

Reactie op Internetconsultatie
Vernieuwd Beleid Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking

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Question 1: Reception in the region

Summary

The following reaction provides recommendations on how the Netherlands can achieve more results on reception in the region, using cooperation with Turkey as a case study. The Netherlands is advised to:

1. Assist Turkey in developing a viable integration strategy of refugee children into its education system;
2. Assist Turkey in creating employment for refugees or assist refugees in Turkey in accessing existing employment;
3. Comply with the commitments of the EU-Turkey Statement.

Introduction

Turkey does not have much experience with refugee flows from the East. Traditionally, Turkey's experience has been with migration flows from the West, more specifically from the Balkans. Since the majority of these people were of Turkic origin, Turkey has never had to develop a strategy for their integration. It would happen naturally over the years. However, the situation now is different with asylum-seekers coming from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan etc.

Turkey's [Law on Foreigners and International Protection](#), which also established the [Directorate General for Migration Management](#) (DGMM), dates back only to 2014. The Law is largely based on the existing legal framework on asylum in the EU. This fledgling legal regime and institutional framework need time to take root and function properly, which is easier said than done in the current situation whereby they need to regulate the rights and residence of more than 3.5 million. Hence, it should be explored how Turkey and more specifically the DGMM could benefit and learn from the experience of a more established legal regime like that of the Netherlands. By determining the needs of the DGMM, the Netherlands could offer capacity building trainings and activities in those relevant areas.

While Turkey tries to cater to the daily needs of asylum-seekers and refugees, it doesn't have a long-term strategy to integrate them. Syrians are still seen as "guests" that will return home once the on-going conflict is over. However, there are no signs of the conflict subsiding in the near future. The education of children of asylum seekers and migrants, irrespective of the legal

status of their parents, should be an absolute priority, to be followed by steps to integrate their parents into the Turkish labour market.

1. Assist Turkey in developing a viable integration strategy of refugee children into its education system

Today Turkey hosts over 3.5 million of refugees ([UNHCR Fact Sheet](#)), 70% of which are women and children. Less than 10% of refugees live in camps, where “[temporary education centers](#)” are established for the education of Syrian children. Outside the camps Syrian children need to attend regular schools, in which they face a language barrier.

According to the [UNCHR data](#), in 2016 160.000 Syrian refugee children were enrolled in Turkish schools, while 340.000 attended the temporary education centers in the refugee camps. 40% of Syrian refugee children are out of school. According to Human Rights Watch, [the education possibilities for non-Syrian children](#) are even more limited. This means that more than 500.000 million children do not have the possibility to go to school, while many of those have to work.

What the Dutch government can do is to continue financing the facility for Refugees in Turkey as agreed under the EU-Turkey Statement (see also under point 3 below). The Facility funds many [schools and health projects](#). However, the fact that hundreds of thousands children still do not have access to education cannot be ignored. Integrating more than a million children into the education system of a country is a huge challenge even for a developed country, let alone for a developing country like Turkey. Hence, Turkey should be assisted in developing a viable integration strategy of refugee children into its education system.

Some Dutch NGOs, such as Spark, already have some experience in this regard, as they have been providing scholarships and helping with access to language courses to Syrian youth in Turkey. Their knowledge and expertise on obstacles faced regarding access to education could be used as a stepping-stone to assist Turkey in devising a broader strategy. In addition, further exchange of views and cooperation with research Centres and Institutes, such as the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, which have relevant expertise could prove fruitful.

2. Assist Turkey in creating employment for refugees or assist refugees in Turkey in accessing existing employment

Regular employment is the single most important step to integration in a host society. Most of the asylum-seekers and irregular migrants, who manage to find jobs, do so informally, on the black market. Even though the number of those with employment permits is increasing, in 2017 only 21.000 Syrians obtained work permits and started working legally. [It is reported that](#) the Ministry of Labour and Social Security approved 87% of the work permit applications. In this case, it is worth researching why the number of work permit applications has been so low.

It is important to identify what the barriers for regular employment are and develop appropriate strategies. In addition to cooperation at governmental level, strengthening the activities of NGOs such as Spark, that provide capacity building activities to different Chambers of Commerce to support the establishment and development of businesses of Syrian refugees could be taken as an example and could be multiplied.

Broader projects could be developed for regions with heavy concentration of refugees, where refugee employment is encouraged by granting preferential access schemes to the products they work on/ produce. That would be especially effective for agricultural products, which do not enjoy free access to the European markets.

3. Comply with the commitments of the EU-Turkey Statement

Point 4 of the EU-Turkey Statement reads as follows: “Once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced, *a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme* will be activated. EU Member States will contribute on a voluntary basis to this scheme”. [emphasis added]

If European countries want long-term cooperation with “countries in the region”, they should take their own commitments more seriously and comply with them. Two years after the Statement, there is no such scheme in place, mainly due to disagreement among different Member States. Those kinds of disagreements need to be overcome if the EU wants to be considered a credible partner. Migration issues are here to stay, which means that all countries, including the Netherlands, should actively work to find ways to fulfil their promises and commitments.

Relation to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In the short-run, point 1 will contribute primarily to achieving quality education for refugee children as envisaged by Goal 4. In the long-run, providing education to *all* children will also facilitate the achievement of gender equality (Goal 5), eradication of poverty (Goal 1), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), reduced inequalities between the refugees and the host population (Goal 10) as well as sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).

Point 2 will contribute to the individual well-being and health of refugees (Goal 3) by decreasing poverty and hunger (Goals 1 & 2). It will reduce inequality between the host population and the refugees (Goal 10), and contribute to overall economic growth in Turkey (Goal 8).

Not keeping the commitments and promises under the EU-Turkey Statement, as suggested under point 3, might jeopardise the long-term sustainability of ‘reception in the region’ as it might influence Turkey’s willingness to keep its promises too, which will affect all the SDGs mentioned above.