



**Education Policies and
Practices that Promote
Integration and Refugee
Children's Right to
Education in Turkey**

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Education Policies and Practices that Promote Integration and Refugee Children's Right to Education in Turkey



EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE INTEGRATION AND REFUGEE CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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SUMMARY

The report is primarily based on the workshop on “Education Policies and Practices that Promote Integration and Refugee Children’s Right to Education” held by the European Liberal Forum in Istanbul with the support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. The participants included academics working on migration and education; representatives of local, national and international NGOs working with refugees; municipality officials; public school teachers who have refugee children in their classrooms; and Ministry of National Education staff who work for the Project for Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System (PICTES) in Istanbul.

The first chapter of the report provides background information by 1) presenting recent data on Syrian children’s access to education, 2) summarizing main problems faced by refugee children, and 3) briefly introducing PICTES, which is currently the largest public initiative focusing on the education of Syrian children. The second chapter, titled Guiding Principles & Recommendations for Policy and Practice, puts forward a series of principles that should guide the education services and activities in this field. Under each sub-section (listed below) the report presents key issues, guiding principles and recommendations formulated in the workshop.

- If necessary arrangements are not made in other policy areas such as immigration, employment, social protection, etc., regulations in the field of education shall only have a limited effect.
- There is strong and widespread demand for more comprehensive data collection and research efforts as well as monitoring and evaluation work. All relevant parties should be able to access administrative data and research findings to have a better grasp of the current situation and to plan future work more soundly.
- The situation at hand requires the cooperation of a large number of international, national and local actors with different capacities and approaches. In this respect, improving coordination, communication and transparency, strengthening capacity building efforts – especially for the Directorate General of Migration Management’s provincial staff – and societal participation are among the primary needs.
- Integration strategies must be accompanied with measures combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia towards refugees, as well as inclusionary practices.
- The fact that attributes, circumstances and needs of refugees in general and refugee children in particular vary must be taken into consideration while devising education policies and practices.
- For the fulfilment of refugee children’s right to education in all its dimensions, it is vital to consider the existing limitations of the education system in Turkey in a holistic manner, to learn from past experiences and to design policies based on the principle of inclusion with regard to all children.

- Multilingual educational practices supporting intercultural dialogue shall contribute both to the individual development of children and to peaceful social interactions.
- Fulfilling children's participation rights for all children, including refugees, requires stronger efforts at both policy and implementation levels.
- There is need for policies and practices that would enable families and communities' meaningful participation in processes and decisions regarding education. In this respect, Turkish language instruction as well as more widespread use of refugees' mother tongues is a central issue in education just as in other fields.
- Despite the rapid increase in rates of enrolment, a variety of obstacles continue to stand in the way of refugee children's integration into the education system. Moreover, access to education is a matter that must be considered in a broader framework than simply tallying schooling rates.
- Continuation, diversification and proliferation of conditional cash transfers, taking into account the impact of the current program, is important in terms of access to education and regular school attendance.
- The fact that teachers in public schools are not equipped for and lack adequate support in working with refugee children, whose mother tongues are not Turkish and many of whom have suffered traumatic experiences, remains one of the primary obstacles to inclusive and quality education. Additionally, opportunities for professional development and employment available to Syrian educators need to be expanded. It is also important to minimise the uncertainty they have come to face with the prospective closure of TECs. Furthermore, they should be offered short and long term possibilities to contribute to the education system.

PREFACE

This report is based on the discussions and recommendations from the workshop on “Education Policies and Practices that Promote Integration and Refugee Children’s Right to Education”, held by the European Liberal Forum (ELF) in Istanbul on 14th and 15th of October 2017, with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. The aim of the workshop and the report is to put forward and to disseminate recommendations that would improve the education system in Turkey to fulfill refugee children’s right to education in all of its dimensions, and towards education services fostering coexistence surrounded by a culture of peace.

While formal education system was the main focus of the workshop, the impact of other policy areas on the field of education and the activities of civil society organizations (CSOs), local governments and other relevant actors were also taken into consideration. The workshop was attended by academics working on migration and education; representatives of local, national and international CSOs active in the field; public school teachers who have refugee children in their classrooms, municipality officials from areas densely inhabited by refugees; and experts working in the “Project for Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System” (PICTES) run by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).

The first section of the report provides background information by presenting key figures regarding Syrian children’s access to education, main problem areas, and activities carried out under PICTES. The second section conveys the recommendations formulated during the workshop in relation to general guiding principles and the current situation. Though more detailed recommendations have been provided on certain issues, others have been treated as general guiding principles. The scope of the report is mostly limited to issues discussed in the workshop. On the other hand, additional information, suggestions and resources on issues, which were inadequately addressed during the workshop according to the participants, have also been included.

The term “refugee” has not been used with reference to any legal status in the report, but rather in a manner that is inclusive of conditional refugees/asylum-seekers and those under temporary protection. Nevertheless, while referring to the “temporary protection” status, conformity with the relevant legislation has been sought. At this point, it is necessary to mention that various groups of refugees, including Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian nationals, reside in Turkey, and that these groups do not fall under the scope of the temporary protection regime. Though the workshop and the report predominantly focus on Syrian children, it is recommended that any measures to be taken bear in mind the rights, experiences and needs of other refugee children as well.

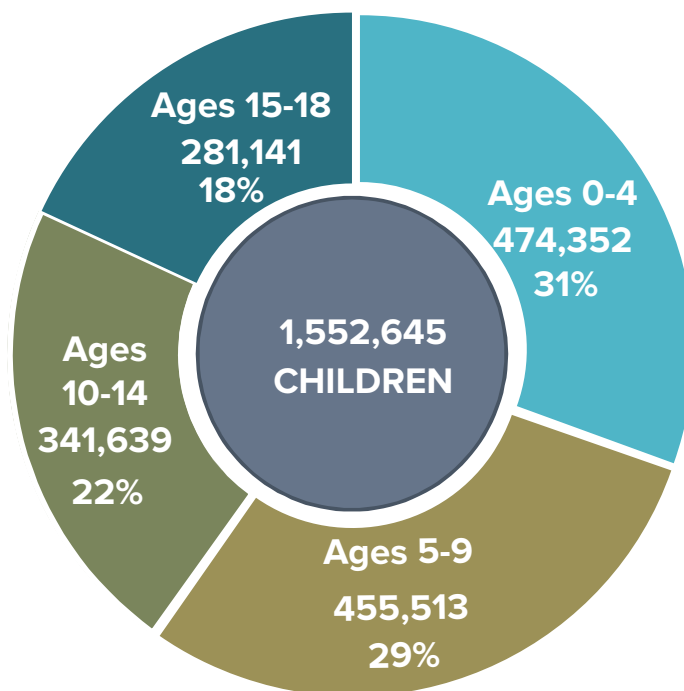
Finally, we thank all experts who participated in the workshop and shared their experiences and opinions. This report could not have been prepared if it were not for the valuable contributions of each and every participant and their openness to dialogue. We would also like to take this opportunity to state that the author is the sole party liable for the contents of this report, and that workshop participants cannot therefore be held responsible for the opinions or shortcomings present in the report.

1. BACKGROUND: KEY FIGURES, MAIN PROBLEM AREAS AND PICTES

Key Figures regarding Refugee Children in Basic Education

According to data provided by the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, there are 3,303,133 Syrians with temporary protection status in Turkey as of the 9th November 2017. 93% of Syrian refugees reside outside temporary shelter centers (i.e. camps). Among the provinces most densely populated by Syrians in terms of their number and/or proportion within the general population of the province are Istanbul, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Gaziantep and Kilis. The number of children within this group under temporary protection is 1,552,645 – 739,606 girls and 813,039 boys.¹ While girls constitute 48% of the child population in other age groups, they comprise 45% of children aged 15 to 18 years.

Graph 1: Population of Syrian Children in Turkey and its Distribution across Age Groups, November 2017



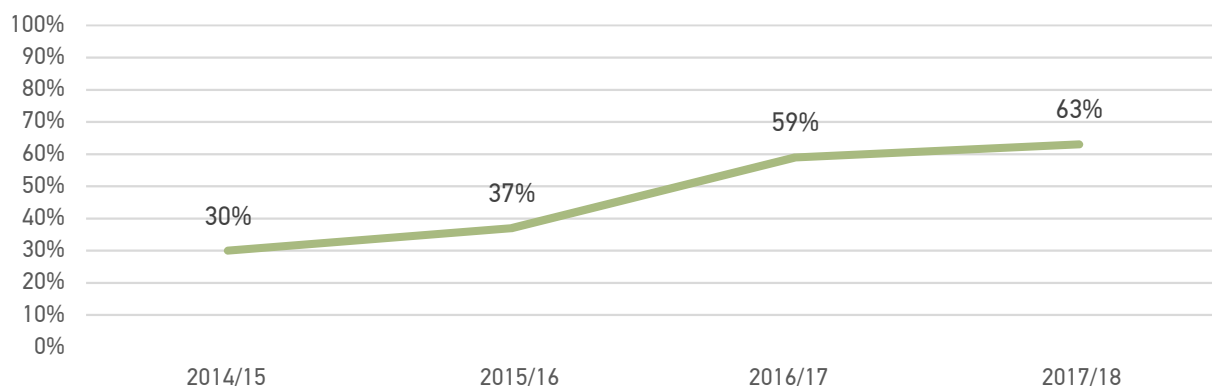
Source: Generated using data dated 9.11.2017 sourced by the Directorate General of Migration Management (2017). This data encompasses biometrically registered Syrians.

The enrolment rates shared by the Migration and Emergency Education Department operating under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Directorate General for Lifelong Learning -using data provided by the Directorate General of Migration Management, the Foreign Student Information Management System (YÖBİS) and e-School (e-Okul) -indicate a significant level of improvement. Yet, it is still the case that about 400,000 Syrian children of schooling age are completely outside the formal education system. Enrolment rates also vary considerably according to province. For instance, while rates are between 40% and 50% in Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Kilis and Istanbul, they range from 20% to 30% in Ankara, Diyarbakır and Mardin.²

1. Ministry of Interior, Directorate of Migration Management (İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü), 2017.

2. Taştan and Çelik, 2017.

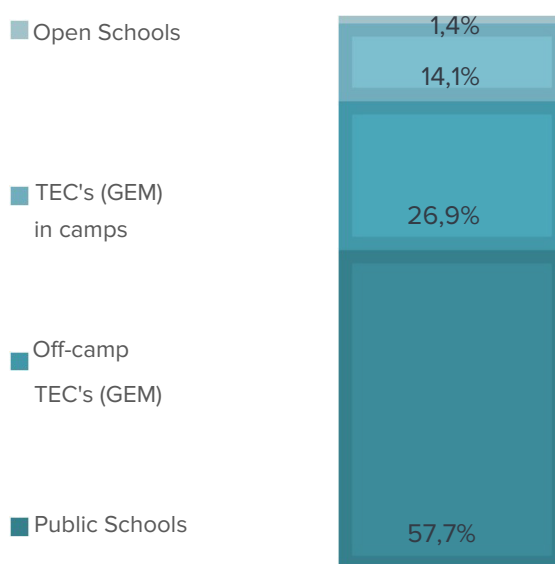
Graph 2: Enrolment Rates, 2014/15-2017/18



Source: Generated using data dated 13.11.2017 sourced by the MoNE Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, Migration and Emergency Education Department (2017). Notes: (1) 8598 students registered in distance (open) education schools are also included in the number of students in 2017/18. (2) The number of students used in calculating enrolment rates includes Iraqi students as well. However, it is unclear whether age population data includes this group or not.

The distribution of Syrian students across different school categories demonstrates that the weight has shifted from temporary education centers (TECs /GEM) to public schools in accordance with the MoNE policy regarding directing Syrian students to public schools. Currently, 14,742 public schools and 338 TECs serve Syrian students.

Graph 3: Distribution of Students across School Categories, November 2017

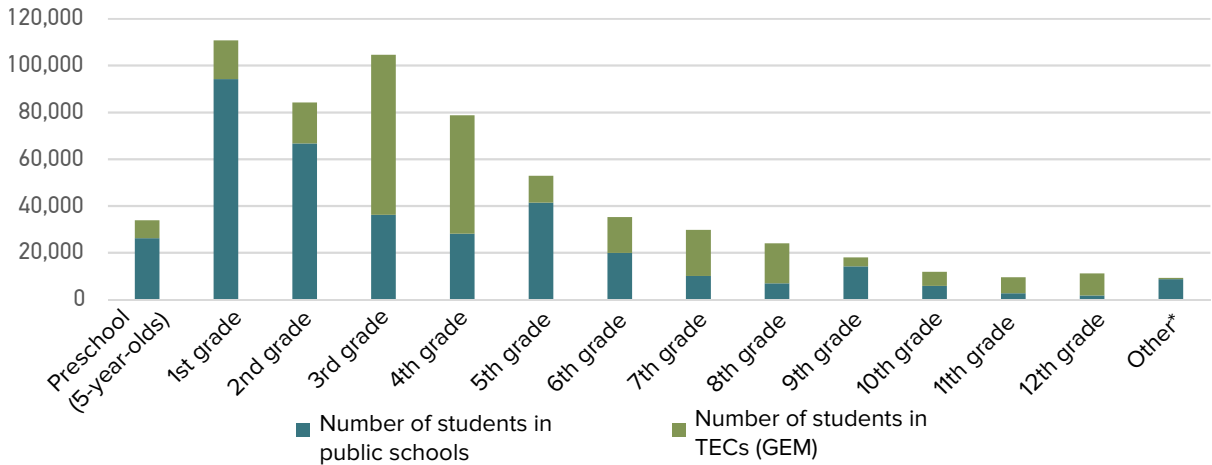


Source: Generated using data dated 13.11.2017 sourced by the MoNE Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, Migration and Emergency Education Department (2017). Note: 35,889 of the 353,621 students registered in public schools are Iraqis, while TECs (GEM) are attended only by Syrian students.

The number of students and enrolment rates in different levels of education reveal that especially Syrian students of preschool and secondary education (high school) age experience difficulties in accessing education. According to MoNE data, only 36% of 5-year-olds are able to receive preschool education, while a mere 23% of children of high school age is registered in a secondary education institution.³

3. The Migration and Emergency Education Department of the MoNE Directorate General for Lifelong Learning (MEB Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Genel Müdürlüğü Göç ve Acil Durum Eğitim Daire Başkanlığı), 2017.

Graph 4: Number of Students in Different Grades according to School Category, November 2017



Source: Generated using data dated 13.11.2017 sourced by the MoNE Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, Migration and Emergency Education Department (2017). Note: The category marked “other” encompasses the students – 497 and 86, respectively – in support (destekleme) and training (yetiştirme) classes in TECs and 8,598 students registered in open (distance education) schools, in addition to another 45 in high school prep classes.

There is a total of 330,000 Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian, Somali and other refugees residing in Turkey, registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as asylum-seekers applying for international protection. Information such as the number of children of schooling age, their distribution across age groups, numbers of students and schooling rates – all of which is shared with the public regarding migrants with temporary protection status – remains lacking when it comes to non-Syrian refugees.⁴

Main Problem Areas in the Education of Refugee Children

A new problem analysis was not carried out in the workshop, but rather the framework provided below formulated based on an examination of a variety of resources was reviewed, resulting in a general acceptance that the topics listed did indeed correspond to the main problem areas encountered.

4. For more information on the education of Afghan and Iranian children, who are not granted temporary protection status and are only able to attend schools in satellite cities they have been settled in as “guest students”, cf. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/05/31/turkey-education-barriers-asylum-seekers>

Figure 1: Primary Areas in which Problems Have Been Observed regarding the Education of Refugee Children⁵

ACCESS	QUALITY	INCLUSION
Legal status and school enrolment procedures	Education settings and processes that promote social and emotional well-being	Relevant and pluralistic content and methods
Placement procedures, catch-up opportunities	Psychosocial support	Language(s) of instruction
Physical capacity of schools and classrooms	Academic support	Special measures for groups at risk and with special needs
Free and safe access to schools	Language instruction	Discriminatory attitudes, exclusion and bullying
Discriminatory practices	Quality of educational materials	Family and community participation
Poverty; related rights violations including forced/child marriages and child labour	Policies regarding teachers (living conditions, employment, qualifications, etc.)	Children's participation rights

Project for Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System (PICTES)

As the most up-to-date and comprehensive effort regarding educational services provided to refugees, the project is being implemented with a 300 Mill.-EURO direct grant provided by the European Union to the MoNE as part of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT).⁶ Most endeavours currently being carried out by the MoNE with regards to the education of refugee children are conducted within the scope of PICTES, which started in October 2016 and is planned to last for two years.

5. The principal resources used in formulating this framework have been: Open Society Foundation (Açık Toplum Vakfı) (2016), Education Reform Initiative (Eğitim Reformu Girişimi) (2017) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Project for Supporting the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (Suriyeli Çocukların Türk Eğitim Sistemine Entegrasyonunun Desteklenmesi Projesi İzleme ve Denetleme Birimi) (2017).

6. For more information on FRIT cf. <http://echo.info.tr/haberler> and https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/frit_factsheet.pdf.

Figure 2: PICTES Activities



2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

A significant portion of the recommendations presented in this section have been developed during group work sessions carried out on five main themes and in light of the principles and observations summarized below.

Figure 3: Group Work Themes and Guiding Questions

Themes	Guiding Questions
Access and physical infrastructure	→ <i>Which of the existing policies and practices should be continued/disseminated?</i>
Teachers and other educational staff	→ <i>What kinds of novel policies and practices are needed in this field?</i>
Community, family and child participation	→ <i>Which practices from Turkey and the world would be useful to adapt/disseminate?</i>
Content and methods of education as well as socially and emotionally supportive learning environments	→ <i>Does the targeted change require policy changes in fields other than education?</i>
Non-formal education and related activities of CSOs and municipalities	→ <i>What kinds of steps should be taken as regards governance, coordination, financing etc.?</i>
	→ <i>Is there a need for data, information and research?</i>

- If necessary arrangements are not made in other policy areas such as immigration, employment, social protection, etc., regulations in the field of education shall only have a limited effect.
- There is strong and widespread demand for more comprehensive data collection and research efforts as well as monitoring and evaluation work. All relevant parties should be able to access administrative data and research findings to have a better grasp of the current situation and to plan future work more soundly.
- The situation at hand requires the cooperation of a large number of international, national and local actors with different capacities and approaches. In this respect, improving coordination, communication and transparency, strengthening capacity building efforts – especially for the Directorate General of Migration Management’s provincial staff – and societal participation are among the primary needs.
- Integration strategies must be accompanied with measures combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia towards refugees, as well as with inclusionary practices.

- The fact that attributes, circumstances and needs of refugees in general and refugee children in particular vary must be taken into consideration while devising education policies and practices.
- For the fulfilment of refugee children's right to education in all its dimensions, it is vital to consider the existing limitations of the education system in Turkey in a holistic manner, to learn from past experiences and to design policies based on the principle of inclusion with regard to all children.
- Multilingual educational practices supporting intercultural dialogue shall contribute both to the individual development of children and to peaceful social interactions.
- Fulfilling children's participation rights for all children, including refugees, requires stronger efforts at both policy and implementation levels.
- There is need for policies and practices that would enable families and communities' meaningful participation in processes and decisions regarding education. In this respect, Turkish language instruction as well as more widespread use of refugees' mother tongues is a central issue in education just as in other fields.
- Despite the rapid increase in rates of enrolment, a variety of obstacles continue to stand in the way of refugee children's integration into the education system. Moreover, access to education is a matter that must be considered in a broader framework than simply tallying schooling rates.
- Continuation, diversification and proliferation of conditional cash transfers, taking into account the impact of the current program, is important in terms of access to education and regular school attendance.
- The fact that teachers in public schools are not equipped for and lack adequate support in working with refugee children, whose mother tongues are not Turkish and many of whom have suffered traumatic experiences, remains one of the primary obstacles to inclusive and quality education. Additionally, opportunities for professional development and employment available to Syrian educators need to be expanded. It is also important to minimise the uncertainty they have come to face with the prospective closure of TECs. Furthermore, they should be offered short and long term possibilities to contribute to the education system.

If necessary arrangements are not made in other policy areas such as immigration, employment, social protection, etc., regulations in the field of education shall only have a limited effect.

One of the first examples that comes to mind in this respect is the prevalence of poverty and, in a parallel manner, child labour.⁷ Just as access to education cannot be treated as independent from child labour, child labour too cannot be addressed without taking into account the absence

7. For more information on this matter cf. http://www.hayatadestek.org/yayinlarimiz/Turkiyede_Cocuk_Isciligi_Sorunu_2016.pdf and http://hayatadestek.org/yayinlarimiz/2016_VA_Report_Eng.pdf

of a national policy for children and the lack of access to quality employment for a significant majority of Syrians. Similarly, the fact that a holistic and rights-based immigration harmonization policy has not yet been formulated and that the system into which the “temporary protection” regime will morph remains unclear, has an impact on the situation regarding the right to education along with many other fields. For instance, language policies in formal education and models to be implemented within this framework are issues that cannot be thought of independently from immigration harmonization policies and that must rather be developed in tandem. The importance of evaluating ongoing education policies, thus determining the complimentary initiatives required in other areas, and of designing models that would target children along with their families and communities becomes apparent.

There is strong and widespread demand for more comprehensive data collection and research efforts as well as monitoring and evaluation work. All relevant parties should be able to access administrative data and research findings to have a better grasp of the current situation and to plan future work more soundly.

Relatively limited data is collected and disseminated about refugees in general and refugee children in particular. The need for research is palpable in many areas. Minimizing existing restrictions regarding data collection and research and taking steps to encourage collaboration in this field, as well as empowering and authorizing local governments may contribute to overcoming such limitations. The data needed and research topics that especially stand out within the scope of this report are as follows:

- Data gathered and shared regarding access to education should be comprised not only of enrolment rates, but also of different dimensions of access such as attendance/ absenteeism, graduation and transition to higher levels.
- In order to identify the most disadvantaged groups, data on access to education and other dimensions of the right to education should be disaggregated by characteristics such as place of residence, gender, mother tongue, special needs status, access to social aid, etc.
- The results of needs analyses (for instance, the Survey for Assessing the Training Needs of Teachers in Schools Attended by Syrian Students, conducted as part of PICTES in the summer of 2017) and evaluations of training activities (for example, trainers’ trainings for Syrian educators organized jointly by the MoNE and UNICEF in August-September 2016 and following training activities) provided by institutions such as the MoNE and UNICEF and by CSOs for teachers and other educational staff should be shared with all relevant parties.
- Both quantitative and qualitative research should be conducted for a better understanding of the experiences, perspectives, challenges and needs of educators in public schools with refugee students and TECs. Research should also serve the purpose of identifying good practices and successful strategies that have been developed by educators.
- Questions and requests received by YIMER (the Communication Center for Foreigners – ALO 157) regarding education should be documented and reported.

Additionally, assessment and evaluation reports prepared for PICTES, which introduces many new practices, should be made public and discussed with a large group of stakeholders. This is vitally important not only in terms of accountability, but also for those active in the field to learn from existing experiences and improve their work. This would also constitute a good practice since monitoring and evaluation reports of large-scale projects run by the MoNE are very rarely shared with the public.

The situation at hand requires the cooperation of a large number of international, national and local actors with different capacities and approaches. In this respect, improving coordination, communication and transparency, strengthening capacity building efforts – especially for the Directorate General of Migration Management’s provincial staff – and societal participation are among the primary needs.

The need for fostering communication, coordination and collaboration has been voiced regarding many different contexts, including relationships:

- different public institutions have with each other and with CSOs,
- between central and local levels,
- among CSOs themselves,⁸
- between schools and families and communities around schools,
- among education staff.

Among recommendations made in the workshop in this regard are the creation of “provincial and district migration platforms” ensuring the active participation of CSOs and the continuation of ongoing meetings bringing together the MoNE, UNICEF and CSOs working for the benefit of refugee children. It is also believed that opening new spaces for local governments and CSOs to share their experiences and the outcomes of their work with each other shall have a positive effect in terms of strengthening coordination and collaboration as well as building capacity.

The cancellation of various international CSOs’ work permits at the start of 2017 and the restrictions brought to educational activities of CSOs operating in the field⁹ have become a source of serious apprehension and uncertainty for many institutions carrying out empowering activities for refugee children. Recent developments, including new protocols of collaboration between the MoNE Directorate General for Lifelong Learning and several NGOs

8. For a study providing detailed evaluations on the communication, coordination and collaboration between CSOs cf. Macreath and Sağnıç (2017).

9. For memorandum no. 15520822-10.06.02-E.788106 dated 19.01.2017 on Unauthorized Educational Activities (İzinsiz Eğitim Öğretim Faaliyetleri) cf. http://oogkm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_01/19173346_19012017izinsiz_eYitim_YYretim_faaliyetleri_Genelge.pdf

and MoNE's emphasis on dialogue and cooperation with the civil society have partly done away with these drawbacks. However, there are measures to take in order to fully overcome this state of uncertainty and to establish mutual trust. First of all, audits need to be carried out in accordance with additional standards that promote children's best interests, a rights-based approach and principles of good governance. Furthermore, there are question marks regarding how existing standards are established – if indeed there are such standards – and what kind of assessments take place prior to granting/rejecting work permits. For instance, CSOs interviewed in a study conducted by the Citizens Assembly (Yurttaşlık Derneği) in 2016, involving individual and focus group interviews with about 70 people in total, convey an understanding that “the state is cooperating only with those who are ideologically aligned with it”.¹⁰ Hence, it is important to look into different stakeholders' perceptions of the regulations made in 2017. Moreover, MoNE, other decision-makers and CSOs must adopt methods to enhance dialogue and transparency. This also entails considering CSOs as legitimate and equal partners, and allowing them flexibility and autonomy within their fields of expertise and activity.

It is possible to mention some difficulties that must be addressed in the relationship between CSOs and refugees as well. In this regard, one of the points made in the “Civil Society and Syrian Refugees in Turkey” report by the Citizens Assembly is especially noteworthy: “Syrians are often not being recognised as actors in their own future. There is still a tendency to work ‘for’ rather than ‘with’ Syrians, and the ideology of charity and aid giving dictates their position to be one of victim rather than actor. Some associations are trying to reject this ideology and this is increasing the level of cooperation with Syrians.”¹¹

There are also certain responsibilities that fall upon donor organizations. Donors are expected to be better informed about local social dynamics and/or be more open to the opinions and guidance of more experienced CSOs. It is also recommended that approaches, which encourage cooperation rather than competition among communities and CSOs, be adopted.

Finally, it merits mention that though local governments are among the actors most affected by migration, especially in provinces and districts heavily populated by refugees, they lack adequate authority and resources for providing services to refugees. For more effective service provision, municipalities need better access to data collected by other public bodies, personnel trainings and financial resources.¹²

10. Macreath and Sağnıç, 2017.

11. Ibid., p. 61.

12. For research on the experiences and work of municipalities in Istanbul regarding Syrian refugees cf. <http://marmara.gov.tr/UserFiles/Attachments/2017/04/14/69d13b46-9e36-4d95-9940-5b88bea867dc.pdf> and <http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/publication/english-engaging-syrian-communities-the-role-of-local-government-in-istanbul/?lang=en>

For the work carried out by the Municipality of Sultanbeyli, prominent among the good examples in Istanbul, through the Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association cf. <http://multeciler.org.tr/faaliyetlerimiz> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=145&v=UBB5cMW4rI0.

For the efforts of the Municipality of Gaziantep, providing a variety of services that are mindful of social harmonization through its Migration Office, which itself is a novel practice cf.

<http://uclg-mewa.org/uploads/file/39c9141e89b947ca82456f8b3ef3decb/Suriye-Raporu-TR.pdf>

Integration strategies must be accompanied with measures combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia towards refugees, as well as with inclusionary practices.

Though there are different perspectives on the concepts of “integration” and “harmonization”, one of the points agreed upon in the workshop was that the responsibility for “harmonization” must not be placed solely on refugees, but living together in peace would only be possible on the basis of equality and through the joint efforts of all communities. In other words, the approach to be adopted should be one where no group – and not only refugees but also other groups facing inequalities and exclusion in Turkey – is accorded more value than any other group or is forced to adapt to another. In this vein, fulfilment of refugees’ rights through public services should be accompanied by additional efforts. The education system, as well as other policy domains, has a critical role in these efforts. The recommendations expressed in the workshop in this regard are as follows:

→ Transforming the way in which Syrians are portrayed in the media and featuring “good examples”

To clarify, news about refugees are predominantly about crimes and adversities, and often contain hate speech, or they tend to portray refugees as incapacitated people to be treated with pity rather than as individuals with rights.¹³

→ Using public service announcements in order to increase societal acceptance and better representation of the diversity in the society in ads and TV series

→ Organizing social, cultural and artistic events at the neighbourhood level, bringing together refugees and other communities

→ Paying more attention to local social dynamics and carefully considering the ratio of refugee population to the host community in decision-making processes regarding the settlement of refugees in certain provinces and districts, and taking measures for the prevention of possible tensions and conflicts

→ Preventing fake news and disinformation (about services and aid provided to Syrians) that fuel racism and xenophobia, ensuring transparency with regards to such services and aid, and including other marginalized groups in service and aid provision alongside Syrians, with donors being sensitive and flexible in this regard

Some of the activities carried out through PICTES aim to support the school as a whole (such the employment of security and cleaning personnel, and the provision of educational equipment), thus constitute positive examples of this approach, and it is important to multiply such practices.

→ Consulting CSOs that are familiar with local dynamics to ensure equitable service provision and aid distribution

13. For studies on how reports in the media feature refugees cf. http://ozgurulukarastirmalari.com/pdf/rapor/OAD_c2IGWsk.pdf, <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/173908-medya-multeci-haberlerini-nasil-veriyor>, <https://hrantdink.org/tr/asulis/faaliyetler/projeler/medyada-nefret-soylemi/934-medyada-suriyeli-multecilere-yonelik-nefret-soylemi-videosu-yayinlandi>

What may be done within this framework via education and in the school environment shall be covered in following pages.

The fact that attributes, circumstances and needs of refugees in general and refugee children in particular vary must be taken into consideration while devising education policies and practices.

First, it should be mentioned that Syrian refugees are a heterogenous group in terms of ethnic origin, mother tongue and religious belief, and that these differences may result in different experiences of discrimination in various areas in life, including education. These experiences may arise both in the relationships between refugees themselves and in their relationships with host communities. It is necessary to take into consideration different – and often multiple – disadvantages they face when developing policies regarding refugee children. Special measures must be taken for children who are more vulnerable to rights violations, such as, for instance, girls, children with special needs, unaccompanied children and working children. Additionally, it is also important to keep in mind that the circumstances and access to services of refugees living in camps and urban areas and of Doms, who are forced to live as nomads and are among the most vulnerable groups, differ significantly.¹⁴ Finally, it should be noted that still there are children who are unregistered or do not have a foreigner identity number starting with 99.

For the fulfilment of refugee children’s right to education in all its dimensions, it is vital to consider the existing limitations of the education system in Turkey in a holistic manner, to learn from past experiences and to design policies based on the principle of inclusion with regard to all children.

“While the risks children face increase the older they grow and the longer they are deprived of a formal education, they are at the same time burdened with the responsibilities of caring and making a living for their family at an early age. In this respect, girls – and especially adolescent girls – emerge as a group requiring special attention and follow-up due to risks they face such as child marriage, child pregnancy and child motherhood either for economic or cultural reasons. The duration of their stay in formal education and their continuation on to secondary education are of critical importance in protecting girls from risks of this kind and ensuring their healthy development as well as their upbringing as educated, well-equipped and competent individuals who are in control of their own lives. Yet, due to the financial difficulties suffered by families, there is a serious fall in the rates of girls’ continuation on to secondary education in particular.”

Mavi Kalem, 2017, p. 3.

14. For an up-to-date study on Syrian Doms who have taken refuge in Turkey as well as other related groups cf. https://issuu.com/kirkayakkultur/docs/the_dom_the_other_asylum_seekers_fr

Inclusion of Syrian children into the education system in Turkey makes it more challenging to address some of the existing problems, especially the issue of overpopulated classrooms in certain provinces and districts. Nevertheless, issues regarding infrastructure, equipment and access are more visible and have greater potential for fundraising on both international and national levels. The 200 Mill. EURO granted by the European Union for the construction of 100 schools may be cited as an example here. Yet, the problems present in the education system are not limited to this.

The fact that the education system in Turkey is not fully purged of all kinds of discrimination based on ethnic origin, language and faith, and has not been rendered inclusive of all children requiring special measures is a disadvantage affecting the education of refugee children as well.¹⁵ If, for instance, inclusive educational policies and practices had been developed for children that have mother tongues other than Turkish and are unable to receive education in equal circumstances with their peers or for refugee children residing in Turkey before the arrival of Syrian refugees, then current challenges could have been alleviated, albeit partly. More concretely, it would have been possible to be better prepared for the education of Syrian children in terms of education methods and materials or teacher competencies in matters such as teaching Turkish as a foreign language, teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, etc. The approach put forward by the Education Reform Initiative (ERG) in its report titled “Community Building Through Inclusive Education” (Bir Arada Yaşamı ve Geleceği Kapsayıcı Eğitimle İnşa Etmek) dated 2017 is highly significant in this regard: “Educational policies should be formulated within an inclusive education framework by taking into account the ethnic and socioeconomic heterogeneity of both the refugee and broader student population. In this respect, “the refugee crisis” urges us to rethink the way that the Turkish education system can best serve its multi-ethnic, multilingual student body in a more inclusive way.”

This does not, of course, mean that past policies and practices are not at all put to use. The catch-up education sessions planned as part of PICTES are among the positive examples in this vein. On a positive note, the Catch-Up Education Program (Yetiştirici Sınıf Öğretim Programı – YSÖP), prepared and previously implemented for five years as of the 2008/09 school year for children aged 10-14, who had either never been enrolled in primary school or had fallen at least three years behind their peers due to unexcused absences or academic failure, was taken into account while formulating the catch-up education program in PICTES. In short, a holistic approach, which is also based on learning from past experiences, needs to be adopted.

Multilingual educational practices supporting intercultural dialogue shall contribute both to the individual development of children and to peaceful social interactions.

15. The report ‘Discrimination Based on Colour, Ethnic Origin, Language, Religion and Belief in Turkey’s Education System (Türkiye Eğitim Sisteminde Renk, Etnik Köken, Dil, Din ve İnanç Temelli Ayrımcılık)’ prepared by Nurcan Kaya in 2015 on issues of discrimination and inclusion in the education system in Turkey (<http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EN-turkiye-egitim-sisteminde-ayirimcilik-24-10-2015.pdf>) and reports by the Education Reform Initiative in 2016 (<http://en.egitimreformugirisimi.org/inclusive-education-study-2/>) may be examined.

The needs and recommendations underlined in the workshop regarding this subject, partly addressed in the previous section as well, are as follows:

- Designing intercultural calendars based on cultural heritage, visual arts and literature together with students
- Providing more opportunities for the use of different languages in education in a manner not limited solely to electives
- Adopting educational models that would develop competencies in both the official language and mother tongues, and examining different multilingual education models towards this end
- Eliminating discriminatory content from education materials
- Ensuring that pre-service and in-service trainings address multilingualism and intercultural pedagogy
- Encouraging the production and dissemination of bilingual children's books and games¹⁶
- Starting preparatory/transitional classes for children with mother tongues other than Turkish
- Creating spaces for CSOs and their alternative language instruction practices in schools
- Organizing workshops for children, where they can experience learning a new language, other than the official language and their mother tongue (such as English, Farsi, sign language, etc.), together with their peers with different mother tongues
- Initiating peer learning systems on different topics
- Organizing cultural, artistic and sports events for children from different backgrounds and refugee children to attend together

Fulfilling children's participation rights for all children, including refugees, requires stronger efforts at both policy and implementation levels.

"Though the state has made commitments,

The child-friendly spaces and educational support models created by the YUVA Association are effective demonstrations of some of the recommendations in this section. The aims of YUVA's education programs include preparing children and youth for living in a multicultural world, fostering better relationships between children from Turkey and Syria within school and in everyday life, and supporting social participation and harmony by creating pluralistic spaces for children and youth from Turkey and Syria. For detailed information on the educational work carried out by YUVA: <https://www.yuva.org.tr/en/education/>

16. For exemplary work cf. <http://www.anadolukultur.org/en/announcements/arabic-turkish-bilingual-children-books-ready-for-distribution/413>, <http://www.anadolukultur.org/en/announcements/peace-prize-for-%E2%80%99Chad-ia%E2%80%9D/411>, <http://anadolukultur.org/en/areas-of-work/cultural-diversity-and-human-rights/books-and-games-for-children-on-syrian-cultural-heritage/189>, <http://www.yanyana.biz/yanyana-kutu-oyunumuz-cocuklara-sorduk/>

set certain objectives and undertaken some initiatives in this regard, it is not possible to speak of a holistic policy, supported by appropriate mechanisms and adequate resources, for the realization of children's right to participation in schools in Turkey. This becomes apparent not only in the scarcity of participation opportunities, but also by the fact that processes related to children's participation have been designed in a manner completely detached from children's opinions, interests and needs. It would not be wrong to say that when children can express their opinions, this is often through means and in settings seen fit for them by grown-ups. The fact that children do not have the power to influence decisions concerning themselves in their schools, and that every student – no matter their age and characteristics – is not included in processes of participation are also among main problem areas.”¹⁷

This assessment made by the Istanbul Bilgi University Child Studies Unit (ÇOÇA) and ERG as part of their project titled “Towards Democratic Schools: Participation Practices Empowering Students and Schools” (Demokratik Okullara Doğru: Öğrencileri ve Okulları Güçlendiren Katılım Uygulamaları) is crucial also for the rights of refugee children.¹⁸ Among recommendations expressed in the workshop in this regard is the development of mechanisms to ensure children's participation in the planning of education and in the arrangement of learning environments. Recommendations include making student councils in schools more effective and influential, and making sure that refugee students are also represented among class representatives, in student councils and student clubs. Participation must be considered as a fundamental principle and right that should accompany all other rights rather than a matter of secondary importance to be brought to life only after certain rights have already been achieved.

There is need for policies and practices that would enable families and communities' meaningful participation in processes and decisions regarding education. In this respect, Turkish language instruction as well as more widespread use of refugees' mother tongues is a central issue in education just as in other fields.

Some of the needs highlighted in the workshop are as follows. Families and communities should be better informed about education and have a greater say over decisions concerning education. Besides, communication among parents from different backgrounds whose children are attending the same school, and communication and cooperation between schools and parents need to be improved. To this end, more informative and multilingual materials should be made available for parents, translators should provide assistance in parent-teacher meetings, refugee parents should be encouraged to take active roles in parent-teacher associations, these associations should become functional and participatory, cultural and artistic events should be organized with the participation of communities around schools, and awareness-raising activities against discrimination and hate speech should be organized. In addition, it was mentioned that programs such as volunteering, etc. that would enable interactions between parents and other children could also be developed.

17. Tüzün and Sarışık, 2015, p. 14.

18. For reports prepared as part of this project containing publications for children as well as for educators cf. http://www.cocukcalismalari.org/project/demokratik_okullara_dogrui/index.html and <http://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/demokratik-okullara-dogrui-projesi-yayinlari/>

Despite the rapid increase in rates of enrolment, a variety of obstacles continue to stand in the way of refugee children’s integration into the education system. Moreover, access to education is a matter that must be considered in a broader framework than simply tallying schooling rates.

Regarding access to school, additional regulations are necessary for unregistered refugee children and for those in possession of the pre-registration document starting with 98 who do not yet have their temporary protection identity card starting with 99 and are thus unable to benefit from certain services. It is critical that good practices – such as MoNE’s recent initiative of taking children in groups to the Migration Management Office to obtain identity cards starting with 99 before their families – rapidly spread across all provinces. On the other hand, children who were registered in provinces other than that of their residence still face difficulties in obtaining temporary protection IDs. It is noted that coordination between MoNE and Directorate General of Migration Management and between the central and provincial offices of these bodies as well as schools must be enhanced.

“In the book “Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships” by Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Dovies, it is argued that a much more effective and participatory model for collaboration between the school, family and community - which would go beyond bake sales and financial support to schools by parent-teacher associations - is necessary. For this, educational settings and the school climate should be positive, intimate and supportive for families as much as for their children. To build effective family-school partnerships the authors emphasize the following needs:

- Schools to be open to family visits, and families to feel welcomed by principals and teachers at school,*
- Teachers to regularly discuss with parents how they are to support the academic, social and emotional development of their children at home,*
- Translators who know the families’ mother tongues to be present in schools located in neighbourhoods where a language other than the official language is widely used, and for different cultures existing in the neighbourhood to be reflected in course contents,*
- Schools to inform families of cases of discrimination and violence and to collaborate with them in developing preventive efforts,*
- Schools to inform families of cases of discrimination and violence and to collaborate with them in developing preventive efforts,*

Education Reform Initiative (ERG), 2017b, p. 108.

Means for safe and free transportation to school is stated as a fundamental need for girls especially. It is possible to say that the fact that a significant majority of refugee students in both TECs and other schools attend school in the afternoon and that it is often dark by the time school is over, leads to a sense of unsafety. Other necessities highlighted in the workshop are socioeconomic support to families, access to quality preschool education – one of the most effective means of intervention with respect to the issues at hand –, and

the proliferation of catch-up education programs developed as part of PICTES. It is also suggested that decisions on the grade placement of refugee students should not be solely based on their Turkish skills.

CSOs also play an active role in the enrolment of refugee children in schools and their access to resources such as conditional educational transfers. For instance, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) disseminates information to promote enrolment in school, supports families in school registration processes and application to assistance programs, and conducts activities encouraging out-of-school children to attend non-formal education activities through its Al Farah Child and Family Support Centers. For detailed information on the work of ASAM cf. <http://en.sgdd.info/?p=1054#more-1054>

It is well-known that being enrolled in school does not necessarily mean regular attendance, and that absence is an important problem for refugee children. To fully understand and counter the dynamics behind this problem, which has been made visible through the observations and research of various experts and organizations, comprehensive data collection and additional measures are needed.

Finally, it requires mention that initiatives for directing Syrian children to religious (imam-hatip) schools or vocational and technical education add a new dimension to issues already controversial in Turkey.¹⁹ Quick and easy solutions do not seem probable in such matters that require further discussions on the relationship between gender segregation and gender equality in education, the quality of vocational education and child labour, the tracking system and socioeconomic inequalities, as well as how to treat religious education within formal education. Therefore, there is a need for platforms, where different opinions may be voiced and the assumptions underlying decisions to direct refugee children to these schools can be debated.

Continuation, diversification and proliferation of conditional cash transfers, taking into account the impact of the current program, is important in terms of access to education and regular school attendance.

The families of 56,000 students were supported in the first payment period (May 2017) of the Conditional Education Aid (Şartlı Eğitim Yardımı – ŞEY), a conditional cash transfer program established by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, UNICEF, the Red Crescent and ECHO. The program targeted 230,000 refugee students in 2017.²⁰ The number of students reached as of the 13th November 2017 is 137,000.²¹ A student should not be absent from school for more than four days a month so that the family can receive ŞEY payments

19. For news reports and documents on directing refugee children to religious (imam-hatip) schools and/or vocational and technical education cf. <https://dogm.meb.gov.tr/www/suriyeli-ogrencilere-yonelik-din-ogretimi-calistayi-mustesar-yardimci-si-ercan-demircinin-baskanliginda-istanbulda-gerceklestirildi/icerik/544>, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/mebden-suriyeli-ogrenciler-imam-hatiplere-yonlendirilsin-genelgesi,444937>, <http://istanbul.meb.gov.tr/www/suriyeli-cocuklarin-egitim-ogretimi-konulu-koordinasyon-toplantisi/icerik/1459>, <https://www.iesob.org.tr/uploads/dosyalar/genelgeler/21.pdf>

20. <http://www.aile.gov.tr/haberler/sartli-egitim-yardimi-programi-kapsaminda-31-mayis-itibariyla-56-bin-332-multeci-cocuga-33-bin-kart-uzerinden-3-milyon-800-bin-lira-nakdi-yardim-ulastirdik>

21. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon_tutanaklari.goruntule?pTutanakId=2000

every two months, ranging between 35 and 60 TL monthly according to education level and gender of the students. Prerequisites for application to the program include the condition that all members of the family have foreigners' identity numbers (starting with 99) and lack social security.

The program, which has been implemented in Turkey since 2003 and has recently started to cover preschool education as well, carries important potential for increasing enrolment and attendance rates of children who are out-of-school due to poverty. The fact that ŞEY is open not only to Syrian refugees but also to other refugee groups and that it also targets preschool students, strengthens its potential even further. In order to fully realize this potential, the impact of the first implementation phase has to be assessed, and followed by improvements to the program and further dissemination. First of all, the number and profile of students reached by the end of the year must be made public, and if the targeted number has not been achieved, the reasons behind this must be identified. Moreover, there is need for reliable data on attendance/absenteeism for both the beneficiaries of this program and refugee children in general.

Another element of the program that requires consideration is the sum provided as aid. Prevalency of child labour, which is closely linked to poverty and adults' lack of access to quality employment, is one of the main obstacles hindering refugee children's right to education. Therefore, it should be assessed whether the aid is providing an effective incentive in preventing child labour, and the payments should be structured accordingly.

The fact that teachers in public schools are not equipped for and lack adequate support in working with refugee children, whose mother tongues are not Turkish and many of whom have suffered traumatic experiences, remains one of the primary obstacles to inclusive and quality education. Additionally, opportunities for professional development and employment available to Syrian educators need to be expanded. It is also important to minimise the uncertainty they have come to face with the prospective closure of TECs. Furthermore, they should be offered short and long-term possibilities to contribute to the education system.

Supporting the teachers is among the top priorities agreed upon by all relevant actors. Teacher trainings carried out under PICTES and trainings for Syrian teachers organized by MoNE in collaboration with UNICEF should be accompanied by longer term, diverse and innovative efforts in this field. Recommendations voiced in the workshop include the following:

- Taking teachers' resistance and lack of motivation towards in-service trainings into consideration while planning trainings for teachers
- Ensuring that trainings offered by MoNE and CSOs are not limited to seminars, and are rather complemented by more practice-oriented, workshop-type activities
- By collaborating with universities, making online training resources available to teachers
- Organizing communication and mutual learning activities that would bring together teachers from Syria and Turkey

- Preparing a social activities guidebook, which can be used for all student groups, with the contributions of teachers from Syria and Turkey
- With a consideration of the traumatic experiences they have undergone, providing psychological support to Syrian teachers
- Noticing Syrian teachers' experiences and potential contributions to education, clarifying the roles they may undertake in the education system in the wake of the closure of TECs, and developing methods that would allow them to familiarize with the education system
- Taking measures to mediate the tensions between Turkish coordinators and Syrian teachers in TECs

A summary of two projects presented in the group sessions during the workshop is provided below.

23 teachers attended the seminars and workshops organized by the Citizens Assembly (Yurttaşlık Derneği) with the support of the British Embassy, Open Society Foundation and Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Istanbul from July 2016 to June 2017.²²

49 teachers participated in the Turkish language trainings and professional development courses organized in Istanbul and Hatay between November 2016 and May 2017 by the HayatSür Association as part of the “Syrian Teachers Language and Professional Development Project” (Suriyeli Öğretmenler Dil ve Mesleki Gelişim Projesi) carried out with the support of the Open Society Foundation.²³ The professional development courses included the following modules:

Introduction to Teaching Profession and Teaching Practice, Learning Leader Teacher Seminar, and Trauma and Coping Methods. 32 teachers have gained an advanced level of Turkish

Seminars and Workshops Organized in the Teacher Support Program for the Social Integration of Syrian Refugee Children		
Communication and Conflict Resolution Methods for Teachers	Teaching under Difficult Circumstances	Is Differentiated Instruction Possible?
Rethinking the Teacher/Teaching	Discrimination at School/in the Classroom	Rethinking Assesment and Evaluation, Alternative Approaches
Migration, Refugees, and Syrian Children's Access to Right to Education	Democratic/Participatory School and Classroom Management Practices	Teaching in the Digital Age
Developing Familiarity with Languages, Learning for Students whose Mother Tongue is not Turkish	Meeting with CSOs working on the Social Integration of Refugees & Information Session on the Syrian Education System	Module Development Workshop

22. For detailed information cf. <http://www.hyd.org.tr/tr/haberler/234-suriyeli-multeci-cocuklarin-egitim-yoluyla-toplumsal-entegrasyonu-icin-ogretmen-destek-programi-tamamlandi>

23. For additional information cf. <https://aciktoplumvakfi.org.tr/projeler/suriyeli-ogretmenler/> and <https://aciktoplumvakfi.org.tr/projeler/suriyeli-ogretmenlerin-gelecek-kaygisi/>

language skills, while 17 reached an intermediate level, and all participants were observed to have been empowered in a professional sense by the end of the six-month project period.

Finally, it is not possible for teachers alone to carry out all the work in schools regarding the needs of refugee children or other groups at risk. Additionally, the scope of psychological guidance and counselling provided in schools and the time and resources allocated to these services are already inadequate. There is a need for considering different models, in which psychologists and social workers may serve within schools, to ensure that all children are included and that preventive measures, psychosocial support as well as other services could be structured in an effective and sustained manner. One model that may contribute to meeting the psychosocial needs of both refugee children and all other children and to supporting them along with their families and communities is the school social work model.

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ANNEX: PARTICIPANTS OF THE WORKSHOP ON EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE INTEGRATION AND REFUGEE CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION

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The European Liberal Forum (ELF): The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the foundation of the European Liberal Democrats, the ALDE Party. A core aspect of our work consists in issuing publications on Liberalism and European public policy issues. We also provide a space for the discussion of European politics, and offer training for liberal-minded citizens. Our aim is to promote active citizenship in all of this. Our foundation is made up of a number of European think tanks, political foundations, and institutes. The diversity of our membership provides us with a wealth of knowledge and is a constant source of innovation. In turn, we create an opportunity for our members to cooperate on European projects under the ELF umbrella. We work throughout Europe as well as in the EU Neighbourhood countries. The youthful and dynamic nature of ELF allows us to be at the forefront in promoting active citizenship, getting the citizen involved with European issues and building an open, Liberal Europe.

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

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