from the employment agency draw attention to limitations of the service provisions of the agency which are only for those migrants/refugees with work permits. Along the same lines, a pro-migrant CSO supports employers for formal employment at the textile sector via paying the fees for the work permits. Finally, the limited job opportunities in the labor market are a common complaint yet there is no long-term, sustainable policy making on part of the local actors to resolve the issues in employment.

The barriers to access to (decent) employment for post-2014 migrants/refugees in the **ST Central Anatolia** are similar to the ones mentioned in the ST East Marmara. Unlike the ST East Marmara, ST Central Anatolia does not reveal a clear class differentiation among the migrant/refugee population. The Iranian asylum seekers waiting for third country resettlement tend to have higher education and language abilities, therefore, their relative skills differentiate them from other refugee/migrant groups in the labor market. Syrian and Afghan labor force living in the decaying neighborhoods in order to be close to the Workers’ Bazaar mostly take day labor under precarious conditions as cheap labor. As the official from the municipality states, they are employed in rather invisible jobs (porter, dishwasher and the like). Again, some work as apprentices; for example, the small shop owners, such as groceries or bakeries sometimes employ Afghans as apprentices. The PDMM points to high informality and very low rate of work permits for these groups, while the municipality clearly expresses its exclusionary attitudes against them. The deputy mayor also draws the line by stating that the citizens in the province have the priority for improvement in their employment conditions.



Nationalist, conservative and Islamist political atmosphere in the province plays a role in the passivity. For instance, the member of municipality council from opposition party holds migrants/refugees as responsible for the unemployment of the locals and their depressed wages. Ironically, the local authorities (the deputy mayor of the municipality) and some local actors (such as employer or various street-level bureaucrats) simultaneously appreciate the migrant/refugee labor at the same time stating that the local economy cannot survive in their absence.

Finally, the rural areas of the **RA Mediterranean** offer the easiest access to employment for the post-2014 migrant/refugee groups. Agriculture and husbandry have been the most inclusive sector for these groups to find employment due to their highly informal character, daily payment system, and unskilled jobs. It is possible to work during the whole year in the rural areas because of ongoing agricultural activities. That is why, large groups of Syrians under temporary protection status work as seasonal agricultural laborers in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean. While in the beginning they experienced a harsh ethnic confrontation with the internally displaced Kurdish laborer groups, the Syrian labor has now replaced it and become the dominant labor force in the area. During the first years after their arrival, Syrians depressed wages leading to serious conflicts with the Kurds, yet their wages have recently become almost equal, as some interviewees state. The daily wage determined by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in order to create to a standardized payment on a national basis still differs from one location to another in practice. Gender division of labor is another parameter for changing daily payments. The intermediaries play a critical role in gathering workers, making deals with the employers on behalf of them and paying them. However, let alone the workers (either Kurdish or Syrian), even the intermediaries themselves work informally. Very few numbers of intermediaries are registered and therefore, workers generally have no proper contracts.

As a result, Syrians are employed in an exploitative work system characterized by long working hours, poor living conditions in the tents next to the fields, risky transportation in overcrowded vehicles and the like. Such system also isolates them leading to ongoing language barriers and lack of/limited integration with the locals. As seen in other two localities, the informality is not considered an issue for the local authorities/actors to fight against. The municipality shows the blurred legal status of temporary protection as the main reason behind their lack of intervention, as well as the municipality's budget being determined according to the number of citizen residents excluding the large numbers of Syrians living within the borders of the municipality. The governorate and the PDMM also acknowledges the high informality. At the same time the former confesses that they intentionally do not take action: if inspections cause a shift in agricultural production from informality to formality, this will increase the costs of production and food prices may be doubled or tripled. The PDMM tries to ease the social tension between the locals and the migrants/refugees by assuring local actors that migrants/refugees only take the jobs that the locals do not want to take up in the



rural areas. According to this logic, it is thanks to these groups that agricultural products are cheaper and available for consumption despite the hyper-inflation that Turkey is currently facing. In this regard, there exists national regulations (such as standardization of the daily wages or the project METIP to improve seasonal laborers' working conditions, or further requirements/fines for intermediaries for registration) which attempt to overcome the informality in rural areas, however their effectiveness on the ground should be carefully examined. To sum up, it is safe to say that the most important challenge in the access to housing and employment for post-2014 migrants/refugees in Turkey has been the lack of access to decent housing and formal employment in Turkey.

When it comes to the evaluation of Turkish cases in terms of the Whole-Comm typology, one should note that there have been overarching similarities among these three localities in spite of their different characteristics in terms of size, political affiliation, experience of cultural diversity and structural factors. The national understanding of migration management in the course of rising centralization in Turkey seems to limit the responses of the local to the migration issue. However, at the same time, behind the overall passivity of the local authorities with different political affiliations, the motivations to be so are quite different as observed during the interviews. While one can expect from the municipality in ST Central Anatolia (ruling party) to be pro-refugee/migrant that is in line with the AKP's political stance, during the interview, the municipality's discriminatory attitudes towards these groups were explicitly expressed and underlined that as a municipality, they wait for the final decision of President Erdogan who would determine if the migrants (mainly referring to Syrians) are temporary or permanent. Only after that, the municipality considers to take action. On the other hand, progressive municipality in RA Mediterranean states that the blurred category of temporary protection in legal terms makes them paralyzed as it is not clear to them whether they should intervene or not. Based on the findings from the fieldwork, it is safe to state that in spite of different political affiliations, the active passivity of the municipalities has been found as common yet the reasons behind such active passivity may be diverse.

In ST East Marmara, the presence of wealthy foreigners (mostly from Iraq, Iran and Gulf countries with residence permit or seeking Turkish citizenship by investment) leads to increasing reactions of the citizens against the more vulnerable/disadvantaged migrant groups. In a similar way, the presence of Kurdish IDPs in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean creates a severe competition and confrontation for Syrians under temporary protection with increasing hostility. These examples make us question the assumed positive relation between the diversity and the better integration in localities according to the Whole-Comm typology.

The spheres of employment and housing in Turkey suffer from certain structural contradictions, such as high informality and super-exploitation or the lack of public policies for social housing. Nevertheless, the urban-rural divide in the Turkish cases is found to be significant for explaining the limited differences between the diverse migrant/refugee groups'



access to housing and employment. RA Mediterranean comes to the scene as a place where super exploitation of the Syrian labor force (under temporary protection) as seasonal agricultural laborers goes hand in hand with the precarious housing conditions.

We also believe that the differences in access to employment in the three cases seem to be closely related to the state of leading economic sectors in each locality. For instance, Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans under and/or seeking international protection appear to fill the gap in manufacturing sector in ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia as unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Agriculture and husbandry have always been the most accessible sectors for the post-2014 migrants in RA Mediterranean. Having competed with the Kurdish IDPs, Syrians now take their place at the bottom of the rural labor market.

When it comes to housing, the right to property ownership emerges as a significant determinant in Turkey. While those under temporary protection are not allowed to buy houses for their own, those with other types of residence permits can buy real estate, mostly in return for citizenship. Conceptualized as “class-based integration” (Simsek, 2020)⁴⁵, this brings us to the issue of class differences between migrant/refugee groups, as the class status may determine the migrant status in a very dramatic way in Turkey.

⁴⁵ Simsek, D. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 33, Issue 3, September 2020, Pages 537–554, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev057>



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