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3 Metamorphosis of educational 4 understanding: Temporary 5 integration of Syrians in Turkey

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6 Abstract

7 *The integration of refugees in Turkey has been realized in the field with the help of DGMM (Directorate*
8 *General on Migration Management), Kızılay and UNHCR mainly, and by many more international and*
9 *non-governmental organizations that have supported refugees by answering their short-term needs*
10 *such as giving them cards for shopping, clothes, preparing them for winter (“winterization”) and*
11 *providing educational assistance. I conducted 15 interviews with state officials, various NGOs and a few*
12 *refugees. During my research many interesting points about integration policies (to-be-formed) at the*
13 *moment in Turkey were discovered. One interesting finding was that the state officials do not like to use*
14 *the word “integration”, as it is reminiscent of the way Turkish migrant workers were treated in Germany,*
15 *where assimilation and integration were understood as the same concept. I use the term “temporary*
16 *integration” for the case of all refugees, but this article will focus mostly on the Syrians. Within the*
17 *context of temporariness, this article’s central attention will be the educational integration of Syrian*
18 *refugees in Turkey. I argue in the paper that the temporariness and the nostalgia with the Ottoman past*
19 *are two main elements mostly present regarding the educational integration of Syrians in Turkey.*

20 **Keywords:** *Syrian refugees; Turkish immigration policies; educational integration; temporary*
21 *integration; harmonisation.*

22 Introduction

23 With the Law on Foreigners on International Protection in 2013,
24 “harmonisation”— a term used to refer to integration—was endorsed by
25 Law as well by article 96. The Turkish government specifically chose this
26 concept, because it would imply the two-way approach in line with the
27 2004 Common Basic Principles of Europe¹. Moreover, it would differentiate
28 the definition of ‘assimilation’ from endorsing a reciprocal meaning.

29 Two-way integration requires that the host society itself changes, adapts
30 and transforms, not only its immigrants and refugees. Integration cannot
31 be imposed or demanded by force, and becoming integrated is not only
32 about reconciling cultural differences. This concept also includes other
important dimensions, such as educational integration, access to
healthcare, political participation, family reunification, access to a path

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¹ http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf accessed on 26th
of June 2016.



1 toward citizenship and respect for the principle of non-discrimination². This
2 article's focus will be educational integration.

3 The aim of this article is to demonstrate the necessity of creating
4 harmonisation policies in Turkey, and also to establish that, while creating
5 these harmonisation policies, it must be understood that the refugees and
6 migrants are not being integrated into an empire. The idea of
7 harmonisation suggested by the DGMM conflicts with the idea of
8 integrating the subjects to a greater majority, which is considered by the
9 government to be reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. When I began my
10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews in November 2015, in Gaziantep and
11 Ankara, it turned out that the integration policy and migration policymaking
12 regarding Syrians in Turkey are both quite influenced by these nostalgic
13 ideals of empire-like behaviour. However, I have also observed that
14 regarding the educational integration policy, empire-like treatment of
15 immigrants and nostalgic approach were more visible than in other areas
16 of integration.

17 Turkey, to an extent, had been successful in integrating refugees,
18 especially the Syrians. Turkey had been an immigrant country for more than
19 30 years, but until the Syrian refugee crisis came to the fore, integration
20 had never been discussed nor endorsed to this extent. The high number of
21 Syrian refugees (more than 3 million by 2017 (Sirkeci, 2017:127) also has a
22 great significance: it shows how much Turkey had to (and still must) realise
23 in terms of reforming immigration policies and creating diverse integration
24 policies for different refugee groups, as all these groups have different
25 needs (within groups, needs differ based on age and gender; between
26 groups, Syrians and Iranians may have different priorities).

27 As indicated above, harmonisation was the term that was preferred for
28 the reason that it meant mutual recognition, respect and adaptation.
29 Göksel (2015) indicated that recent developments on immigration, for
30 instance, the adoption of the Law on Foreigners and International
31 Protection (YUKK) and the establishment of a Directorate General of
32 Migration Management (DGMM) in 2013, demonstrate that the need for
33 devising systematic integration policies is recognised by the state. Article
34 96³ has been an important one for reinforcing harmonisation, as foreseen
35 below:

² These are the indicators taken from MIPEX. It is also very recent that Turkey has been evaluated by MIPEX indicators; it has scored 25 out of 100. There are many reasons for this, though the article does not aim to analyse all reasons in detail. Rather, it aims to understand the *raison d'être* of the state in enacting the law and including harmonisation within.

³ http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/eng_minikanun_5_son.pdf accessed on 16 November 2016.



1 *ARTICLE 96– (1) The Directorate General may, to the extent that Turkey’s*
 2 *economic and financial capacity deems possible, plan for harmonization activities*
 3 *in order to facilitate mutual harmonization between foreigners, applicants and*
 4 *international protection beneficiaries and the society as well as to equip them with*
 5 *the knowledge and skills to be independently active in all areas of social life without*
 6 *the assistance of third persons in Turkey or in the country to which they are*
 7 *resettled or in their own country. For these purposes, the Directorate General may*
 8 *seek the suggestions and contributions of public institutions and agencies, local*
 9 *governments, non-governmental organisations, universities and international*
 10 *organisations.*

11 In line with this article, the Turkish state started language courses for
 12 the foreigners; they consulted public agencies and gave a number of
 13 conferences and seminars for raising information and awareness on
 14 integration. Workshops and informative sessions with migrants were held
 15 in different cities across Turkey. The legislation of Foreigners and
 16 International Protection has been translated into 10 languages. A cartoon
 17 character based on a migrant child, called MUYU⁴, was created;
 18 additionally, a website for migrant children was formed, and a children’s
 19 comic book (with the same name MUYU) was published. The experts at
 20 DGMM also organised and were involved in activities on the 18th of
 21 December Migrant Day Celebrations. A helpline previously used by IOM,
 22 the 157 Helpline, was also transferred to DGMM in order to answer
 23 immigrants’ questions and respond to their needs. Hence, migration and
 24 integration policy are becoming institutionally entrenched in the Turkish
 25 context. This is not only due to the Syrian refugee crisis, but is also a result
 26 of years of work that has been accomplished, and the years of cumulative
 27 experiences and constructive criticism together with support from local
 28 NGOs and the international community.

29 In this article, I will discuss if the term “temporary integration”⁵ is
 30 applicable to the case of Syrians. It seems that their case has been treated
 31 as harmonisation and a two-way approach was adopted, but still there are
 32 discussions and debates around their temporariness and permanency.
 33 Although this term was mostly applied to the case of the temporary migrant
 34 workers, I find the term temporary integration also useful in this case, as
 35 the Syrians might return to their country when peace is restored, but they
 36 might also never again have the chance to return. Their status allows them
 37 to integrate, but it keeps them under temporary protection.

38 As the situation has been protracted and refugees have stayed much
 39 longer than expected, the context of this issue has changed tremendously

⁴ Muyu, when read reversely is ‘uyum’ which means harmonisation in Turkish.

⁵ This term was first used by the author to refer to temporary migrant workers, meaning that integration can be temporary. However, in this case, the definition is slightly different.



1 in the last five years. Although there were no official integration policies,
2 there was a great deal of organisation at the local level to provide social
3 support to Syrians, to help them with health and education access by the
4 AFAD (The Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), United
5 Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations
6 International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), IOM, Welthungerhilfe
7 (WHH), IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Mazlum-der, WHH, Kimse Yok
8 Mu, and many other, similar organisations (also including Syrian
9 organisations, such as Minbar Al-Sam). Gaziantep became a hub of both
10 international and local organisations. Within this context, Syrians' case
11 carries the traces of both integration and temporariness.

12 As a result of my field-work in Ankara and Gaziantep in the month of
13 November 2015, I found that Syrians were temporarily integrated under
14 the status of temporary protection. However, since their numbers are high
15 and the state's capacity is not yet at the level of managing such major
16 numbers, integration will be a long and multi-lateral process (Akçapar and
17 Şimşek 2018). It seems that NGOs and INGOs have achieved great results in
18 terms of performing their duties as social service providers, negotiators,
19 translators, researchers, and organisers of macro-level meetings, yet the
20 systematic approach to the general situation is missing from the scene. This
21 is not only because the state has a limited capacity, but also because the
22 numbers are not easily manageable. However, it is also necessary to add
23 that DGMM has improved its system and personnel capacity greatly in
24 order to meet the needs of migrants, and this improvement has led to great
25 innovations in the process. They have also started to publish online
26 statistics (previously under the discretion of TUIK⁶) and a yearly report, both
27 in a very detailed manner. Migration management and integration
28 management have become core areas in which the Turkish state wants to
29 develop its capacity and its institutions. While trying to build its capacity,
30 Turkey is usually looking up to good practices internationally.

31 In this article, I attempt to understand from my interviews what kind of
32 vision of integration and harmonisation the Turkish state has in mind, and
33 what their implications could be for the area of educational integration,
34 especially where the conflicts of ideologies gain precedence. I am of the
35 opinion that educational integration is the most controversial topic
36 regarding temporary integration; this will be explained with the interviews
37 that provided me the most original insights into educational integration.
38 Finally, I will articulate some policy suggestions in the conclusion.

⁶ Turkish Statistical Institute, which is called now Turkstat



1 **A Short Review of the Literature and the Background of the Current Terms**

2 The literature on the integration of Syrians is mostly focussed on the
 3 social, economic, demographic and political aspects of integration (Sirkeci,
 4 2017; Yucesahin and Sirkeci, 2017; Kivilcim, 2016; Doğutaş, 2016; Kaya,
 5 2016; Kirişçi, 2014; Erdoğan, 2014; Topçuoğlu, 2014; Dorman, 2014; Özden,
 6 2013; Seydi, 2013). However, a full-fledged study on the diverse pillars of
 7 integration (education, health, social and political participation, welcoming
 8 and referral-orientation, and status transitions including security of status
 9 and family reunification) has not yet been published. Göksel (2013)
 10 deliberated over the term harmonisation and its meaning in the nation-
 11 state context. Erdoğan (2014), although not specifically indicating matters
 12 of integration, wrote a very extensive first outlook on the Syrians' situation
 13 as well as the public's opinion of it. He also indicated the extent to which
 14 the Syrians had access to social, political and economic rights.

15 Exceptions to these works include Elif Eda Tibet (2017), who carried out
 16 a detailed analysis of the wishes, educational dreams and non-formal
 17 education of foreign children in Turkey. She had conversations with the
 18 minors and tried to understand their world. Her work introduces a unique
 19 and intriguing method of study that has yet to be experimented with by
 20 Turkish scholars. She suggested that most of the young refugees did not
 21 have much hope about their future in Turkey.

22 The academics have come to a point where discussing integration or
 23 harmonisation as a national model is insufficient. For instance, in
 24 educational integration policies, there is a need to elucidate which needs
 25 are to be provided regarding educational qualifications for the teachers and
 26 trainers (Balkar et al. 2016). Moreover, we need to achieve progress in
 27 improving educational institutions for enabling a multicultural society
 28 where some of the children are extremely vulnerable, and scared. The issue
 29 of underage Syrian brides is another complication within this dilemma⁷.

30 It was thought that temporary protection status would be sufficient, as
 31 the refugees would return to their country after the end of the war (yet to
 32 this day the war is not terminated); however, it was seen that the crisis was
 33 protracted and Syrians were forced to stay, since they had no chance to
 34 return to their home country. This was one of the reasons why the
 35 government officials also refrained from using the word "integration".
 36 Another reason why "harmonisation" was chosen over "integration" was

⁷ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2018/01/child-marriage-divorce-syrian-refugees-turkey/> accessed on 25th January 2018.



1 that the DGMM had associated integration with the assimilative policies of
2 the European countries. As one of my informants, a professor⁸, stated:

3 *“When you go to DGMM do not use the word ‘integration’ because it has*
4 *historical connotations with the integration of Turks in Germany. They have been*
5 *mostly assimilated⁹. It is better to use the word harmonisation. It does not mean*
6 *that assimilation is a pejorative thing necessarily, if there is a host society then*
7 *migrants will adapt to the economic and political ways of organisation there. But*
8 *Turkey is trying to say that they suggest a different experience than those EU*
9 *countries applied, that is why they say harmonisation.”*

10 Not only the word harmonisation, but also the “open door policy”¹⁰
11 towards Syrians, has been affected by empathy and nostalgia towards the
12 Ottoman history. It is worth noting how the occupation of Constantinople
13 (an invented tradition) is celebrated every year, as this was not a common
14 practice even fifteen years ago. The Republican holidays (youth and
15 children’s day), on the other hand, have lost their lure and attraction. There
16 is a great effort on the part of the government to align itself on the side of
17 the Ottoman world, as if Ottoman Empire is repeatable and as if there had
18 not been an eight-five-year Republican history in-between. Governance of
19 space/time/historical victories (and/or losses) and common memories as a
20 resurrection of a glorified Ottoman-ization reveals itself in many other
21 areas (Karaosmanoğlu 2010; Harmanşah 2014). Refugee integration has
22 also some traits of this governing ideology.

23 The Syrian refugee crisis has become a part of this understanding;
24 hence, the world “ensar” (the one who helps the Muslim refugees; helpers;
25 Muslim foreigners) is being used as a name by many NGOs in different
26 cities. Although these NGOs are highly representative of the refugees in
27 some cities, the structures of these NGOs suggest a Gramscian perspective
28 on organic intellectuals and NGOs, rather than on representing an
29 independent state of mind. These organisations seem to be closely
30 connected with the dominant ideology of the state and appear to be the
31 most active ones, especially in the Middle Anatolian cities.

32 The professor I interviewed also made these important remarks
33 regarding the issue of harmonisation: “Ottoman history is more relevant
34 than Turkish history when harmonisation is considered. If we have such a

⁸ Interview in November 2015, Ankara.

⁹ At this point, we discussed whether assimilation is integration. For my thesis, I claimed that integration is not assimilation, but he suggested that “integration” recalls Turkish experience and that is why the DGMM did not want to use this word.

¹⁰ Open door policy meant that the Turkish state would have its borders open to the Syrian refugees at whatever cost, and both AFAD and DGMM said that this policy would be followed no matter what. However, there is some counter-evidence to this claim in some scholarly works.



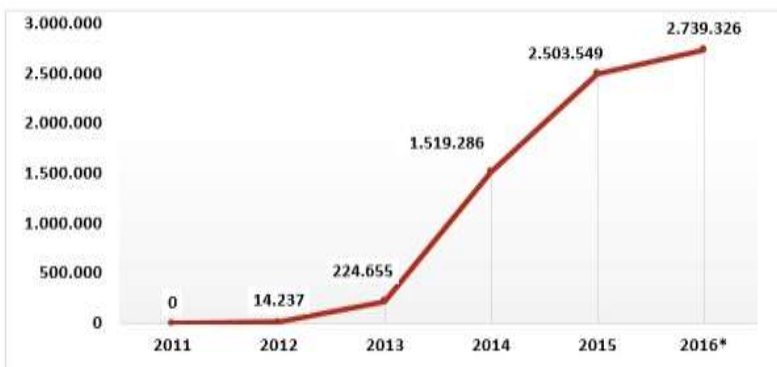
1 historical enrichment and experience, for sure it will be used. The fact that
 2 these people are coming from previous Ottoman territories and they are
 3 Muslims makes a difference in terms of the approach towards them.”
 4 Ottoman history and societal relationships are taken more as a referral
 5 point, to keep a long story short. However, I believe that this understanding
 6 is not based on factual historical research. This is more of an invented past,
 7 or “invented traditions”¹¹.

8 Despite all these discussions, the officially-accepted belief reflects the
 9 idea that “harmonisation” sounds better than “integration”, although
 10 integration does sound more international; harmonisation sounds unique,
 11 while integration sounds more commonly used. It could also mean, in the
 12 Turkish state’s words: “I will not follow a model that is followed by the EU,
 13 I have my own tools and history lessons to figure out what kind of system I
 14 am going to apply this term in my country.” However, considering that the
 15 Syrians are high in numbers, choosing this term is not a coincidence. It is
 16 quite doubtful if the same term “harmonisation” would have been used in
 17 the case of non-Muslim refugees.

18 **A Brief Background of Protracted Temporariness: Numbers and Comparisons**

19 Turkey has never had to deal with such a great number of refugees
 20 before, and it has never had to lift such a burden before the Syrian refugee
 21 crisis. 2013 was the tipping point that caused some changes in the policies
 22 regarding migration (see table 1 below):
 23
 24

Table 1. The holders of Temporary Protection Status in Turkey



25 **Source:** <http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-koruma> 363 378 4713
 26 accessed on 26th of June 2016.
 27

¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, ed. (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.



1
2 Harmonisation policies were unforeseen for Bulgarian Turks, Russians
3 and former Soviet Union migrants and refugees, as well as for Iraqis,
4 Iranians, Afghans, and Pakistanis. Some might claim that it would be one-
5 dimensional to interpret this issue only in terms of religious affinity and past
6 ideological interpretation. In this case, it would be necessary to add that
7 the state also did not have the personnel and institutional capacity to build
8 this kind of structure before 2013, as there was no YUKK before 2014.
9 However, with the assistance of the NGOs and IOs, and with academia
10 pushing the debate into an immigration country since the 1990s (Kirişci,
11 2007; Tolay, 2015), the policy rationale was finally ripe for change. It is a
12 contextual change, as the Syrian refugee crisis triggered the necessity of
13 enacting a major legislation. However, the role of the previous advocacy by
14 academics, NGOs and INGOs cannot be denied.

15 Within the framework of supporting the development of harmonisation
16 policies in Turkey, six aspects of harmonisation have gained prominence¹²:
17 1) Developing orientation and referral services; 2) Securing access to
18 statuses, as well as civil, social and economic rights; 3) Granting efficient
19 and systematic social service provisions; 4) Guaranteeing access to decent
20 health services; 5) Increasing access to education; 6) Integration in the
21 labour market; 7) Strengthening mechanisms for social participation.
22 Adopting a holistic approach to integration is an urgent need for Turkey,
23 where there are currently 3,583,434 Syrians registered¹³. However, this
24 harmonisation policy does not only have the purpose to cover Syrians, but
25 all migrants and refugees residing in Turkey, as Syrians make up 80 percent
26 of the migrant population (IOM Strep 2016). The state has recognised the
27 need for an all-encompassing integration policy.

28 When it comes to education policy the key facts are as such: 62 percent
29 of the Syrian children are enrolled in formal education; over 20,000 of
30 Syrian youth are attending Turkish universities; 1152 Syrian students are
31 receiving full scholarships supported by UNHCR; and finally, 4292 Syrian
32 youth are enrolled in UNHCR supported higher education preparation
33 programs¹⁴ (UNHCR 2018). When the full numbers of the children are
34 considered, these numbers enrolled in educational institutions seem to be

¹² Working at IOM Ankara for four months, these are the areas, which were discussed and accepted in order to prepare the National Strategy Document on Harmonisation Policies of Turkey. These categories might have changed slightly.

¹³ Data Source UNHCR, June 2018 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113> latest access on 12th of June 2018.

¹⁴ Promoting access of refugees to education, accessed on <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63882> latest access on 2nd of June 2018.



1 lower than what the ideal situation could be. According to the statistics of
 2 2016 (UNICEF 2016), 54 percent of total Syrian population registered in
 3 Turkey are children and amongst them 325,000 are enrolled in schools.
 4 Therefore, it is possible to see that there is a slight increase in the number
 5 of the students enrolled in the schools from 54 percent to 62 percent. On
 6 the other hand, the funding for the 3RP¹⁵ strategy of the UNHCR comes
 7 from diverse resources¹⁶. Diversifying the resources can be a good strategy
 8 but it does not mean that there would not be a donor fatigue in the future
 9 as temporariness is protracted.

10 On the other hand, funding seems to be a problem that is encountered
 11 in Jordan and Lebanon as well. According to Culbertson and Constant (2015:
 12 37) in the long-term donor fatigue can be an issue if long-term
 13 infrastructural measures are not taken into consideration. The research
 14 reveals that the Syrian children in Turkey are not integrated into the mixed
 15 classes (where Turkish children are educated) as much as they are in Jordan
 16 and Lebanon (Kolcu 2014 quoted in Culbertston and Constant 2015: 50).
 17 Only 7 percent of the Syrian children are in the same classroom with Turkish
 18 children (ibid.). On the other hand, what is common between three
 19 countries is that the traumatised children are not sent to special schools
 20 but are registered in normal schools (Culberston and Constant 2015: 61).
 21

22 **Table 2:** Registered Refugees including Children in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon
 23 and Turkey

	<i>Registered refugees</i>	<i>Child refugees (under 18)</i>	<i>Child refugees (under 5)</i>
<i>Jordan</i>	<i>661,859</i>	<i>334,901</i>	<i>100,603</i>
<i>Iraq</i>	<i>248,382</i>	<i>106,804</i>	<i>40,486</i>
<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>991,165</i>	<i>546,132</i>	<i>158,586</i>
<i>Turkey</i>	<i>3,588,877</i>	<i>1,647,295</i>	<i>495,265</i>

24 **Source:** UNHCR data portal accessed on May 2018, compiled by the
 25 author.
 26

27 Turkey is not the only country to handle the situation of educational
 28 integration of Syrian children. In Jordan and Lebanon Syrian children are
 29 facing similar challenges in educational integration. The practices slightly
 30 differ. In Jordan Zaatari for instance, the curriculum is based on Jordanian

¹⁵ 3RP strategy of the UNHCR focuses on resilience which means that not only short term goals should be aimed but also medium term capacity building meaning long term goals shall be bridged with short term goals (Culbertston and Constant, 2015: 35).

¹⁶ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63650> accessed on 2nd of June 2018.



1 curriculum where the teachers are also Jordanian as well as the
2 management (UNICEF 2018). The problems that faced in the educational
3 integration by the children in Jordan can be categorised as such: child
4 labour, violence, vandalism, congestion, tardiness of students, theft acts,
5 and early marriages (UNICEF 2018). These complications also occur in
6 Turkey as it will be depicted in the upcoming sections of this article.

7 **Methodology**

8 The empirical data was gathered via 15 semi-structured and in-depth
9 interviews with diverse stakeholders, policymakers and NGOs in Ankara and
10 Gaziantep in November 2015. All the participants were involved in
11 migration policies at the local or national level. Since the interviews were
12 semi-structured they allowed some space for the interviewer to ask
13 questions depending on the information given. The interviews lasted one
14 hour in average and the method of reaching the interviewees was mainly
15 via contacts that are known but also as a result of snowball sampling. The
16 main themes of the questions asked were about the diverse dimensions of
17 integration such as social, economic, cultural and educational integration.
18 The answers were recorded either via recording machine or via taking
19 notes, depending on the consent and the preference of the interviewee.

20 Later on, the interviews were transcribed word by word. Afterwards,
21 they were sent to the interviewees for their consent and approval, making
22 sure that the information is transcribed rightly. In order to abide the ethical
23 rules, they were anonymised and the names were deleted totally. The
24 interviews were examined according to thematic coding. The thematic
25 codes were based on some predetermined keywords: temporariness,
26 educational integration, social integration, health integration and labour
27 market integration. On the other hand, new information that was
28 unexpected were found, mostly regarding the educational integration and
29 perceptions of diverse NGOs and experts on educational integration of
30 Syrians. It has been depicted as a sensitive topic, which paved the way for
31 a more inductive research article such as this one.

32 **Interviews and Analysis: Harmonisation, Nostalgia with the Ottoman Past and** 33 **Temporariness**

34 There are many aspects that render the Syrians' presence temporary,
35 but also there are other aspects that benefit their integration. Temporary
36 protection status is a much better status to possess than many others,
37 though as many critics claim, it does not provide as much security as the
38 international protection status. The reason that the Syrians were given
39 temporary status is that their numbers were too high and it was impossible



1 to provide international protection for them in such an emergency
 2 situation; this idea has also been supported by my interviews. It has also
 3 been suggested by a few of my interviewees that their integration is a must,
 4 and that some Syrians do wish to attain full international protection status
 5 (IPS), since it is a safer status. This section will analyse in what sense they
 6 are seen as temporary and in what sense they can be considered integrated
 7 as a result of their agentic behaviour and of state and civilian support.

8 One of the officers at DGMM drew attention to the fact that criticisms
 9 might be raised: “We know that the temporariness of their legal status is
 10 being criticised. But when the migration is in high numbers and in aggregate
 11 massive numbers, temporary protection is provided to all of them rather
 12 than individual statuses.” The law of Foreigners and International
 13 Protection (YUKK) has placed temporary protection as a regulation so that
 14 they would have a status closer to international protection status:

15 *ARTICLE 2 – (1) The provisions of this Law apply to the activities and actions*
 16 *related to foreigners; the international protection to be extended in cases of*
 17 *individual protection claims of foreigners at borders, the border gates or within*
 18 *Turkey; the immediate temporary protection to be provided to foreigners in cases*
 19 *when there is a large influx into Turkey and where they cannot return back to the*
 20 *country they were forced to leave; and, the structure, duties, mandate and*
 21 *responsibilities of the Directorate General of Migration Management.*

22 In addition to the above remarks, according to a social worker in
 23 Malumat¹⁷ (an organisation that provides educational service to refugees,
 24 gives women information on health issues, teaches languages, etc.),
 25 temporary protection is a system that Turkey uniquely created to find a
 26 solution to the mass arrivals of refugees:

27 *“Since it was not possible to give all of them refugee status, the Turkish*
 28 *authorities have found such a solution thinking that these people might remain*
 29 *here. The good sides of this decision were that they could benefit from their rights*
 30 *in the areas of education, health and these rights were guaranteed to them. They*
 31 *do not have the refugee status, but they can benefit from first step health services,*
 32 *education, security and also from justice. They can complain to the police if*
 33 *something bad happens to them. They can benefit from judicial assistance. If they*
 34 *don’t have enough money they can ask to have a lawyer from the lawyers’*
 35 *association. Even though it is temporary there is a legal basis for their rights.”*

36 A Labour Agency director in Kilis also confirmed that examining the
 37 situation as a temporary one might create a problem: “They do not have
 38 the same rights as the refugees. Hence, there is an atmosphere like the

¹⁷ <http://malumat-gzt.org/tr.html> accessed on 1 December 2016.



1 Syrians will leave tomorrow¹⁸. This means that you are cutting their
2 connections to the production process. And then you are sending a kid to
3 school after 3-4 years of a gap. The upcoming process will be much more
4 difficult.” On the other hand, the main gap is actually that the more
5 educated and economically well-off people are somehow able to manage
6 to continue their schooling¹⁹.

7 The director added to his words: “In academic, social and cultural terms,
8 the ones that are at the bottom of the ladder are being wasted. While some
9 kids are being sent to private schools some of them cannot and they are
10 lost.” In fact, the education system stands as the main crux and area where
11 most of refugees’ problems arise, as well as where conflicts regarding
12 ideological differences manifest themselves and nostalgia with the
13 Ottoman Empire comes to the fore.

14 A social worker in ASAM added that harmonisation is a must because
15 these people are expected to stay as long as the conflict is protracted: “They
16 have to do local integration, or harmonisation whatever we call it, and it
17 should start as a process. Only in the camps (the information of 3-4 months
18 ago), 70,000 children were born. You cannot see them as guests and you
19 can’t solve the problem when they see them as guests.” There are 26 camps
20 in Turkey, but most refugees prefer to leave the camps, especially in the
21 summer. This is because being in the city gives them more possibilities for
22 socialisation and they feel more liberated to be there. The camps’ quality
23 varies, with some camps having been heavily criticised while some others
24 were praised for their practices. In general, it seems that the ones who can
25 afford to rent a house in the city choose to leave the camps.

26 Temporariness and integration are two elements that are united in the
27 case of the Syrians. They are de facto integrated, although their status is
28 not as safe as those who are internationally protected. An officer from
29 AFAD underlined that they cannot apply for full refugee status and Turkey
30 still has not lifted the geographical limitation so that international
31 protection status can be granted, but only just before they are settled into
32 the third country. The officer from AFAD said:

¹⁸ Using ‘tomorrow’ metaphorically, meaning “soon”.

¹⁹ Currently, Turkey adopts a more privatised school system where the children would be sent to private schools and the state would support them with some financial incentives as high as 3,000 Turkish Liras. However, this is not an opportunity that all migrants and refugees can benefit from, since this support would not suffice to continue education in private schools.



1 *“In practice the geographical limitation²⁰ is being applied because they cannot*
 2 *make applications for attaining the refugee status. They cannot get residence*
 3 *rights and citizenship. Those with the passports can get more residence rights. They*
 4 *have places for temporary residence. Those who have worked before and those*
 5 *who had work permits a long time ago can get residence permits, too. The ones*
 6 *who came later are not included in this group. There are some who have come*
 7 *before the war started and they had double citizenship, for instance.”*

8 As it is seen, those Syrians who had previous social networks in Turkey
 9 and those who have always had the closest links with the area are in better
 10 conditions, especially if they can benefit from the right to open their own
 11 businesses. Those who have become Turkish citizens have a right to
 12 become entrepreneurs. However, before the Work Permit Law that was
 13 enacted in January 2016²¹, those under temporary protection were not able
 14 to work with their status. “As a solution to the problem, the ‘Regulation on
 15 Work Permit of Refugees Under Temporary Protection’ has been issued in
 16 the Official Journal No. 2016/8375, dated 15 January 2016, and these
 17 refugees will be granted work permits under following conditions and
 18 restrictions.”²² Now they can work with a quota limitation: if there are five
 19 Turkish people working in one place, one Syrian can be recruited.
 20 Therefore, the problem of work permits on the legislative side seems to
 21 have been “resolved” since January 2016. Nonetheless, problematic
 22 approaches continue to persist: some employers do not want to employ
 23 Syrians legally in many parts of Turkey, since it means that they have no
 24 comparative advantage if they are employable as a Turkish citizen who
 25 incurs the same costs to the employer. On the other hand, not having any
 26 quota restrictions for the temporarily-natured jobs for those under
 27 temporary protection could mean that temporariness might bring
 28 precarious status to these refugees, as it does all around the world for
 29 temporary migrant workers.

30 It is not only true that the EU should take some responsibility, it is also
 31 important to underline that many tensions are arising in Gaziantep, where
 32 there are more than 350,000 Syrians. Here there are social conflicts
 33 between the local population and the migrants, which have increased

²⁰ Turkey has not lifted geographical limitation, but acted in such a way that geographical limitation would not apply in many cases. International protection status is also given to those who come from countries, which used to be subjected to geographical limitation.

²¹ <http://turkishlaborlaw.com/news/legal-news/362-turkey-grants-work-permit-for-syrian-refugees> accessed 22 July 2016.

²² <http://turkishlaborlaw.com/news/legal-news/362-turkey-grants-work-permit-for-syrian-refugees> accessed 22 July 2016.



1 recently.²³ Moreover, it is often the case that some employers might prefer
2 to employ Syrians at lower wages and exploitation might be one of the
3 consequences. The price of labour is generally lowered in this case. The
4 labour market gap is filled with Syrians, because most of the time it is the
5 Syrians who accept to work for lower wages in the domains of textiles and
6 farm work. A responsible from IHH said: “Gaziantep benefited from the
7 Syrian labour, many of them are working in leather and shoe industries.
8 Since most of the vocation schools were closed, there is a need for labour
9 in the industries and Gaziantep made use of the Syrians’ labour.” In
10 addition, child labour is one of the problems that Syrians are facing (Del
11 Carpio and Wagner, 2016).

12 We have seen that the crisis was prolonged and the adverse situation
13 for the Syrians has been protracted. After four or five years of stay, many
14 Syrians have understood that they would not be able to go back to their
15 country. A general consensus amongst the NGOs I interviewed was that the
16 main solution to the crisis would be ending the conflict. They also agreed
17 that a second, less ideal, solution would comprise of sharing the burden of
18 the crisis with EU countries. However, neither of these scenarios have been
19 made a reality, and so integration (or harmonisation) of the Syrians, their
20 livelihood, educational integration, increasing the state capacity and
21 training the DGMM personnel started to be considered as the main
22 solutions. On the other hand, as a part of the Regional Refugee and
23 Resilience Plan²⁴ led by UNHCR and UNDP (United Nations Development
24 Programme) the INGOs, NGOs and government have to work together
25 (Brussels 2018). Moreover, international community also expects Turkey to
26 include a national strategy for integrating refugees whilst respecting the
27 principle of *non-refoulement* (ibid.).

28 A great organisational and collaborative structure has been developed
29 in the Southeast of Turkey as well as in Istanbul. It was surprising to see
30 how many NGOs and INGOs are working in Gaziantep, for instance, to do
31 the needs assessment, provide aid to families in need, promote children’s
32 education and help families send their kids to school. There are also
33 monthly meetings coordinated by the governor in Gaziantep that enables
34 all the NGOs to come together with the local authorities, such as the

²³ There have been many news stories where a landlord had a fight with the Syrians who did not pay their rent, or the occupants were being asked to pay a higher rent. Also in some cases, Syrians were placed where the Kurdish were residing, and this inconsiderate policy has been causing tensions because the infrastructure is already insufficient and there is already a reaction to the government for the social, economic and political policies’ implementation on the ground.

²⁴ Resilience plan includes integration in many aspects: education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure, socio-economic support, livelihoods, social cohesion, employment and other social services for refugees in Turkey.



1 governorship, to discuss the problems. Therefore, for the people whose
 2 situation might be considered temporary, this kind of capacity building is
 3 invaluable. However, one of the problem-ridden areas is related to the
 4 topic I would like to discuss in the next section: educational integration. This
 5 is the sphere wherein most of the ideological leanings manifest themselves,
 6 and where there are divisions and many dichotomies in terms of developing
 7 a coherent policy. The future of effected Syrian children seems to be
 8 hopeless unless an elaborate, efficient and long-term solution is found to
 9 this indecision and to the dichotomy in the educational system.

10 **Challenges regarding Syrian children’s education: Institutional and natural**
 11 **barriers**

12 The current situation of the Syrian children and other foreigner
 13 children’s education is currently very complicated. Their stay was thought
 14 to be temporary and they were therefore granted temporary protection by
 15 the Turkish state; however, while the temporary protection status had
 16 provided them with the right of access to health and education, after four
 17 or five years it is clear that they cannot be “permanently temporary”.

18 Despite children’s right to access education, there were many problems
 19 regarding their education: some children could not start or continue their
 20 education because they were not registered, others had problems because
 21 they were registered but their respective identity numbers could not be
 22 seen in the common portal of educational system (of the Ministry of
 23 Education). Therefore, if the discretionary power of the school managers
 24 did not allow their registration, they would not be able to initiate their
 25 education in Turkey. It is estimated that there are more than 600,000
 26 refugee children not enrolled in educational institutions. Furthermore,
 27 problems related to educational preparations and societal and
 28 harmonisation issues are also part of the dilemma.

29 Turkish constitution considers educational rights as inalienable (also as
 30 indicated in the Constitution of Turkey in article 42). When it comes to
 31 implementation, the role of the managers of the schools reveal that many
 32 children who have refugee backgrounds (whose parents might have the
 33 status of international protection, or they might have applied for
 34 international protection status or their parents might be under temporary
 35 protection) cannot have access to the educational possibilities. Especially
 36 the children of the irregular migrants are the most vulnerable ones.

37 There are two types of schools for foreign children in Turkey. One
 38 teaches Arabic and gives education using the Syrian curriculum; these are
 39 the temporary education centres. The temporary education centres exist
 40 both in the camps and outside the camps. The other option is public school,



1 which teaches Turkish and the Turkish curriculum. The first school type
2 takes place in the afternoon, within classrooms in Turkish schools or in
3 separate buildings designated for educational reasons; the second is via
4 enrolment of students to the Turkish schools. A representative from a
5 humanitarian assistance NGO in Gaziantep, named Kimse Yok Mu?,
6 indicated that “There are Syrian teachers there and Syrian curricula is
7 continuing to be taught. At the same time there is a Turkish teacher, Turkish
8 manager and assistant manager.”

9 I have noticed that great problems related to the content of the
10 curriculum are present and conflicting views are raised on how the
11 curriculum can be revised at the policymaking level (at the time, the
12 Ministry of Education did not give clear signs of how the curriculum would
13 be adapted to multicultural values). Some organisations claimed that the
14 Ottoman history is taught to Syrian children in the Arabic curriculum, where
15 Ottoman is represented as a repressive and assimilative power; the
16 interviewed leaders of these organisations claimed that this would cause
17 hatred in refugee children towards Turkey, the country in which they took
18 refuge. However, there is an anachronism in this aspect. Some NGOs did
19 not mention the Turkish Republic at all, mostly discussing the content of
20 the classes on Ottoman history being taught to the children.

21 An IHH representative, for instance, indicated that teaching the curricula
22 and portraying the Ottoman Empire as a coloniser was not the right
23 approach: “They are buffering/alleviating policies, they are not thought in
24 detail and these classes are not long-term oriented. For instance, in the
25 curricula of the Syrian students who come to Turkey, the rhetoric that
26 Ottoman was a coloniser still exists. This is not a good representation,
27 because these children are given the reasons to hate Turkey if this history
28 class is taught like that.” These claims clearly underline that not the
29 Republic, but the Ottoman is the reference point, for some of the NGOs. In
30 fact, helping Syrians is considered a duty within being a good Muslim in line
31 with learning the lessons from the Ottoman past, as some religion-based
32 NGOs believe; they also draw attention to the fact that the Ottoman should
33 be portrayed as a remarkable actor when history is taught to Syrian
34 children. Hence, it would not be wrong to say that education is one of these
35 areas where the ideology of a purposefully chosen and invented past
36 reveals itself the most.

37 The various institutional barriers have been briefly explained above.
38 Some natural barriers related to Syrian children’s learning opportunities
39 and future are as such: first, the issue of two languages (learning Arabic in
40 a system where they might sit the exams in Turkish, if they stay long enough
41 in the Turkish educational system) must be overcome, as the reconstruction



1 of their home country will unfortunately take longer than expected.
2 Although this area might seem the most problematic, in practical life and at
3 school children are the ones who can learn languages the most quickly. A
4 language specialist from the British Council underlined that children,
5 especially in elementary school, might seem to not be learning the language
6 (as they do not speak as much as the native speakers in the class); however,
7 they do learn cumulatively. Besides these, many migrants and refugees
8 make their kids communicate with the strangers who speak Turkish, since
9 it is harder for parents to learn another language and their children pick it
10 up language quicker. Thus, Syrian children become cultural and linguistic
11 mediators and interpreters.

12 The second issue is related to child labour as highlighted above. Many
13 families do not send their kids to school because they are obliged to work,
14 especially in the families without any working males, whilst the mothers
15 take care of the house and younger children. In this case, the older children
16 are burdened with taking more work-related responsibilities, which causes
17 them to discontinue their education. My observation is that while these
18 children become cultural mediators for their families, they can also become
19 a source of cheap labour for their families. To counteract this problem,
20 NGOs are providing economic assistance to families whose kids are working
21 on the street or in factories, on the condition that the children are sent to
22 school.

23 The third issue is related to certification in education and the fact that
24 few children are hopeful about their educational prospects in Turkey, they
25 are rather dreaming of going to Europe²⁵. They are also uncertain of the
26 validity of the certificates they receive from temporary education centres.

27 The fourth problem is related to gaps in educational life. This is
28 connected with the other issues of having stayed in a war zone for too long,
29 and then having an interrupted educational life due to being involved in the
30 labour market. This generation has the lowest prospects in the educational
31 system, as they have lost too many years. Different suggestions are made
32 for these groups of refugee students, like intensive schooling. Turkish
33 educational actors do not have much experience with this topic. Whether
34 Turkish educational institutions are prepared for this kind of intensive
35 schooling for foreign students whose first language is not Turkish is another
36 question mark.

²⁵ Elif Eda Tibet gave a presentation on this topic on the 17th of March 2016, at Limak Hotel, Ankara. It was a successful organisation on preventing the lost generation planned by the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASAM) and the British Council.



1 Last but not least, there is the problem of young marriages, which mostly
2 affects females. Turkey already has a low level of literacy for females
3 compared to males: 9.2 percent of Turkish women are illiterate, while 1.8
4 percent of Turkish men are²⁶. This means that Turkey must deal with its
5 structural problems when refugees are in need of structural solutions.
6 Another institutional problem that has not been mentioned here revealed
7 itself in an interview with a trainer and teacher²⁷, who gave lectures to
8 teachers about cultures and values. She underlines that the parents of
9 Turkish children are uncomfortable about the fact that the young refugee
10 people feel more relaxed here in Turkey, particularly regarding their
11 behaviour and style of dress. Some conservative Turkish parents think that
12 the young refugees are too confident in themselves. Contrarily, Turkish
13 youth are not as bothered by this fact as their parents are.

14 Finally, Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan demands that Turkey
15 continues to increase the opportunities for “education in both formal and
16 non-formal educational settings, whilst giving importance to vocational
17 training, higher education, providing courses both in Turkish and Arabic
18 languages, and focusing on quality learning outcomes” (Brussels 2018, 6).
19 In order to reach these aims, institutional and cultural transformation is
20 necessary as well as to approach educational integration (or harmonisation
21 in the area of education) with a structured vision and long-term
22 perspective. This perspective needs to consider all these aspects in detail,
23 not only by name. For instance, Kirişçi (2016) emphasizes that within
24 informal education, radical Islamist education is a growing trend. Another
25 question is related to the weight that should be given to both languages for
26 the respect of transnational identities. All these aspects might seem as
27 straightforward issues and purposes, but the devil is in the detail.

28 **Research and Conclusions: Educational Integration into the Empire with** 29 **Rewriting History?**

30 From my fieldwork²⁸ I observed that the schooling rate in the camps is
31 94 percent, while it is 20 to 30 percent outside the camps. In a meeting with
32 ASAM representative İbrahim Kavlak, he also underscored that there was a
33 need to reach those who are outside the camps. Not only Syrian but Iraqi
34 children will be also in need of education after the second intervention in
35 Iraq, as they also need shelter and access to their rights to be free from

²⁶ <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=21519> accessed on 2 December 2016.

²⁷ Interview via Skype in October 2017, Luxembourg.

²⁸ Presentation by İbrahim Kavlak, head of ASAM, April 2016.



1 labour and to be free from forced early marriages²⁹. The ASAM
 2 representative also added that in January, February and March 2016 a total
 3 of 16,000 refugees arrived from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran; their access to
 4 education is also inadequate³⁰.

5 What has the state been doing so far? The Presidency for Turks Abroad
 6 and Related Communities provides full scholarships and partial
 7 scholarships, as well as some Turkish language program. Yunus Emre
 8 Institute³¹ is also cooperating with teaching Turkish and grant certification.
 9 However, Yunus Emre seems to be still devoid of statistics in terms of how
 10 many teachers they can train and how many they have trained so far, as
 11 well as to how many students they would need to reach out. Their capacity
 12 seems to be limited. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is assisting
 13 temporary education centres in relation with article 42 of the Constitution
 14 (right to education). On the other hand, they were also aware that these
 15 temporary education centres somehow had to be integrated into the main
 16 educational system in Turkey. If the children are to stay in Turkey, two
 17 curriculums with diverse subjects and backgrounds cannot be taught.
 18 Therefore, it is better to have a common curriculum and include optional
 19 courses for foreigners in Syrian history and Arabic. The curriculum can also
 20 adopt some multicultural and/or intercultural elements so that the ideal of
 21 diversity is taught in schools at an earlier age.

22 The idea that the refugee children are guests should be totally
 23 eliminated from institutional speeches, as children's futures are at stake
 24 (regardless of whether they are staying in Turkey specifically). Integration
 25 or harmonisation must be the main aim, because being considered a guest
 26 creates a different dynamic. The purpose of the DGMM can be temporary
 27 integration with full rights to education, health and housing, as the
 28 immigrants' permanence shall be taken into account realistically.

29 Syrian refugees have already been in Turkey since 2011, which implies
 30 that more than six important years of their youth's childhoods and
 31 adolescences have been in Turkey. Some of these children will choose to
 32 stay in Turkey. In return, MoNe claims that they would like to unite
 33 temporary education centres with the mainstream schools. However, do
 34 they have a plan on how to do it? This is not yet clear. MoNe also provides

²⁹ It is very important to underline at this point that Zeynep Kivilcim's work (2016) on legal violence against Syrian female refugees in Turkey draws our attention to the cases of legal inaction by the Turkish authorities and how Temporary Protection Regulation allows the authorities to escape responsibility for any harm brought to female refugees (i.e. by physical, sexual and economic violence).

³⁰ Presentation by Ibrahim Kavlak, head of ASAM, April 2016.

³¹ It is an institute that teaches Turkish in Eastern Europe. It has strong presence in Bosnia, for instance.



1 an abundance of statistics on temporary education centres in meetings and
2 public announcements, particularly on the number of kids that are enrolled
3 in both the Turkish schools and temporary education centres. Surprisingly,
4 this information provided by state institutions sometimes tells us nothing
5 about the quality and content of education. This does not mean that they
6 do not put enough effort into integrating children to the education system;
7 however, they need to provide more transparent information for the public
8 and for researchers.

9 Another serious issue affecting the future of children in Turkey in
10 general is as such: privatisation of the education system in Turkey does not
11 help the cases of minorities, those in poverty nor refugee kids from Syrian,
12 Iraqi, Iranian or Afghani. The state must clarify what they need to enact on
13 educational reform rather than focussing on numbers. At the end of the
14 day, providing more statistics without presenting any kind of meaningful
15 relationship between the variables does not clarify the situation of
16 children's educational integration in Turkey. There is a risk that they will
17 receive worse quality education and that there will be a parallel system to
18 the main educational system. On the other hand, refugee children could
19 not be educated in solely their native language and home curriculum.
20 Granting Syrians the right to be educated in Arabic does not mean
21 harmonisation or integration; on the contrary, it only means there is a
22 policy gap in multicultural and multilingual educational criteria.

23 To sum up the problems related to integration of refugees in the domain
24 of educational: language barrier, families' economic problems, social
25 integration problems (such as negative public opinion and exclusion by
26 other students in classrooms), insufficient infrastructure (ex. schools,
27 services to schools and sport and arts facilities that do not necessitate
28 speaking the local language fluently), the misalignment between education
29 systems (having created a double system) and finally, new instability arising
30 in the Middle East that brings new refugee kids to Turkey without any prior
31 preparation or experience on the side of Turkish teachers and schools.
32 These are the major issues detected and confirmed by other scholars as
33 well as by my fieldwork. This article has added one contextual problem to
34 all these barriers to education: the risk that the curriculum will be changing
35 in to glorify and mystify religion and the Ottoman Empire rather than
36 evolving to include a multicultural and intercultural perspective. The
37 children are not being integrated into the nostalgic image of Ottoman
38 Empire, they basically need a multicultural or intercultural curriculum that
39 introduces diversity to them, simultaneously allowing them to be who they
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41



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27 **Other resources and field work**

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30 Field-work and observations during my job at IOM Ankara (March-July 2016)

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