A ROAD MAP FOR THE EDUCATION OF SYRIANS IN TURKEY
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

İPEK COŞKUN, MÜBERRA NUR EMİN

The reflections of the humanitarian crisis in Syria since 2011 have been experienced all over the world in different ways. In this sense, Turkey’s experience has gathered a lot of attention as well. Thanks to its open door policy, Turkey has become the country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world and has created a living space for millions of Syrians. According to official figures, Turkey hosts 2,724,927 Syrians and thus takes the burden of the humanitarian crisis on its shoulders. Each Syrian is important for Turkey, as is their adaptation to Turkish public life.

The most crucial elements of orientation towards public life are education and employment. With respect to employment, Turkey has taken considerable steps. In addition to this, the education of Syrian children requires a road map so as not to create lost generations for the future of Turkey and Syria. The NGOs in Turkey have taken great responsibility for the education of Syrians and play an important role in offering advice for the Ministry of National Education’s (MEB) road map. However, only one in three Syrian children is schooled – this is evidence that the NGO-based short-term solutions are not enough and long-term public policymaking is required. From the first years of the crisis in Syria, the SETA Foundation has been supporting the policymaking process especially in terms of educating Syrians, aiding their legal status and their adaptation to public life.

The SETA Foundation is especially sensitive on the issue of Syrians’ education and in this study aims to contribute to developing a road map on Syrians’ education and to work against the creation of lost generations.
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The reflections of the humanitarian crisis in Syria since 2011 have been experienced all over the world in different ways. In this sense, Turkey’s experience has gathered a lot of attention as well. Thanks to its open door policy, Turkey has become the country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world and has created a living space for millions of Syrians. According to official figures, Turkey hosts 2,724,927 Syrians and thus takes the burden of the humanitarian crisis on its shoulders. Each Syrian is important for Turkey, as is their adaptation to Turkish public life.

The most crucial elements of orientation towards public life are education and employment. With respect to employment, Turkey has taken considerable steps. In addition to this, the education of Syrian children requires a road map so as not to create lost generations for the future of Turkey and Syria. The NGOs in Turkey have taken great responsibility for the education of Syrians and play an important role in offering advice for the Ministry of National Education’s (MEB) road map. However, only one in three Syrian children is schooled – this is evidence that the NGO-based short-term solutions are not enough and long-term public policymaking is required. From the first years of the crisis in Syria, the SETA Foundation has been supporting the policymaking process especially in terms of educating Syrians, aiding their legal status and their adaptation to public life.

The SETA Foundation is especially sensitive on the issue of Syrians’ education and in this study aims to contribute to developing a road map on Syrians’ education and to work against the creation of lost generations.
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Burhanettin Duran
SETA General Coordinator
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• There are 2,724,927 Syrians in Turkey: 254,747 of them are residing in 25 camps in 10 cities established by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), while the rest are living and supporting themselves in various cities in Turkey.

• Approximately half of the Syrian population in Turkey (1,277,018) consists of children between the ages 0 and 18. There are 912,044 school-age children (5-18).

• There are currently 364,974 children aged between 0 and 4 who will start their education in the following years. This signifies the immediate need for the preparation of short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans.

• Even though there are immense efforts to provide education to the Syrian children in Turkey, only 311,256 are currently being educated in public schools and Temporary Education Centers (GEMs). There are 523,583 Syrian children who are not part of the education system yet.

• Considering preschool and primary education at both public schools and GEMs, it can be said that the male school enrollment rate is higher than the female. However, in secondary education, female school enrollment rate is higher than the male one. The probable reason for this is that teenage males have to work in order to support their family economically.

• School enrollment rate changes according to the education level. The highest school enrollment rate is in primary education.

• The school enrollment rate decreases as the grades advance. It is highest in the first grade and lowest in eleventh grade.
There are two main factors which affect the school enrollment rate at high school level: male teenagers have to work in order to support their family, while female teenagers are subjected to early marriage.

The first alternative for the education of Syrian children is the GEMs, in which the education is provided by Syrian teachers in Arabic and according to the Syrian curricula.

There are 425 GEMs within and out of the camps: 82,503 students are being educated at 36 GEMs located inside the camps, while the remaining 166,399 students are provided education at 389 GEMs located outside the camps. The city of Hatay hosts the most GEMs. Hence, Hatay with 51,267 students is also the city where the most Syrian children are being educated.

While 90% of school-age children in the camps are being schooled, this rate is around 25% for the children outside the camps.

12,759 education personnel currently staff the GEMs. As the Syrian curricula are being taught in Arabic at the GEMs, most of them are Syrian lecturers.

The second alternative for Syrian children is the public schools, which provide education in Turkish and according to the Turkish curricula. In comparison with the GEMs, there are significantly less Syrian students in public schools. While 62,357 Syrian children are being educated at public schools, there are 248,902 Syrians attending GEMs.

One of the most prominent issues for Syrians in Turkey is the absent and inadequate legal regulation. This situation allows each and every school to apply their respective regulations.

The most problematic part of Syrian children’s integration is language training. Due to inadequate lecturers, study materials and methodology at both GEMs and public schools, it is not possible to provide full-fledged Turkish language training.

Another issue with providing education to the Syrians is the inadequacy of facilities at the GEMs. While there are GEMs which have their own separate facilities or use the facilities of public schools during downtimes, there are also GEMs which are established in apartments, basements and even in derelict buildings.

Syrian students’ attendance is higher at the GEMs than at public schools. Factors contributing to this are the language barrier at public schools, the inability to receive education with children their own age, being excluded by Turkish students, and the miscommunication with teachers and school administrators.
There is a need to improve the rights of approximately 12,000 Syrian education personnel at the GEMs and to differentiate their wages according to the locations of the GEMs (inside or outside the camps).

Education of Syrian Refugees in the Rest of the World

More than 250,000 of the 500,000 Syrian school-age children in Lebanon are currently not receiving any education.

There are 1.3 million Syrians in Jordan. Out of 660,000 Syrians documented by the UN, 226,000 are school-age (5-17) children. More than one-third weren’t able to receive education last year.

In Germany, 40% of the Syrian refugees are estimated to be school-age children. Currently there isn’t any publicized data regarding the school enrollment rate of the Syrian refugees in Germany.
THE CURRENT CONDITION OF EDUCATION FOR SYRIANS IN TURKEY

Due to the ongoing internal strife in Syria, millions of Syrians were forced to relocate within Syria or migrate to neighboring countries. Turkey, as a result of its open door policy, is currently hosting approximately 3 million Syrians within its borders. According to the Directorate General of Migration Management’s (GİGM) data, 254,747 Syrians are residing in 25 camps in 10 cities, while there are 2,470,190 Syrians living and supporting themselves in various cities of Turkey. There are a total of 2,724,927 Syrians in Turkey. Approximately half of this population (1,277,018) consists of children between the age 0 and 18 (GİGM, 2016).

Education and employment are the two most important factors in the integration of Syrians in Turkey. The granting of work permits to Syrians by the
Turkish government in 2016 improved their employment issues (*Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette], 2016). However, Turkey wasn’t able to provide the same standards in regards to education. Even though various regulations about education are being implemented since 2012, it is hard to affirm the existence of a stable policy on this issue. In 2012, the policies regarding Syrian children’s education were shaped according to the assumption that Syrians would be returning to their homes in the short term. Thus, the policies were related only to the educational activities within the camps. As the number of Syrians within Turkey increased in 2013 due to the raging war in Syria, the Ministry of National Education (MEB) published two notices on April 26 and September 26 of the same year, trying to address the issues at an institutional level (Emin, 2016). In 2014, when the Syrian population within Turkey reached almost 2 million, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK) came into effect in April 2014, becoming the first extensive legal regulations on Syrians living in Turkey. With The Bylaw on Temporary Protection that came into effect in October 2014, Syrians were granted access to education, health and welfare services (*Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette], 2014). The education to be provided to the Syrian children was guaranteed and standardized with a circular titled “Education for Foreigners” published on September 23, 2014 (MEB, 2014). Moreover, education for refugees is a subject which is to be included for the first time in MEB’s 2015-2019 Strategic Plan (MEB, 2015).

Even with all of the above developments, it is not possible to claim that Turkey has achieved the desired rate of school enrollment for Syrian school-age children. According to MEB’s February 2016 data, there are 834,833 Syrian school-age (5-18) children in Turkey.
While 311,259 of these children are being educated at the GEMs, the remaining 523,583 are yet to be enrolled in schools. GİGM’s August 2016 data indicates that there are more Syrian school-age children than the MEB data suggests. According to GİGM data, there are 912,044 Syrian school-age children in Turkey. Furthermore, GİGM data reveals that there are 364,974 Syrian children currently aged between 0 and 4, who will start their education in the following years (GİGM, 2016). This signifies the immediate need for the preparation of short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans.

Currently, there are 18 million students receiving education in Turkey. When the Syrian children are added to the existing student population, it is obvious that the MEB is to face a challenge which doubles its capacities. Therefore, every plan regarding the education of Syrian children, should also consider the condition of Turkish students.

Considering the total number of schooled Syrian children, it can be seen that there are more schooled females than males. While 36% of female Syrian children are enrolled in schools, only 32% of male Syrian children are in school.
### FIGURE 5. SCHOOLING RATES BY GRADES

**Schooling rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>73,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Class</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>55,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Class</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Class</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Class</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Class</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Class</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Class</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Class</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Class</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8,195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total: 311,259 Student*

**Source:** MEB
However, regarding preschool and primary school education, it is observed that male Syrian children have a higher rate of enrollment than female children. Conversely, in secondary education and high schools, female Syrian teenagers have a more significant enrollment rate. This is due to the fact that male Syrian teenagers have to work in order to support their families economically.

The school enrollment rate changes according to the education level. The highest school enrollment rate is in primary education. It decreases as the grades advance: it is at its highest in first grade and lowest in eleventh grade. The higher rate of enrollment in twelfth grade is probably due to the proficiency exam prepared by the MEB. The Syrian students are able to graduate from the GEMs with this exam. There are two main factors which affect the school enrollment rate at high school level: male teenagers have to work in order to support their family, while female teenagers are subjected to early marriage. The factors which obstruct the Syrian children's access to education will be examined in the following chapters.

THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN’S EDUCATION: TEMPORARY EDUCATION CENTERS (GEMS)

GEMs are primary and secondary education institutions which provide education to Syrian children and teenagers in Arabic and according to the Syrian curricula; they are active both inside and outside the camps (MEB, 2014). Various NGOs led the establishment of the GEMs and from the very first years of the conflict, the NGOs have been administering and financing the GEMs. The GEM Model was founded by both Turkish and Syrian NGOs. The model was then improved by the MEB and international organizations. Currently, the GEM model maintains its singularity – there are no similar models in the world.

![Figure 6. Number of Students at the GEMS (Inside and Outside of Camps)](image_url)

Source: MEB
A total of 82,503 students are being educated at 36 GEMs located inside the camps, while the remaining 166,399 students are provided education at 389 GEMs located outside of the camps. While 90% of the school-age children in the camps are being schooled, this rate is around 25% for the children outside the camps. This data indicates that there is a significant population of Syrian children outside of camps which don’t have access to education. Moreover, while an average of 2,290 students are being educated at each GEM inside the camps; this number is around 430 outside the camps. The numbers might suggest that the GEMs outside the camps are more advantageous as they are less populous; however, in reality, the lower number of average students at the GEMs outside camps is due to the lack of infrastructure and the inadequate education standards. Many of the GEMs provide education at apartment-turned-schools or buildings which are not suitable for education. On the other hand, there are some GEMs which use the public school facilities during the schools’ downtime.
There are 425 GEMs in 21 cities in Turkey: 36 GEMs are located inside the camps, while the remaining 389 GEMs are located outside the camps. The city of Hatay hosts the most GEMs. Hence, Hatay with 51,267 students is also the city where the most Syrian children are being educated. While there are 5,451 GEM students in camps, the remaining 45,816 attend the GEMs outside the camps. Şanlıurfa is second after Hatay with 47,899 students. The city of Siirt, which doesn’t have any camps within its limits, has the least Syrian students (107).¹ Even though Şanlıurfa hosts over 395,000 Syrians and approximately 134,000 of them are school-age children, only a third of these children were enrolled in a school. Cities that host a significant Syrian population but don’t have any GEMs within their limits are one of the most prominent reasons for the low enrollment rates of Syrian children. GEMs are not established proportionately to the school-age Syrian children residing in a city. For instance, while there is a GEM in Antalya, where 228 Syrians² reside, there aren’t any GEMs in Şırnak, where almost 14,000 Syrians live. Furthermore, none of the school-age Syrian children attend public schools in Şırnak.

There are 12,759 personnel working at the GEMs. As the lectures are in Arabic and the Syrian curricula are being employed, most of the GEM personnel consist of Syrian teachers. For the weekly, 5-hour-long Turkish lessons, GEMs have Turkish teachers. Moreover, each of the GEMs is managed by one Turkish and one Syrian administrator (Emin, 2016).

¹. Data acquired from the MEB.
². According to GİGM 2016 data.
THE SECOND ALTERNATIVE FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN’S EDUCATION: PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The second alternative is the public schools, which provide education in Turkish and according to the Turkish curricula. However, in comparison, there are fewer Syrian students being educated at public schools than at the GEMs. There are 62,357 Syrian students who are provided education at public schools, while there are a total of 248,902 Syrian students at GEMs.

This means that while 4 out of every 5 Syrian students prefer to study at GEMs, only one of them goes to public schools. There are several reasons for this situation. First of all, due to the assumption at the beginning of the war that the Syrians would be returning to their country in a short time, the education of the Syrian youth was left to the GEMs, rather than public schools. As the war kept raging in Syria due to international conjuncture, the MEB opened the doors of public schools to Syrian students in 2014. Another prominent reason of preferring GEMs over public schools is the language barrier, especially for children who haven’t received education for a long time. In addition, while it is obvious that Syrians will have to reside in Turkey for longer as the war is far from over, many Syrians expect to return to their country; thus, they prefer education in Arabic and according to the Syrian curricula.3

3. Interviews with Syrian parents.
Currently, Syrian students are admitted to public schools. In this sense, Bursa is a significant example, as the city didn't have any GEM and all the Syrian students were directed towards the public schools. Bursa is the city with the highest enrollment rate of Syrians in public schools. Similarly, Gaziantep is the city where the most Syrian students (9,486) attend public schools. Istanbul follows Gaziantep with 8,377 Syrian students. On the other hand, there aren't any Syrian students studying at public schools in cities such as Aydın, Şırnak, and Siirt. It is possible that the operations against terrorism and the state of emergency in Şırnak have affected the education of Syrian students negatively. However, it is clear that work has to be done in Aydın and Siirt. Moreover, while Şanlıurfa has the highest Syrian population in Turkey, only 785 Syrians students have been attending public schools. This indicates that the enrollment rate of the Syrian youth must be improved by various strategies. The Syrian students’ continued education at public schools is crucial for achieving social integration. However, the concerns of Syrians regarding cultural assimilation must be also taken into consideration. In the following chapter, the topics of cultural integration and the concerns of assimilation will be explored in detail.
Turkey’s policies towards Syrians since the beginning of the conflict have been applauded both nationally and internationally (Hoffman & Samuk, 2016; Kanat & Üstün, 2015; Their world & A World at School, 2015). Turkey’s main aim for the social integration of Syrians is to provide a prosperous life standard for them. However, the social integration of the 3 million Syrians in Turkey is undoubtedly a challenge, as is the case for every country which has faced a refugee influx. More work definitely has to be done in many fields and education, both in the short term and the long term, is one of the most prominent fields. There are both internal and external factors which require Turkey to educate Syrians within its borders.
The policies of the international actors regarding Syria imply that the crisis is not going to be resolved in the short term. Moreover, even if the crisis is resolved, it will take time to rebuild Syria. Furthermore, the indecisive and inconsistent policies of allied countries during the refugee crisis, along with the existence of ethnic and religious terrorist groups such as PYD/YPG and DAESH, constitute the external factors which encourage Turkey to be more determined on social integration and education policies. Similarly, in order to have social agreement on Syrian refugees and to keep Syrian youth away from any activities which may disrupt public order, Turkey needs to prepare a road map for education.

Since the beginning of the conflict, SETA has been working in close contact with its partners on the issue of the education and social integration of Syrians. Especially in the last 3 years, the foundation has been informing the public and policymakers by conducting observations inside and outside the camps, realizing visits to camps and holding interviews, along with participating in workshops and meetings in order to contribute to the process of preparing sustainable long-term policies.

This report is a compilation of the findings gathered during field research conducted over the last two years and of information obtained in SETA-led workshops and meetings. The report aims to contribute to the creation of a road map for the education of Syrians. The most recent evaluation of the general aspects of the report took place during the workshops held at SETA Istanbul Office with the participation of both Turkish and Syrian NGOs. The workshops were held on June 1 and 2, 2016, in cooperation with SESRIC and OIC, and a diverse group of participants were present. Day-long meetings on the selected subject matters were held with Turkish NGOs on the first day and with the Syrian NGOs on the second day. Currently, there are two models for the education of the Syrian youth. The first model is the GEMs, which are established in agreement with national and international NGOs; the second is the public schools. Aspects of the Syrian students’ education, such as curricula, education language, adaptation issues and so forth, differentiate according to the type of school they attend –GEM or public school– along with their city and district. The discussed issues and proposed suggestions in the following section are expected to contribute to the efforts of preparing a road map.

THE AMBIGUITY OF LEGAL REGULATIONS

One of the most prominent issues regarding the education of Syrian children is the lack of and ambiguity of legal regulations regarding their education. This causes every school to have different regulations, and results in the lack of uniformity. For instance, some school administrators are hesitant to admit a Syrian student to the first grade. Moreover, some GEMs demand monthly or yearly fees from the students in order to pay for the rent of the building, along with the teacher’s wage, which currently does not have any legal basis. There are certain arbitrary actions
at these institutions which, obviously, are a burden for Syrian families and prevent them from sending their children to the schools. Furthermore, as there aren't any regulations regarding the finances of these schools, some of them falsely claim to provide free education in order to get funds from national and international NGOs. Delegates of both the Turkish and Syrian NGOs have said that, due to the lack of a legal basis, there are instances of illegal actions, such as corruption and nepotism, at the GEMs. The absence of a legal framework also creates obstacles for the clear job definition of GEM administrators and teachers. This, in turn, obstructs the process of education and prevents healthy relations from being formed. In order to improve the conditions at the GEMs, workshop participants made the following proposals.

Proposals

- In order to have positive results, a standard application is required. To realize this, a mechanism which includes the Syrians must be established.
- The Bylaw on Temporary Protection, which defines the status of Syrians in Turkey, must be updated and expanded.
- The GEMs, which are preferred by 80% of the Syrian students, should be standardized and all the GEMs should follow these standards.
- The job descriptions of coordinators, principals and teachers should be clarified.
- Both Turkish and Syrian citizens in Turkey must be informed about the legal decisions related to Syrians, in order to prevent misunderstandings.
- Lastly, the following aspects regarding local administrators must be regulated legally: the allocation of school buildings for the Syrians, the provision of aid and services to them, and the documentation of the resources allocated to them.

LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The most significant problem in the Syrian children’s education and adaptation process is language education. It has been highlighted that both in public schools and in GEMs it has not been possible to provide quality education due to the lack of educational material and methodology in the Turkish courses designed for Syrian children. One of the main reasons for this problem is that the teachers who are appointed by the Ministry of Education (MEB) do not have the training to teach Turkish to foreigners. Although public school teachers manage to teach reading and writing in Turkish, they have stated that the children remain weak in terms of comprehension.4

4. This information is based on interviews conducted with public school teachers in Ankara, Şanlıurfa, and Kãlis.
The language obstacle is a big problem for parents as well, who have difficulties communicating with school administrators and teachers. This impairs the ability of the parent to support the educational process. It has been noted that Community Education Centers (HEM) have organized Turkish courses for parents. This has been viewed as a beneficial move, however, these courses were recorded as lacking quality and were not adequately advanced. Furthermore from the 3 million Syrians living in Turkey not even a 100,000 are attending Turkish language courses.5

In Turkey there are Turkish language courses provided for foreigners through the Public Education Centers of MEB, NGOs, municipalities, universities, and the Turkish Learning, Research and Application Center (TÖMER). Since TÖMER mainly provides language education at the university level, there is no educational material or human resources for children who are at primary school level. Furthermore, language education at TÖMER is not preferred by Syrians who are in a weak socio-economic situation. Although NGOs have the human resources for language education, there is a shortage of material. Universities are expected to take more initiatives on this front and become more active in mobilizing their language education centers for Syrians.

Another problem with language education is the lack of coordination and of a standardized program between institutions and associations. This leads to language education being inadequate and of low quality. The fact that the Yunus Emre Institute, which provides Turkish language and culture education in almost

5. Interview with MEB representative.
40 countries, is not taking an active role in providing Syrians in Turkey with language education is one of the major deficiencies in this area. The Yunus Emre Institute has educational material for learning Turkish as a second language at the primary school level. Therefore, the amendment of the founding statute of the Yunus Emre Institute to provide more resources to this area can significantly reduce the inadequacy in language education.

The main issue underlying the hesitation of Syrian parents is their presumption that children who will learn Turkish will forget their native language, namely Arabic. The Syrian NGO representatives in the workshop who were also parents highlighted that Syrian students and parents have preferred GEMs over public schools because of this issue. Syrian NGOs pointed out that learning Arabic is very difficult and that unless they learn Arabic first, they will have great difficulty in learning it after primary and middle school. Therefore they request a hybrid model in public schools which includes Arabic. Their proposals for language education are the following.

**Proposals**

- Syrians in public schools should go through a 6-month/1-year language education and preparation for school, after which they should be included in the education process according to their level.
- If the preparatory process is not enough, they should be provided with weekend or after-school Turkish language education.
- The applicability of the methodologies (ESL etc.) used by countries like the U.S., which experienced significant immigration, should be investigated.
- Those who will be providing Turkish language education should be trained by institutions such as the Yunus Emre Institute or TÖMER which train experts in Turkish education.
- The MEB should determine the standards in language education. The education provided by NGOs with appropriate space, teachers, and programs should be acknowledged by MEB schools.
- Turkish education materials and methodology should be prepared according to the level system that is universally used in language education.
- The quantity of Turkish education materials designed for primary school level should be increased.
- The prepared materials should be distributed to schools and other language centers free of charge or for a small fee.
- As part of informal education, the language courses provided for adults by MEB, local administrations and NGOs should be improved in terms of quantity and quality.
• Mass communication technologies such as radio and TV should be utilized for language education.
• The camp centers of local administrations and the Ministry of Youth and Sports can be used as language education centers.
• NGOs should support efforts to announce language courses and encourage Syrians to participate in these courses.

INSUFFICIENCY OF BUILDINGS AND CLASSROOMS

The insufficiency of buildings and classrooms is another important problem in the education of Syrians. Although there are public schools assigned to the GEMs in the afternoon, and GEMs which have their own buildings, there are also GEMs in apartment rooms, basements, or abandoned buildings. Many children spend their time in alleyways and attics. This situation indicates that children are not provided with a healthy learning environment. Moreover the insufficiency of building and classrooms force GEMs to charge monthly/yearly fees from Syrian students. These fees are a significant burden for families who are already in a disadvantaged socio-economic situation, and create an obstacle for sending their children to school.

The government is rapidly working towards transforming half-day public schools to full-day schools. Therefore GEMs which provide afternoon education will have difficulty in continuing their service. Hence it is expected that the building and classroom problem will get worse in the near future. The roadmap published by the MEB Basic Education Administration outlines a plan in which Syrian kindergarten and first grade students are transferred to education with Turkish curriculum starting the following academic year. In order to achieve this, new primary schools will be established in GEMs with adequate physical capacity. The GEMs that lack the physical capacities will send their youngest students to the nearest public school (MEB, 2016). This decision indicates that the MEB needs more classrooms for the education of Syrians and that the problem of capacity will become even greater in the future. The proposals to deal with the insufficiency of buildings and classrooms highlighted in the workshop and interviews are the following.

Proposals

• Existing GEMs should be evaluated in terms of meeting school standards in Turkey and those GEMs who pose life-threatening dangers to students and staff, and have very low standards should be closed down. The students in these institutions should be transferred to appropriate GEMs and public schools. This practice should not be conducted in a way that negatively impacts the expansion of schooling.
• A need-based analysis should be conducted according to school-age Syrian population density. The quantity of buildings and classrooms should be increased in places like Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, and Istanbul where there are large populations of Syrians who have difficulty gaining access to schools.
• In order to meet the demand for buildings and classes some culture centers and foundation buildings can be utilized.
• In cities such as Kilis and Şanlıurfa where city centers do not have sufficient zones for construction, schools and dormitories should be built in the outskirts of the city.
• The enrollment capacity of imam hatip middle and high schools (schools which include a religious education) should be improved.

PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL ACCESS AND ATTENDANCE
Currently 248,902 Syrian children are being educated in GEMs where education is in Arabic and which follow the Syrian curriculum. On the other hand, 62,357 Syrian children are being educated in public schools with their Turkish peers. NGOs that participated in the workshop stated that although GEMs are preferred by Syrian parents, they often send their children to public schools because there are no GEMs nearby. Furthermore from the interviews with NGOs, GEMs, and public schools it was gleaned that in terms of attendance GEMs are doing better than public schools.6 Some of the reason for this is the language problem in public schools, the fact that the child cannot study with children his or her own age and level, the experience of exclusion by Turkish peers, and the lack of communication with teachers and administrators. While these problems can be overcome in the short term there are two major problems concerning school access that are difficult to overcome. Firstly, parents who are in a difficult socio-economic situation are making their sons work instead of providing them with education. Secondly, due to traditional norms parents are not providing their daughters with education, especially when they are 13 years and older, and are marrying them young. Solving these problems in the short term is going to be difficult. Social programs by local governments and NGOs can alleviate these problems to a certain extent. It is important to note that according to NGOs and Syrian parents the fact that public schools are co-ed is another reason for Syrian parents not to prefer public schools for their daughters.7

6. The data set for attendance could not be accessed from the MEB. This information was provided by GEMs and public school administrators, and by the NGOs who are financing the GEMs.
7. This information was obtained from the interviews with Syrian parents conducted in cities such as Ankara, Şanlıurfa, and Kilis.
Alongside these problems the constant shift in living addresses is a significant obstacle for the Ministry in terms of keeping track of students who have low attendance and communicating with their families. It has become virtually impossible to reach the parents and inform them about their children's attendance records. The difficulty of transportation is another factor concerning access to education. Especially families who are experiencing financial problems cannot afford the resources for transportation and therefore cannot send their child or children to school. Classes at GEMs which use the afternoon period of public schools end late and parents who do not want their children to use public transportation in the evenings view the transportation issue as a safety issue. As a safety precaution parents sometimes do not want to send their children to school. Proposals concerning problems with school access and attendance are the following.

**Proposals**

- Social aid for Syrian families should be linked to their children’s education. The social aid for families can be conditioned upon school-age children being sent to school and ensuring their attendance. For instance access to the AFAD card can be conditioned upon the children being sent to school.
- The MEB should regularly share data with the public concerning Syrians’ access to school and attendance. This data is important for developing social policy.
- The concerns of Syrian families over co-ed education should be taken into consideration by the Ministry.
- In order to enable access to schools municipalities can provide Syrian students with cards that provide free or cheaper transportation.
- Systems of distance education should be developed so that children who have to provide financial support to their parents by working, particularly high school students, can study and work more easily.

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8. Interview with MEB representative.
UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF GEMS

GEMs provide educational services with the support of different institutions and associations in terms of finances and property. According to MEB data 45% of GEMs in Turkey provide education in buildings that belong to the MEB, and 34% provide education in private buildings belonging to NGOs. The GEM property within camps all belongs to AFAD.

In terms of finances and property, GEMs have a multifaceted structure. This situation has advantages but in terms of process administration it creates the disadvantage of fragmentation. Furthermore, the sustainability of GEMs is contingent upon the support of NGOs and other institutions in terms of finance and property. Therefore if an institution experiences financial problems this can lead to the closing down of the GEM and students being left out of the educational process. During the interviews with GEMs and the workshop series, the Turkish and Syrian NGOs who are providing GEMs with financial support highlighted that the uncertainty concerning the future of GEMs prevents the development of education centers and any long term planning. Moreover it was stated that news reports about GEMs shutting down in the medium term negatively impacted teacher and student performance. This concern has led to hesitation about opening new GEMs. It was also stated during interviews with the MEB that in the long run GEMs are not sustainable and there is a possibility that they may be closed down.9 If the GEMs close, the Syrian teachers working

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9. Interview with MEB representative.
there for modest wages will become unemployed. NGOs with Syrian origin have stated that the GEMs are very important for Syrian children and that if these schools are closed down all at once the public schools will not be able to meet the children’s educational needs. The proposals concerning the future of GEMs are the following.

**Proposals**

- It is important that the uncertainty surrounding GEMs and speculations about closing them down are managed.
- The agenda of closing down GEMs should be a very long term and gradual one.
- The process of closing down GEMs should not begin until the capacities of public schools are improved.
- Studies should be conducted towards establishing GEMs that are in accordance with MEB school standards in terms of physical infrastructure and human resources.

**THE PROBLEM OF INSPECTING AND MONITORING GEMS**

NGOs who attended the workshop and GEM administrators who were interviewed stated that GEMs are not subject to proper inspection and monitoring. The inspection process focuses on checking paperwork and not the educational process, teachers, or the buildings’ condition. As far as GEMs are concerned, the Ministry of Education’s general inadequacy in terms of inspection mechanisms has been revealed. The inspection and monitoring process in public schools also mostly focuses on the tracking of official documents. The inspection mechanisms that review the quality of education are weak in public schools as well. GEMs have emerged as a new education model for Turkey and the world, and as mentioned above their finances and property belong to various institutions and associations. Therefore inspection and monitoring has become even more important and guidelines are strongly needed. The proposals concerning this matter are the following.

**Proposals**

- Inspection teams should be established in the National Education Administrations specifically for GEMs. These teams should include at least one Arabic-speaking person or they should operate with a translator.
- These inspections should focus on student attendance and dropouts, and the reasons for dropping out should be determined.
- Since these schools are still mostly financed by NGOs financial audits should be obligatory.
CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOKS

Curriculum and Textbook Problems in GEMS

GEMs conduct all education in Arabic and the Syrian curriculum is followed. The curriculum problem at GEMs was frequently discussed by workshop and interview participants. Different curriculum alternatives were initially tested and later the Syrian curriculum was used following the removal of Baathist content (Emin, 2016). Syrian civil initiatives like the Syrian Scholars Association and Turkish NGOs played active roles in this process (BEKAM, 2015). Despite all the progress there still is not a standard practice concerning textbooks and curriculum. Several stakeholders who were interviewed stated that a commission comprising Turkish and Syrian experts, teachers and academics is needed to reevaluate the Syrian curriculum and textbooks. In addition, it was stated that there were changes made in the content of the books but that there were problems in their distribution and transportation. For this reason two or three different books were used even in the same school. Furthermore since the children do not have regular class hours as they did in Syria, there is a problem of covering all the curriculum topics on time. It was highlighted that the curriculum should be designed realistically taking these circumstances into consideration.

Curriculum and Textbook Problems in Public Schools

There are no special considerations in terms of curriculum for the Syrians attending Turkish public schools. NGO representatives who attended the workshop series highlighted the need for a curriculum and textbooks that encompass Syrian children as well. Particularly NGOs of Syrian origin expressed their discomfort with the İnklap Tarihi course, which focuses on the history of the Republican period and the reforms by Kemal Atatürk, and its Kemalist elements. They also stated that expressions which ostracize Arab societies should be removed from textbooks. Essentially the Syrian NGOs highlighted that they do not want Syrian children to go through an education process without learning about their own country, culture, language, and traditions. It was stated that the public school curriculum should take this concern into account.

Proposals

- The standardization of GEM curriculum and the establishment of a committee that will update and organize the textbooks.
- A curriculum should be prepared that does not exclude Syrian culture, traditions, and language.
- The Syrian curriculum should be revised into a single format and the same curriculum should be followed in all schools.
- A blended and hybrid curriculum can be prepared for Syrian children in public schools in order to aid the adaptation process.
THE TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS

Another important issue for the education of Syrians is the topic of teachers. This issue was frequently raised during the SETA workshop series and was highlighted during interviews with teachers and school administrators. They stated that the official general instruction was published after the center was established and that it should have been the other way around. Therefore teachers were already selected by GEMs through an oral or written exam or both. It is generally accepted that the commissions were formed after the official general instruction was published and that these teachers were interviewed only for formality purposes. Another frequently raised point is that the commissions did not select teachers according to merit. Other issues and proposals which were raised during the interviews and the workshops concerning the acquisition and training of teachers are the following.

Misrepresentation and Forged Diplomas

Syrian teachers could not obtain the relevant documentation on their profession from their country. Therefore a commission interviewed them but failed to determine their competence. The biggest problem was that some who applied to become teachers misrepresented themselves and provided forged diplomas. NGOs who participated in the workshops stated that the GEMs they did not have many problems with mathematics, science, and English teachers. The problems of misrepresentation and forgery were generally associated with people who claimed they were Arabic teachers or teachers of Islamic studies.

Proposals

- The MEB can work with Syrian initiatives who are experts in education in order to organize a committee comprising of experts from all subjects to test teachers and provide them with certificates. Following this, a committee will select teachers after both written exams and oral interviews.
- As an alternative, international institutions can provide diploma accreditation.

Teacher Training

Syrian teachers who were interviewed and GEM administrators who attended the workshop stated that teachers did not go through an in-service training process and that they tried to provide teachers with training but that their efforts were insufficient. They claimed that teachers especially need training in terms of class management, preparing a course plan, providing in-class psychological support, program development, communication techniques, and crisis management. Syrian NGOs in particular highlighted that the physical appearance of teachers is
important and that teachers are needed who have religious and spiritual values and understand child psychology.

MEB and UNICEF have started working towards meeting this need. The National Education Ministry Teacher Training and Development Administration will collaborate with UNICEF in order train 514 teachers as instructors. This centralized training will be provided by 21 academics from different universities for 2 weeks (90 hours). The training of the first group took place on August 8-19, 2016 and the second group training took place on August 22- September 2, 2016. The 514 instructors who were trained during this period will later provide training for 20,000 Syrian teachers for 2 weeks (90 hours) in the cities where they live. The first of this second round of group training took place between August 22 and September 2, 2016. The second group training will take place on September 5-23, 2016. The groups are made up of 10,000 teachers each.

These training programs provided by the Ministry and UNICEF will likely yield positive results. Alongside this, some NGOs also stated that they have provided teachers with training during the summer. They added that this training was particularly for people who were not teachers in Syria but are working as teachers in Turkey.

Proposals
- A standard needs to be determined for the preparation and selection of teachers.
- Teacher performance needs to be improved. In this context, Turkish and Arab teachers need to participate in activities and workshops together.
- If a teacher knows that he or she will sit an exam, they will improve their performance. For these exams a committee of experts from the subject and profession must be organized.
- During the semester teachers should be evaluated by a teacher supervisor.

Employee Rights of Teachers
As stated in the official general instruction, Syrian teachers work voluntarily. Nevertheless, NGOs pay teachers a modest, non-standard amount. In the GEMs that are supported by UNICEF teachers earn a 900-lira salary. Teachers have stated that this amount is inadequate to cover their basic needs and that there should be a pay distinction between teachers who live inside and outside the camp. Teachers stated that a teacher who lives inside the camp does not have rent, transportation, and food expenses and therefore their salary is adequate. But for teachers who live outside the camp, these expenses come out of their pocket and as a result their

10. Interview with MEB representative.
salary is not enough.\textsuperscript{11} This salary particularly makes it impossible for teachers in big cities like Ankara and Gaziantep to provide for their families. Another issue that was raised was job insecurity. There were concerns that teachers were being laid off for no reason and that they are offered no legal protection.

**Proposals**
- Teacher salaries should be improved; the minimum proposed pay is 2,000 TL.
- In order to prevent teachers from having financial problems during the summer they should receive salaries for teaching in refresher courses etc.
- Teachers working in GEMs should be insured.

**Intermediate Classes and Remedial Education**
A major issue concerning Syrian students who were in intermediate classes in Syria is that when they come to Turkey they could not continue education at their previous level and an appropriate level could not be found. Therefore their education remains incomplete. There are especially problems at the high school level. The 11th grade is the minimum years of schooling of Syrians in Turkey (Figure 5). There are two main reasons for this. First, there are no corresponding Turkish levels of study to the Syrian levels. Second, children prefer to work in order to support their family and girls get married at a young age. It is a known fact that children who have been outside the education system have major difficulties re-entering formal education. The Ministry, NGO representatives and educators expressed this fact repeatedly. All interested parties have acknowledged that these children have a potential of becoming a lost generation and that this is a major risk for Turkey and the re-building of Syria. Participant NGOs have highlighted that children who cannot access intermediate classes should be provided with an open education system or distance education. It was stated that the current open education system needs to be revised as it will face significant demand. In the interviews with the Ministry it was stated that open education will solve the crisis of intermediate classes but that a special program for Syrians has yet to be designed.\textsuperscript{12}

**Proposals**
- Remedial education mechanisms should be designed for children who have been outside the education system for a long time.
- In order to deal with intermediate classes and losing a year, the lost year’s classes can be provided with an intensified curriculum.

\textsuperscript{11} Teacher interviews in Kilis, Ankara, and Istanbul.
\textsuperscript{12} Interview with MEB representative.
• For example in an association a student who was supposed to start 4th grade started 3rd grade instead and through remedial classes and an exam moved on to the class he was supposed to attend. But this practice can only apply to one year gaps and due to age difference cannot be applied to several lost years. Therefore a different remedial system is required for these students.
• Children who are outside the school system can access the curriculum and textbooks if they are made accessible electronically.
• There should be updates to the open education system for Syrians.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Parties that were interviewed in the context of Syrian children’s education frequently expressed vocational training as an alternative. It was highlighted that especially female students and students who are experiencing financial problems should be provided with vocational education. An NGO that attended the SETA workshop stated that they had applied to open a medical vocational high school but they did not succeed, as Syrians are not accustomed or aware of this professional field. As a response to the demand for vocational education, the MEB decided that Syrian students will be directed towards vocational education. The MEB issued the following statement on August 12, 2016,13

Those Syrians, who speak Turkish, received “Turkish A1 Level” from public education centers or have passed the reading writing first level determination exam, will be admitted as 9th grade students to the Anatolia Vocational Program of schools which have empty quotas. In this context a class can open with 10 Syrians who are under temporary protection. In the cases where this number is not met, the demands from the educational district can be combined. City or provincial education administrations will determine which schools will be combined in this case.

The Ministry is also providing apprenticeship opportunities. Syrian students will have the opportunity to gain practical education in different sectors through internships and they will receive the same general insurance and health insurance benefits as Turkish students. If the following proposals are taken into consideration, the vocational education of Syrian students will in the long term reach a level of efficiency.

Proposals

• First of all, studies concerning possible solutions to the problems of vocational education in Turkey need to be evaluated and monitored.

• The vocational education that the Ministry is starting to provide this year should be monitored.
• Student admission to intermediate levels should also be planned.
• Language requirements should not be enforced during the beginning of apprenticeship education. There should be obligations concerning developing language skills during training.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Among Syrian students there are intellectually and physically handicapped students who need special education. There are also gifted students who need to be educated in different programs. Teachers have stated in interviews that although there are classes that are designed for students who need special education, they need to be increased. Furthermore, interviews with teachers and NGO representatives highlighted the fact that Syrian children who live outside the camps are prevented from receiving special education by the deficiencies in the physical capacities of the GEMs. The inclusive education programs in public schools are already inadequate even for Turkish students and are not even offered to Syrian students. The Umut Special Education Center in Kilis was visited and it provides special education for both Turkish and Syrian students. These kinds of centers need to be increased.

Although there have not been any studies on gifted students, according to NGO representatives there are many gifted students among Syrians. There are also some experts who claim that some international organizations have been conducting surveys in Turkey and taking selected gifted children out of Turkey. The ministry and the NGOs do not have any clear data concerning this matter. But making sure that in the long term these gifted Syrian children stay in Turkey holds strategic importance. Similarly, it is important that Turkey mobilizes its resources so that these children do not become a lost generation.

Proposals
• Experts from GEM science and art centers and RAMs (Guidance Research Centers) should work with students.
• Students that have been selected should attend training and activities in the science and art centers.
• The educational process of these students should be monitored and students should be supported financially and morally.
• The aid provided by special education centers for the families of intellectually and physically handicapped children should also be provided for Syrian families facing a similar situation.
• The quantity of special education centers and experts should be increased.
ADAPTING TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND THE EDUCATION PROCESS

Interviews and observations in and out of camps indicate that children have the least difficulty in terms of social adaptation. But obviously this does not mean that they do not experience any adaptation problems. The Syrians who were interviewed and NGO representatives who participated in the workshop stated that children did not have much difficulty in terms of adapting to the education process. However, they highlighted the problems of guidance and psychological counseling needs, the physical inadequacies of buildings and lack of equipment, and the exclusionary attitude of their Turkish peers and adults in their neighborhood. Most of these children have developed post-traumatic symptoms due to their experience of war and some others who have been born in Turkey are trying to make sense of their environment. Adapting to the educational environment is critical to overcome these problems. The places where adaptation has proven to be most difficult are public schools. Syrian children first face reluctance from administrators during the registration period and then they face other negative attitudes and behavior from teachers, students and parents. Some of these are exclusion, marginalization, and peer bullying. These attitudes and behaviors make the adaptation process harder. The worst result of such behavior is that children become alienated from the school environment, become distant and eventually even drop out.

Proposals

- Awareness concerning adaptation can be increased through parent teacher meetings, Friday sermons, social media etc.
- Orientation programs for the administrators and teachers at schools where Syrian children have enrolled can be designed with the support of GEMs.
- Syrian students should be offered social and psychological support.
- Special social adaptation programs should be developed for children who were born in camps and have not experienced social life outside of these camps.
Countries like Turkey are receiving significant numbers of refugees; Syria’s neighbors Lebanon and Jordan, and European countries like Germany are also experiencing problems in terms of providing Syrians with education. In fact, many of the problems that Turkey has overcome have become chronic problems in these countries. It is also the case, however, that these countries have developed policies that can serve as models for Turkey.

LEBANON

As of 2016, the number of Syrians living in Lebanon has exceeded 1.1 million (European Commission 2016). There are 500,000 school-age children living in Lebanon, 250,000 of which are not in school (HRW, 2016a). Officials have waived their requirement to show residency permit and registration fees, and have started split-day education in order to provide Syrians with formal education. Currently 238 of 1,350 public schools provide split-day education (HRW, 2016a; Dryden-Peterson and Adelman, 2016). In the mornings, Lebanese children have priority and in the afternoon Syrian children receive education. But it has been noted that the teachers of both periods are not competent enough. Nevertheless split-day schooling has significantly increased Syrian refugees access to education (Dryden-Peterson and Adelman, 2016).

Teachers can benefit from the language education program that the British Council set up following a request by the Lebanon Education Ministry. This program, however, helps alleviate only a limited number of the problems encountered in the classes (Dryden-Peterson and Adelman, 2016). It has also been noted that there are obstacles that are unique to secondary education. Some of these include the need for documentation, the fact that classes are almost entirely taught
in English and French, the long distances to schools, and pressure to work in order to support their families (Khawaja, 2016). Although the official language in Lebanon is Arabic, the education languages are French and English. Therefore the language problem that Turkey is experiencing is ironically experienced in Lebanon as well. Steps have been taken to make it easier for Syrian children to enroll in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education waived the requirement of transcripts to enter the Brevet\textsuperscript{\textregistered} exam (Khawaja, 2016). In the 2015-2016 academic year, 82,744 secondary school students applied to attend public schools, but as of March only 2,280 have managed to enroll. This is less than 3 percent of the total number (HRW, 2016a). On the other hand, 150,000 have enrolled in primary education (Khawaja, 2016).

In 2014, Lebanon embraced the policy of Reaching All Children with Education (RACE). This policy helped increase the number of Syrian students in public schools to 158,321. In 2016, the 5-year RACE II plan was initiated. The second step of the policy aims to enroll 440,000 Syrian students into the formal education system until the end of the 2020-2021 academic year (HRW, 2016a). In the academic year 2015-2016, there were 200,000 spots in public schools for Syrian students. Although this number may seem insufficient for 495,910 school-age children, for the reasons discussed above and because open spots are in places where there is no demand, even the 200,000 quota was not filled (HRW, 2016a).

**JORDAN**

Jordan, which has a population of 6.6 million, currently is home to 1.3 million Syrians. From those who were registered by the United Nations, close to one third (226,000 out of 660,000) are school-age children between 5 and 17 years of age. One third of these (80,000) did not receive primary education in the past year (UNCHR, 2016; World Bank, 2016).

The Ministry of Education has taken steps similar to those of Turkey in order to meet Syrian children’s need for education. Among these are hiring new teachers, Syrian children enrolling in public schools for free and starting split-day education in 100 primary schools. For the fall of 2016 the aim is to open up 50,000 new spots for Syrian children and to reach out to 25,000 children who have been out of school by offering them remedial classes. The aim of the remedial classes is to complete two years’ worth of curriculum. This will enable children to re-register in schools. This program will only apply for children between the ages of 8 and 12. Another aim of the 2016-2017 academic year is to turn 102 full-day schools into split-day schools (HRW, 2016b). According to the HRW report Jordan re-

\textsuperscript{14}Middle school graduation examination.
ceived 81.5 million U.S. dollars in May in order to expand education. The projects that were conducted between 2012 and 2016 have impacted Syrian children’s transition to formal education and the ratio of Syrian children in the formal education system increased from 12% to 64% (HRW, 2016b).

For the higher classes the requirements for certificates and documentation present obstacles. Some school principals request official documentation concerning the student’s previous education. In Jordan, 40% of Syrian children do not even have the birth certificates they need for their identification cards. This indicates that these children will have difficulty going to school when they reach school age (HRW, 2016b).

Problems with intermediate classes are also present in Jordan. The Ministry of Education collaborated with an NGO to provide an educational program for older Jordanian and Syrian children. But this program only managed to reach a few thousand children (Culbertson & Constant, 2015).

**GERMANY**

Germany has stated that it has received 467,659 asylum requests of which more than one third were from Syrians. Syrian children which have asylum status have the right to attend a German school (Dryden-Peterson, Adelman and Nieswandt, 2016). According to estimates 40% of Syrians who came to Germany were school-age children. In Bavaria, the expectation was that 50,000 new students would arrive (Somaskanda, 2015). In Berlin, 430 new classes (welcome class) were formed. Furthermore over 3,000 new teachers were added to the payroll (Somaskanda, 2015). On September 6, 2015, Angela Merkel declared that her government would provide the states with an extra 3 billion euros in order to support the refugee inflow. The state of Bavaria established a vocational internship program for refugees. This enables refugees to get used to working full time and also earn an income (Somaskanda, 2015). According to a news report in November 2015 it is expected that 350,000 new students will arrive (Young-Powell, 2015).
Turkey has been home to 3 million Syrians since 2011. Turkey has been developing policies for Syrians ranging from housing to work and from health to education. The war in Syria still continues and the space for living in Syria has been almost entirely eradicated. Assuming that Syrians will stay for a long time, has meant that short-term policies have left their places to long-term policy pursuits. It is clear that education is the most critical area in the context of Syrians' development as a society and in the context of adapting to Turkey and providing benefits for themselves. Half of the Syrians living in Turkey are children and young people. Considering the close to 1 million Syrians who are in need of education it is clear that a long-term road map is needed.

At first, as was the case in other areas, the policies for the education of Syrians were based on the assumption that they would return to Syria in a short period of time. In this process, NGOs of Turkish and Syrian origin played the most active role. The GEM model which was built on their own language, curriculum and teachers was considered the primary alternative for the education of Syrians. Nevertheless, as the situation in Syria transformed from a short-term emergency to a long-term humanitarian crisis it became clear that in the long run GEMs would be inadequate for providing education to Syrians. As a result, a second and more permanent alternative, public schools, are expected to play a more central role. Syrian children’s education in public schools is important for these children to adapt more easily to Turkey’s social, cultural, and economic life. However, Turkey already has a considerable school-age population and when the inadequate physical infrastructure and quality is considered it becomes clear that not all Syrian
children can transfer to public schools. For a period of time, it is expected that GEMs will continue to serve as a support mechanism for the public schools.

Access to both GEMs and public schools are not at the desired level. From all school-age Syrians only one third has acquired schooling. Unfortunately there are not education centers in every city of Turkey while there are Syrians in virtually every city. Furthermore the existing education centers cannot entirely meet the demand created by the school-age Syrian population in these cities.

The biggest obstacle in the expansion of schooling is the socio-economic difficulties of Syrian families. Syrian families cannot meet the financial burden brought about by the fees requested by GEMs due to building rent, and teacher and personnel salaries, and the transportation, food and other educational expenses at public schools. This results in Syrian boys working in low skill and low wage jobs, and in girls getting married early. For these very reasons the schooling attendance rates of middle school and high school are lower than the primary school attendance rates. All attempts to improve the socio-economic situation of Syrian families will make it easier for school-age children to gain access to education.

The avoidance of public schools by Syrian students and their parents mainly stems from the language barrier. Although public schools, GEMs, municipalities and NGOs provide Turkish language education the quality and level are not adequate. The most critical issues in language education are the educational material and methodology. In Turkey, there is a significant shortage of material and methodology for providing foreigners, especially school-age children, with quality Turkish language education. In order to alleviate this problem it is important that expert institutions such as the MEB, universities, TÖMER, and the Yunus Emre Institute need to be more actively involved and more collaborative.

The curriculum is an important issue for Syrians to receive education in Turkish in public schools with their Turkish peers. The interviews and workshops have determined that the public school curriculum needs to be revised in a way that is more inclusive and pluralistic. In this context the Syrians expect a system that does not leave out their language and culture. The MEB is preparing to meet this request through elective Arabic and Syrian culture courses designed for Syrians.

It is important for Syrians who will receive education in these institutions to adapt to the school environment and education process so that they can more effectively develop a sense of societal unity and togetherness. In this process it is clear that administrators and teachers in public schools have the most critical role in making sure that Syrian and Turkish students and parents strengthen their relationships and develop an awareness of living together in tolerance and solidarity. At the same time, these administrators and teachers need to be supported by both the MEB and NGOs financially and morally; the latter need to provide the educational services for the pedagogical formation of the former.
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The reflections of the humanitarian crisis in Syria since 2011 have been experienced all over the world in different ways. In this sense, Turkey’s experience has gathered a lot of attention as well. Thanks to its open door policy, Turkey has become the country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world and has created a living space for millions of Syrians. According to official figures, Turkey hosts 2,724,927 Syrians and thus takes the burden of the humanitarian crisis on its shoulders. Each Syrian is important for Turkey, as is their adaptation to Turkish public life.

The most crucial elements of orientation towards public life are education and employment. With respect to employment, Turkey has taken considerable steps. In addition to this, the education of Syrian children requires a road map so as not to create lost generations for the future of Turkey and Syria. The NGOs in Turkey have taken great responsibility for the education of Syrians and play an important role in offering advice for the Ministry of National Education’s (MEB) road map. However, only one in three Syrian children is schooled – this is evidence that the NGO-based short-term solutions are not enough and long-term public policymaking is required. From the first years of the crisis in Syria, the SETA Foundation has been supporting the policymaking process especially in terms of educating Syrians, aiding their legal status and their adaptation to public life.

The SETA Foundation is especially sensitive on the issue of Syrians’ education and in this study aims to contribute to developing a road map on Syrians’ education and to work against the creation of lost generations.