



MATILDE

Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European Rural and Mountain Regions

Turkey Local Case Study Briefing: Impact on labour market and local economy of rural-mountain localities through international migrants' integration: Karacabey, Bursa

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Istanbul Bilgi University, DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.5792781](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5792781)



MATILDE has received
funding from the European
Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation
programme under grant
agreement No 870831

Call: H2020-SC6-MIGRATION-2019

Work Programmes:

- H2020-EU.3.6.1.1. The mechanisms to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- H2020-EU.3.6.1.2. Trusted organisations, practices, services and policies that are necessary to build resilient, inclusive, participatory, open and creative societies in Europe, in particular taking into account migration, integration and demographic change

- **Deliverable 5.2** – Turkey Local Case Study Briefing: Impact on labour market and local economy of rural-mountain localities through international migrants' integration: Karacabey, Bursa

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5792781

This document was produced under the terms and conditions of Grant Agreement No. 870831 for the European Commission. It does not necessary reflect the view of the European Union and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

This report is based on the findings of a fieldwork and deskwork conducted to elaborate on the specificities of the impact of international migrants and refugees on the agricultural production processes, labour market dynamics and local economy in the MATILDE region located in the northeast part of Turkey, namely Bursa and Karacabey. The report is composed of different sections. The main composition of the report includes sections, which disclose the points revolving around the spatial distribution of migrants and refugees in the MATILDE region (Karacabey and Bursa), their socio-demographic characteristics, and their social, economic and territorial impacts on the region. The report mainly delves into the problems, challenges, opportunities that are constituted by migrants and refugees residing in Karacabey and Bursa. As the last decade has brought about massive migration of Syrians in particular, the report will mostly elaborate on their social, economic and territorial impacts on the region, that has been historically exposed to various forms of migration, both international and domestic.

This report is composed of different subsections inquiring about the social, spatial, economic, and territorial aspects migration in the MATILDE region of Karacabey and Bursa in Turkey. We have conducted a fieldwork in Karacabey and Bursa in the summer of 2021, following the footprints of a participatory action research (Stringer, 2014; Schneider, 2012; McTaggart, 2010; Lewin, 1946). We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with migration experts, migrant employees, seasonal migrant workers, small scale migrant entrepreneurs, employers, and local stakeholders involved in health, employment and education sectors (See Table 1). Three different sets of questions were originally prepared to be asked to the migration experts, migrants and local stakeholders. The research team was composed of the principle investigator, researcher and translator from Arabic to Turkish. In addition to the interviews conducted during the participatory action research, this report also benefits from the statistical sources provided by the official bodies as well as our interlocutors, and finally our observations during the field research.

Considering the MATILDE case studies and three main clusters in which the case studies are identified, the impact on labour markets in rural-mountain regions through TCNs integration is at the center of this report. Social and demographic dimensions have not been completely set aside, though. In this sense, the available data mostly refer to the indicators of the economic dimension (share of migrant workers and/or e.g. share of foreign employers) and the related ones (e.g. educational statistics) indicating the labor-market integration. Nevertheless, the existence of data or the lack of data or unreliable data is a general problem for Turkey, especially at the local level, and for the rural areas. The available data may somehow be misleading for a proper analysis on its own. The problem of registration and the high rate of informality in the labour market must be taken into consideration as well, not only for Bursa (and/or Karacabey) but also for Turkey in general. This challenge on data was tried to be overcome by the local information and figures provided by our interlocutors, as mentioned earlier, during the field research. The quantitative gap in indicators that we chose was tried to be closed by the qualitative information provided through the interviews.

Table 1. DATA COLLECTION / PSEUDONIMIZED INTERLOCUTORS					
ID Study code	Date of Interview	Policy Level	Nationality	Stakeholder type/ Affiliation	Working position
WP5TRB001	June 15, 2021	Local	Turkish	Public administration	Health worker
WP5TR001	July 1, 2021	National	Turkish	Research facilities and individual researchers	Faculty Member of the Department of Economics
WP5TR002	July 6, 2021	National	Turkish	Research facilities and individual researchers	National Project Coordinator
WP5TR003	July 5, 2021	National	Turkish	International Umbrella Organization	Senior Project Manager
WP5TRB002	July 7, 2021	Regional	Turkish	Education and training institutions	Courses Department Manager
WP5TRB003	July 28, 2021	Local	Turkish	Trade and labour unions and organized representative groups	General Secretary
WP5TRB004	August 4, 2021	Regional	Syrian	Small private business	Owner
WP5TRB005	August 4, 2021	Regional	Syrian	Small private business	Owner
WP5TRB006	August 4, 2021	Local	Syrian	Public administration	Nurse
WP5TRB007	August 4, 2021	Local	Afghan	Public administration	Doctor
WP5TRB008	August 4, 2021	Local	Syrian with Turkish citizenship	Private business	Factory owner
WP5TRB009	August 4, 2021	Local	Syrian	Non-organized/ other interest groups	Seasonal agricultural worker
WP5TRB010	August 4, 2021	Local	Syrian	Non-organized/ other interest groups	Seasonal agricultural worker
WP5TRB011	August 4, 2021	Local	Syrian	Non-organized/ other interest groups	Seasonal agricultural worker
WP5TRB012	August 4, 2021	Regional	Turkish	Public Administration	Refugee liaison officer

Mass Migration of Syrians to Turkey

The migration of millions of Syrians to Turkey made it the country hosting the largest refugee population in the world, since 2015. In August 2021, there were over 4 million refugees in Turkey, of whom 3,699,388 were Syrians under the temporary protection.¹ Turkey has managed the Syrian mass migration successfully, largely using its own resources, but also supported by international financial aid. Municipal responses in terms of services and projects that support and include the Syrians have been a key success factor, together with Turkey's history and experience in dealing with mass immigration.

Unlike EU countries, Turkey does not define the presence of the Syrians refugees as a crisis, though their daily life in Turkey is far from problem-free. There have been situations where social tensions between Syrian migrant and native communities have emerged (Mackreath and Sađniç, 2017; Herwig, 2017), but municipal and NGO social cohesion projects and efforts have in general minimized their occurrence, or intervened to prevent their escalation. Nevertheless, with the emergence of social movements and the

¹ For detailed, up-to-date statistics, see the website of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM): <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

threat of increasing radicalization of youth, government at all levels needs to review policies regarding Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, and formulate even more effective social cohesion policies and practices, and positively influence public attitudes regarding migration and migrants. The public institutions, NGOs, political parties, the media and universities can all contribute to combating reactionary tendencies that escalate social tensions and conflicts involving the Syrians. Given that both positive and negative migration-related dynamics occur in local contexts, positive municipal leadership is essential.

Turkey is in the process of developing its laws, regulations and policies on migration, based on a combination of security-focused and developmental paradigms regarding migration (Erdoğan and Kaya, 2015). The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law № 6458 of 2013) embodies this approach.² The temporary protection status of refugees has its legal foundation in this law, and is regulated by the Regulation on Temporary Protection of October 2014.³ Turkey strives to formulate best practices with regard to migration management by continuously revising its policies, as do several other states in the region. Multifaceted processes of migration management drive policy discussions in a complex and often politically sensitive direction. Pursuing an inclusive policy regarding migrants, though not universally supported, is essential to ensure social cohesion between the native and migrant communities, as are services of equal quality for all.

The national Harmonization and Communication Department of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) was established to guide migration policy, developed with the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders. Guiding principles are peaceful coexistence, multilateral engagement, self-sufficiency, negotiation, dialogue, multiculturalism, solidarity, empathy, cooperation, reconciliation, and tolerance of diversity, participation in social life, kindness, and respect for human rights. Social cohesion processes based on an intercultural approach emphasize voluntary participation, and two-way communication and cooperation which benefits all stakeholders.⁴

Migrants and Natives in Local Settings

Turkish municipalities follow the principle of *fellow citizenship* (*Hemşehrilik* in Turkish) embodied in Article 13 of the Municipal Law, and strive to provide equal services to non-citizen residents, and initiate projects that foster social cohesion between native and migrant communities. The Syrian refugees have been forced to migrate, and most have suffered extreme trauma and impoverishment due to the civil war, and are extremely vulnerable, and face significant challenges, including the language barrier, as they struggle to rebuild their lives and meet their many needs with minimal resources in a foreign country. It is not surprising that their vulnerability and inability to communicate with locals tends to make Syrians introverted (Erdoğan, 2015).

Legal, political, social and economic projects are thus needed to assist migrants to relate to host communities in these respects, and to live together and actively participate in forming a common yet diverse society based on shared human values and equal human rights. Developing social cohesion and integration policies should not be viewed as an option, but a necessity. Adopting equal access to services and resources by everyone as a fundamental principle, and developing inclusive social policies as a matter of human rights, justice and humanity, is necessary at both national and local levels. Failure to do so

² The Turkish *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* (YUKK) was published in 11 languages. For the English text, see <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf> Accessed on August 13, 2021.

³ For the full text of the *Regulation on Temporary Protection*, see <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma-kanunu-ve-yonetmeligi> Accessed on August 3, 2021.

⁴ For information about the Harmonization and Communication Department of DGMM, see <https://www.goc.gov.tr/uyum-ve-iletisim-dairesi-baskanliginin-gorevleri> Accessed on August 3, 2021.

alienates migrants struggling to access socio-economic, political and cultural resources and services, and promotes marginalized, self-protecting parallel migrant communities, and anti-social reactions of varying degrees.

Migrants and Municipal Law

Municipal responsibilities include ensuring that native and migrant communities coexist in peace, and their role in this is far more important than that of national and international actors (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). Challenges faced by nation-states in realizing the 2016 UN Sustainable Development Goals and in managing migration and social cohesion have increased significantly, and it is essential that they are also addressed at local level. Migration studies literature (Scholten and Penninx, 2016) confirms that this is happening, and Turkish municipalities have recently started to play a more active role in this regard, which was given further impetus by the 2016 EU-Turkey Refugee Agreement.⁵

The local environment for which municipalities are responsible is where migrants and native populations live, work, interact, use infrastructure and receive services, the availability and quality of which affect social harmony, inclusion and coexistence. Turkish Municipal Law includes the principle of ‘fellow citizenship’, and municipalities are responsible for meeting day-to-day needs of all residents, and for promoting a culture of coexistence. Article 13 of the Turkish Municipal Law states that “Everyone is a fellow citizen of the city in which he resides. Fellow citizens shall be entitled to participate in the decisions and services of the municipality, to be informed about municipal activities, and to benefit from the aid of the municipal administration.”⁶ This article makes municipalities responsible for improving social and cultural relations among ‘fellow citizens’, and grants equal rights and responsibilities to all, whether legal citizens or not, and it is important that the general public is made aware of this, in relation to coexistence and social cohesion between the native and migrant communities.

However, Article 14 makes an implicit distinction between citizens and non-citizens in the statement “Municipal services shall be rendered in the most appropriate manner at the places nearest to the citizens”, which appears to be inconsistent with Article 13 which refers to ‘fellow citizens’, defined as all residents. Nevertheless, most municipalities accept and act according to the principle of fellow citizenship in Article 13, rather than trying to avoid their equal responsibilities regarding resident migrants by appealing to Article 14, and a literal interpretation thereof.

⁵ For detailed information on the EU-Turkey Refugee Statement, see https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/18_mart_2016_turkiye_ab_zirvesi_bildirisi_.pdf Accessed on Thursday, August 6, 2021.

⁶ For the full text of the July 3, 2005 dated Municipal Law No 5393, see <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=5393&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5> Accessed on July 3, 2021.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS IN BURSA AND KARACABEY

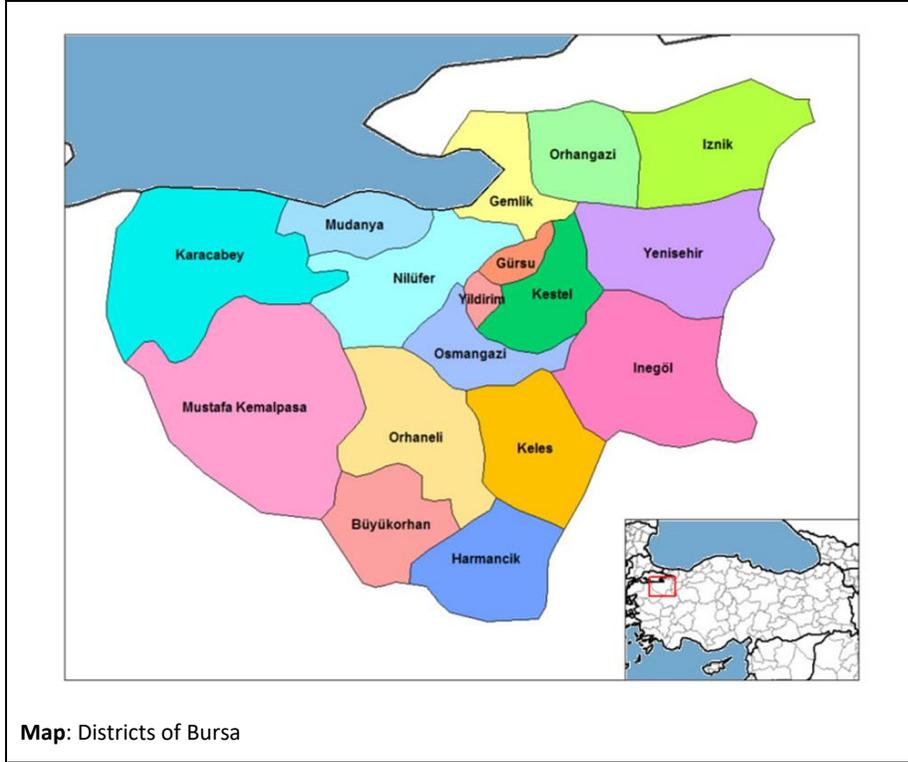
Thousands of Turkish-origin and Muslim migrants originating from the Balkans and North Caucasus were settled in Bursa province in the 19th century. After settling in Bursa, the migrants sought jobs to secure their livelihoods, and some even applied to serve in the army in times of war, with their carriages and animals. It is reported that among the Caucasian '93 Migrants', approximately 1,000 households of Pomak migrants, who did not speak Turkish, settled in Karacabey. Albanians and Bosnians, who also did not speak Turkish, settled in Bursa in large numbers during the same period. Resolving the social and economic problems of these large groups of migrants was always a priority for bodies governing Bursa. Migratory inflows to Bursa yielded several positive outcomes: hard-working migrants contributed significantly to the city's economy, resulting in substantial developments in trade and agriculture, and they enhanced Bursa's ethno-cultural diversity (Kaplanoğlu & Kaplanoğlu, 2014).

Bursa continued to receive migrants from different sources throughout the 20th Century. Mass migrations of Turks and Muslims from Bulgaria in the 1950s and after 1989 were primarily to Bursa. Nearly 15,000 Bulgarian Turks migrated to Bursa in 1951, and many were employed by the Merinos Factory (Pinar, 2014). In 1980, nearly 400,000 migrants of Turkish origin migrated to Turkey, mostly to Bursa and İstanbul, to escape the oppressive Bulgarian regime, forming a 'human bridge' between Bulgaria and Bursa, which is still active today, with ongoing mobility between the two locations (Ciğerci, 2018). According to official statistics, the number of migrants settled in Bursa was around 80,000 in 1989. To curb the rapid growth of the migrant population, migrants were subsequently banned from entering the city.⁷

Having vast and fertile plains as well as vast and richly varied forests of the surrounding mountainous region, the geographical location gives the city a special feature of a rare agricultural region along with an industrial and trade centres of Turkey. Whereas Mount Uludağ (Bithynian Olympos), having a well-known ski-resort, plays an important role in the development of the tourism sector, its fertile lands, 17 percent of which are covered with plains, make the agricultural production very important in Turkish economy. The area of cultivated land in Bursa constitutes 40 percent of the city's total land which also contributes a rather orderly urban growth.

Bursa's population in 2021 was 3.101.833. Karacabey is one of its 17 municipalities, with a population of 84,666 as of 2021. Karacabey includes 64 villages in its district. Regarding population per gender, it has a balanced demographic structure, having 50,06 percent (42.013) male and 49,94 percent (41.910) female population. The ratio of foreigners to total population in this district is 3.65 percent which corresponds to 3,063 in numbers. The foreign population figures include the Syrian population (2,828 in numbers) under temporary protection, which corresponds to 3.37 percent of the total population located in Karacabey.

⁷ For detailed information on the matter, see İnginar, 2010.



In terms of the economic structure, the district economy in Karacabey is based on the sectors such as agriculture, trade, industry, transportation and service. However, vast and fertile soils of Karacabey plain (776,744 decares of agricultural land) make agricultural sector have great weight in Karacabey's economic structure, and the most of its population is therefore engaged in agriculture. Besides, animal husbandry, especially horse and sheep breeding, is also highly developed sector in the district. It is notable to stress that Turkey's best racehorses are bred and raised at Karacabey stud farm. As the agriculture and animal husbandry have important place in production, the agriculture-based industry in the district has considerably developed and, the district has been the centre of attraction for important investments. Leading factories operating in the food industry sector (e.g. Nestle, Sütaş) are centered in the district as well as the import-export industry in the fields of feed, poultry, livestock and dairy products due to the agricultural sector and animal husbandry. In terms of employment, those working in industry and agriculture sector mostly work as seasonal workers.

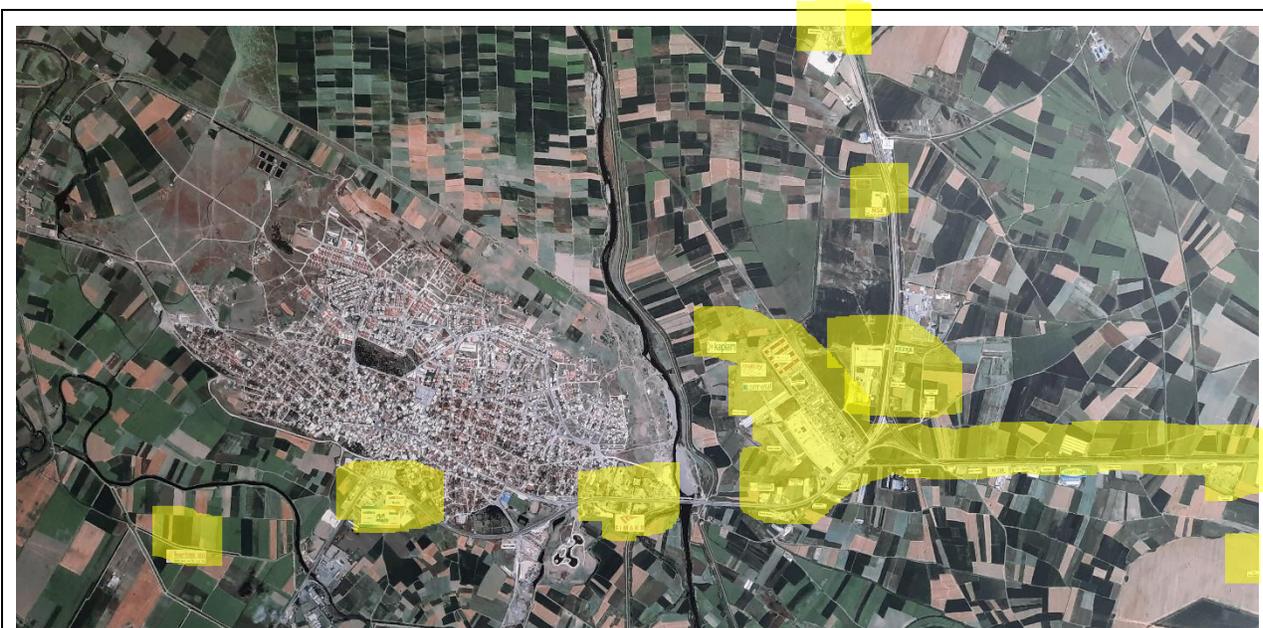


Photo: Karacabey settlement plan and investor companies (highlighted), photo taken from the wall of the building Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry, August 2021.

Challenges, Needs and Opportunities in Karacabey

Karacabey has vast agricultural lands that are currently being depopulated due to emigration of young locals going to the big cities such as Istanbul and central Bursa. Agricultural lands remain idle partly because of increasing emigration pattern and partly because of the inheritance problems leading to the conflictual situations among the members of the extended families that prevent them from harvesting the lands. It is reported that the agricultural lands in Karacabey are very fertile, one of the local stakeholders working in the Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the following in order to draw our attention to this issue as well as to some challenges:

This place [Karacabey] is open to corporate capital. There are different companies from about 20-25 countries, the number is increasing day by day. (...) It is found that Karacabey has the most convenient climate to grow seedbed (*tohumluk* in Turkish). There are even some international companies recently investing in this field in Karacabey. It is apparently a promising field of investment. There are also industrial factories producing agricultural machinery such as Sezer company producing plows. Recently, there are some preparations made by the state actors to introduce the Hightech Industrial Site (YTSB, *Yüksek Teknoloji Sanayi Bölgesi*). We don't know though what it is really. There are rumours that some of the heavy industry in Gebze [an industrial district of Kocaeli, a city neighbouring Bursa in the North] will be moved here. If this is the case then we are really concerned that such a move will heavily pollute the agricultural lands, the wild life and the lakes, which are located in the birds' migration routes. It should be because of these ambiguities and the lack of perspective for the future, youngsters are not willing to stay here, and no bride is willing to come here from outside (Interview **WP5TRB003**)

Table 2. The number of companies with foreign capital in Karacabey	
Syria	4
Germany	3
United Arab Emirates	2
Japan	2
Sweden	2
Jordan	1
Kazakhstan	1
Ukraine	1
Austria	1
United States of America	1
Egypt	1
United Kingdom	1
Holland	1
Italy	1
France	1
Source: Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry, June 2021.	

Karacabey is one of those depopulating districts of Bursa, a city that is hosting around 225 thousand migrants including the Syrians under temporary protection and irregular Afghans migrants. Agricultural lands in the districts of Karacabey and Mustafakemalpaşa are also attracting thousands of seasonal workers coming from the southeastern and southern parts of Turkey each year between April and September, some of whom are Turkish citizens and some of whom are Syrians. Both seasonal and permanent migrants and refugees meet an urgent need that is the continuation of harvesting fertile agricultural lands, an activity that seems to be neglected by the locals because of growing emigration trends and the lack of support by the central state actors as well as the municipal actors.

3. SOCIAL ASPECTS OF MIGRANTS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Bursa is one of the cities most affected by the forced mass migration of Syrians that emerged in 2011. The historical experience of Bursa and its municipalities with migration and migrants manifested itself in the capacity to swiftly respond to this intense mass migration, and to support other organizations to do so. Bursa differs from Turkey's other border provinces in that Syrians, especially those involved in the textile sector in Syria, preferred to settle in Bursa due to its leading position in the global textile industry. According to DGMM data, in September 2021, Bursa was home to 181,266 Syrians.⁸

A city of rich natural beauty, with strong tourism and industrial sectors (particularly, textile and automotive sectors), Bursa is located on the Silk Road, and is Turkey's fourth most populated city. Due to its developed industrial sector, Bursa attracts migrants from all over Turkey including İstanbul, including many Syrians who have lived in Turkey for up to nine years. Syrians in Bursa have mostly arrived in the last few years to benefit from its employment, housing, health care, and educational opportunities, along with its multicultural environment created by the city's rich migration history. The majority of Syrians residing in Bursa today were originally from Aleppo, and the historical, cultural and commercial ties between Bursa and Aleppo, especially the silk and textile industries, make this a natural migration path.

Based on their proportion among foreign nationals in Bursa, Syrian migrants under temporary protection as well as other migrant workers such as Iraqis and Afghans are the particular focus of the case study. The specific subgroup is represented by the Syrians under temporary protection whose population rate corresponds to more than 5 percent of the province's current population. Karacabey, the rural Matilde region, hosts around 3.000 Syrians under temporary protection out of 225.015 migrants (180.910 Syrians under temporary protection and 48.595 regular migrants with residence permits) in total residing in Bursa as of August 19, 2021.⁹

Karacabey is also a district that stands out with its agricultural production as well as with its industrial facilities based on agricultural production. The interaction between the local citizens living in rural areas, especially local seasonal agricultural workers, and migrants, mostly Syrians, who live in tent cities built in districts such as Karacabey in Bursa, is important to be identified with regard to social and economic aspects.

Labor Networks and Informality

In the early days of mass migration, Syrians used their existing informal labour networks widely. Labour networks are widely applied in the process of migration. Not only do they help potential migrants in obtaining information about the availability of jobs, but they also help new migrants settle before starting a job. Even though applying to labour networks might be helpful it should be highlighted that it cannot always be trusted. During the interviews, several Syrians stated that the jobs that were offered for them via labour networks turned out to have poor working conditions as well as low salaries that were often times not paid on time and consistently. At the heart of self-sufficiency is the ability for individuals to earn a living and provide for their families. Under temporary protection, refugees do not have the right to work and without the legal channels to access the labour market, the informal sector becomes the only option for individuals to earn a living. Jobs are mostly found in the textile, construction, service and agricultural sectors. Wages for Syrians are generally reported to be only half of the minimum legal salary and some

⁸ For the distribution of Syrians under temporary protection by province, see the website of DGMM, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638> Accessed on September 09, 2021

⁹ See <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638> accessed on 19 August 2021.

participants in Karacabey reported making as little as 80 TL a day (equivalent of 8 Euro in August 2021) (Interview **WP5TRB009**). It should be mentioned of course that none of these jobs provide job security, occupational safety, or social security benefits.

The lack of formal structures to help migrants find jobs made their integration even more difficult. As it was also not officially possible to get a work permit until January 2016, migrant did not also feel the urge to follow the formal mechanisms to find jobs. Many Syrians had to work in underpaid jobs which mostly did not correspond with their qualifications. As the safety net in big cities was not very strong, the difficulties in the labour market even triggered the exploitation of child labour among Syrian families. A 45-year-old Syrian woman, who came to Şanlıurfa in 2012, locating in Karacabey as seasonal agricultural worker at the time of writing this report, uttered the following words when she was asked about her children:

We came to Şanlıurfa first in 2012 to work in the agricultural sites and green houses. Between April and September we are coming to Karacabey as seasonal workers to work in the fields to harvest tomatoes, or whatever is offered to us. Our children also work with us. We all get paid the same salary. If the children are too small then one of the elderly children stay with them at the tent. When we are back in Şanlıurfa in September then we work in the fields to harvest apples (Interview **WP5TRB010**).

Child labour, exploitation of men and women in the labour market, low salaries, lack of social security, difficult working conditions, lack of formal channels to help migrants find jobs, lack of official controls in the labour market have been repeatedly expressed by our interlocutors (Interview **WP5TRB011**).

When the mass migration of Syrians began, Turkey was at the verge of introducing the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (No. 6458). However, the mass migration delayed the finalization of the law, and already led to the revision of some of the articles even before the law was put into force. However, these revisions and regulations did not create an environment in which the Syrian refugees would have decent work conditions. One of the most important reasons of this failure was the power of the informal labour markets in Turkey. In the first days of their mass migration, Syrians entered a labour market that had high unemployment and informality, especially among the youth, since the beginning of the 2000s. All these combined with the lack of sufficient regulations, discrimination, exploitation and prejudices against Syrian refugees resulted in their settlement at the lowest and most vulnerable strata in Turkey.

Turkish labour market has its ongoing chronic structural problems such as high informality, low skill sets of the labor force, and low labor force participation rates of women. Formal jobs are more difficult to secure for the low skilled workers such as the young, the women and Syrian refugees. Policies to protect the lower skilled workers such as increasing the minimum wage, provokes shifts from formal to informal employment, making the working conditions of the workers even worse (Bakiş et al., 2020). It is estimated that currently 3.3 million workers earn the minimum wage and that 4.1 million workers earn less than the minimum wage, and this is excluding Syrian refugees (Erdoğan et al., 2021).

4. ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND LABOUR MARKET SITUATION

Employment of Foreigners and Work Permits

Before the enactment of Law 8375 in January 2016, which allowed Syrians under temporary protection to have work permits only under certain conditions and with certain restrictions, there were only 7,351 work permits issued to Syrians.¹⁰ They were mostly issued to those who started a business. The number of Syrians who received work permits in 2019, released by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, was around 65.000.¹¹ The number of work permits issued in Bursa in 2019 was 8.609. Also, according to data provided by Bursa Provincial Directorate Social Security Institution, as of August 2021, there were 9.172 foreigners registered in the Social Security system in Bursa. While 8.300 were male, 872 were female. In Karacabey, there were only 37 males registered in the social security scheme, and 3 female (See Chart 1 and 2 below). Our interviews and observations also affirm this data since there is high informality among the foreigners working in Karacabey.¹²

Table 3. Work permits issued to foreigners in Turkey

Year	Type of permission			Total
	<i>Definite</i>	<i>Indefinite</i>	<i>Independent</i>	
2011	17.318	132	16	17.466
2012	32.191	79	9	32.279
2013	45.721	93	9	45.823
2014	52.197	95	3	52.295
2015	64.402	115	4	64.521
2016	73.410	115	24	73.549
2017	87.150	19	13	87.182
2018	115.826	4	7	115.837
2019	145.232	0	0	145.232

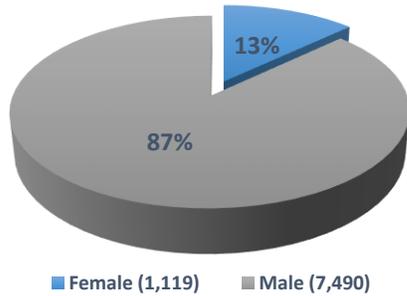
Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2019.

¹⁰ For the Law 8375 see <https://turkishlaborlaw.com/news/legal-news/362-turkey-grants-work-permit-for-syrian-refugees>

¹¹ See <https://t24.com.tr/haber/suleyman-soylu-bu-gune-kadar-76-bin-443-suriyeliye-vatandaslik-verdik,791996>

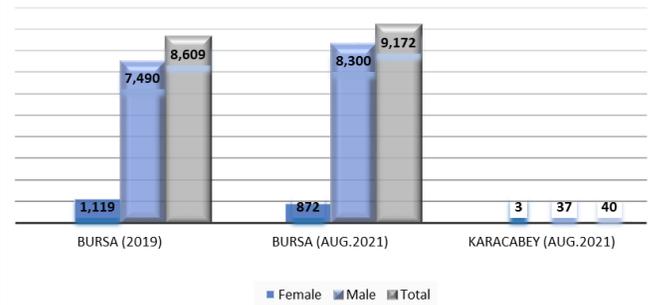
¹² Source: Bursa Provincial Directorate Social Security Institution, August 10, 2021.

Chart 1:
Province of Bursa: Share of work permits given to foreigners by gender, 2019



Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Security, (2019).

Chart 2: Province of Bursa (and Karacabey, the local region)
Number of work permits given to foreigners by gender, 2019 and 2021



Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Work Permits of Foreigners, 2019; Bursa Provincial Directorate Social Security Institution, August 10, 2021.

It is reported that there was no substantial change in this figure during 2020 and 2021 due to the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the labour markets. Syrians living in urban areas have to work to sustain their livelihood, several hundred thousand have joined the informal workforce. Anecdotal evidence points to a boom in the construction sector arising from the arrival of the refugees, particularly in the provinces bordering Syria, and that textiles and clothing manufacturing, agriculture and service sector were other major sectors of informal employment for refugees (Kaya and Kırac, 2015; Ferris and Kirişçi, 2016; Erzan et al., 2018; Rottmann and Kaya, 2020; Kaya, 2020). The field research findings indicate that one of the main reasons for the reluctance of Syrians to apply for work permits is the fact that they know that they will no longer be able to benefit from financial and in-kind assistance once they are given a formal work permit.

Temporary Protection Status as a Challenge

In an economy where informality is merely a reflection of the underlying structural problems of the national labor market, it is very difficult to secure formality for migrants in general, and migrants under temporary protection in particular. However, it is also partly because of the ways in which migrants under temporary protection are legally treated in Turkey that informality remains to be the norm for them. More than 1,6 million Syrians in Turkey rely on the financial assistance provided by the European Union under the Emergency Social Safety Net. Some argue that the financial aid provided by the EU under the Emergency Social Safety Net / Social Cohesion Assistance Program for Syrians (SUY/ESSN)¹³ is creating an increasingly dependent and passive population of migrants, and discussions on this issue have been heated. The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services prepared an *Exit Strategy from the Social Cohesion Assistance Program for Syrians* in 2018, to define strategies for incorporating migrants into social life as active participants, particularly as registered, formal participants in the labor market.¹⁴ The document recognizes that the Syrians under temporary protection are more settled in Turkey (p. 4) and that the Turkish government is willing to “implement more development-oriented assistance programs rather than humanitarian assistance. For this reason, a graduation strategy is considered vital for enhancing the skills and competences of the Syrians under temporary protection and making them less

¹³ For detailed information about the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), see <http://www.essncard.com/tr/> Accessed on July 28, 2021.

¹⁴ See <https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr/uigm/duyurular/04042019-nolu-duyuru/> Accessed on 12 August 2021.

dependent on the social assistance.” The strategic purpose of this “graduation” process is identified as “to increase the social cohesion of the Syrians under temporary protection by supporting their adaptation to the labour market” in Turkey (p. 13). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for the Turkish state actors to pursue such a goal.

Syrians under temporary protection in Karacabey and Bursa have also expressed some other concerns regarding the graduation to formality. The difficulties encountered in naturalization and having work permit are two common impediments expressed by our interlocutors. A 33-year-old businessman who came to Bursa with his family in 2011 when the civil war erupted in Syria has complained about such difficulties. Although he received Turkish citizenship, he stated that citizenship application for the rest of his family is still pending:

We are from Aleppo. We are a wealthy family. We used to do business with Saudi Arabia and other countries before the war... After the war erupted we came here with a lot of money. We invested in a dairy product factory in Karacabey where we employ both Turkish and Syrian workers. We were planning to do export, but because of the depreciation of the TL against the foreign currencies lately, we decided to produce for the domestic market. The COVID-19 pandemic initially affected us badly, but now we are doing fine. I received my Turkish citizenship in 2017. But the rest of the family, my father, brother, uncle could not yet receive citizenship. The workers in my factory received citizenship but my family members could not... I think investors should be given citizenship immediately... (Interview **WP5TRB008**).

Temporary protection regulation blocks the path to Syrians to citizenship and access to individual international protection application. For this reason, the Turkish government grants citizenship to Syrians under temporary protection through “exceptional citizenship”. Some Syrians are naturalized under the article of exceptional citizenship of the Turkish Citizenship Law introduced in 2009. According to the Article-12 (exceptions in acquiring Turkish citizenship) of this Law (Law No. 5901) ‘those persons who bring into Turkey industrial facilities or have rendered or believed to render an outstanding service in the social or economic arena or in the fields of science, technology, sports, culture or arts’ can acquire the citizenship.¹⁵ Turkey has so far issued citizenship to around 150 thousand Syrians.¹⁶

Gender dimension and other challenges in Labor Market

The situation of Syrian refugees in the Turkish labour market has a strong gender dimension. Syrian women work as flexible labourers at the workplace and at the same time, look after their families. They struggle on both ends, i.e., the production and re-production sides of life. At the workplace, they are the most affected and vulnerable agents of the labour market because they are employed with lower wages in comparison with males from other nations. It is very difficult to engage migrant women in having access to the labour market, because they are also taken responsible for domestic household issues. Despite working as a nurse, a female migrant informant in Karacabey put the challenges into words by stating the following:

¹⁵ See https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/6585/file/Turkey_citizenship_law_2009_en.pdf Accessed on 12 August 2021.

¹⁶ *Milliyet Newspaper* (09.05.2021) <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/150-bin-suriyeliye-vatandaslik-verildi-6501330> Accessed on 12 August 2021.

“There is a disabled person in my family. It is difficult to work and take care of their needs but we try to manage it somehow (...) Life is hard, my husband takes care of the kids until I return, then he leaves to work [collect waste paper].” (Interview **WP5TRB006**)

Addressing the household responsibilities, one of our interlocutors, a female Senior Project Manager from International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Ankara, talked about a project that they have currently been working on:

We know that on average migrant-origin individuals are more into entrepreneurial spirit. There are many scientific studies all around the world demonstrating this finding. It is the same in Turkey, I believe. Turkey has not received a very-well educated group of Syrians, we know that. But they brought different kinds of artizanships, which they learned from their parents and grandparents. They are very good in shoe-making, furniture, other kinds of artizanworks. But it is rather difficult to make women involved in employment facilities... We are now working on a Project called “Home-based entrepreneurship”. We are trying to find out if migrant women can be incorporated into the labour market by getting engaged in home-based entrepreneurship on the one hand, and letting them take care of their household responsibilities on the other hand (Interview **WP5TR003**).

Gender dimension with respect to the Syrian and other migrants was also raised by another interlocutor we interviewed. A female Project Coordinator working in the “Resilience in Local Governance (RESLOG) Project” funded by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) said the following to draw our attention to the gendered aspects of projects that are engaged in occupational trainings:

As far as I can see, vocational trainings are very much gender-biased. They are imprisoning both men and women in particular fields. For instance, female migrants are channelled towards gastronomy while male migrants are channelled towards working as mechanics. There is a gendered segregation already here. Such programs can hardly change the life-worlds of migrants and refugees (Interview **WP5TR002**).

On the other hand, Syrian males are employed with lower wages in comparison to the Turkish male workers (Tören, 2018). A 50-year-old man from Afrin working in Karacabey as a seasonal worker in the fields said the following to refer to the low salaries that the Syrians earn in the agricultural sector:

We earn 80 TL per day, and 10 percent of this goes to the commissioner who brings us here from Mersin [a coastal city in the eastern Mediterranean region of Turkey]. We are not getting paid the same salary as the Turks. I don’t know how much they earn. We have to meet all the costs resulting from our back and forth travel from Mersin (Interview **WP5TRB009**).

Both women and men working in Bursa and Karacabey are vulnerable. The vulnerability of seasonal workers employed in the agricultural sector is even more. Gendered assignments made in the vocational training schemes makes it harder for migrants to have different options and opportunities existing in the local settings.

4. TERRITORIAL ASPECTS

Agricultural sites seem to be offering great opportunities for Syrian and Afghan migrants in particular. One of the doctors with Afghan background who had a medical degree from a Turkish university we interviewed in the Karacabey Migrant Health Centre stated the following to draw our attention to the potential in the region to employ migrant labour:

We treat many migrants here in the Migrant Health Centre. We have two other Syrian doctors. As I had my medical degree in a Turkish University, I can also treat the Turkish citizens. But the other doctors can only treat migrants. Migrants are immensely contributing to Karacabey. They are working in agricultural sites as well as in factories. The locals in Karacabey did not have anyone before to work on the lands. Now, migrants are sorting out everything (Interview **WP5TRB007**).

During the field research, an officer working for Refugee Liaison Office in Orhangazi, an agricultural/rural district similar to Karacabey, stressed the potential of the region for foreign labor force due to insufficient local employment, particularly during the summer period:

Agriculture occupies here an important place. There is also industrial sector. The number of workers is not enough. There is a serious shortage of labor force. Production in agriculture here begins and continues with peach, eggplant, olive etc. The local population is not enough, we are looking for workers (Interview **WP5TRB012**).

Employability of Syrians under temporary protection is not only possible in informal sectors or agricultural one; Turkey also offers some other opportunities to migrants under temporary protection to find jobs. Since 2017, Turkish Ministry of Health has initiated a project funded by the European Union to offer health services to the migrants: SIHHAT Project (Health Project). So far, 177 Migrant Health Centres were opened in 29 provinces.¹⁷ A 35-year-old female nurse with Syrian origin expressed her enthusiasm and happiness to be working in the Karacabey Migrant Health Centre, which operates under the SIHHAT Project:

I was a dialysis nurse in Syria. I graduated from the University in 2009. [Bashar] Asad prevented in those days us from receiving our diplomas as the regime was concerned that we would leave the country and go somewhere else to work. When I came here with my family, I had my graduation document, and I was able to apply for the SIHHAT Project. We were then in Gaziantep. I was chosen to work in the Project. First, we had two months training in Ankara, and then I had my internship in Sakarya [a city near Bursa in the North]... I applied for Turkish citizenship, I hope I can get it soon. Otherwise I don't know what to do if the Project ends. I guess I will have to work in an underpaid job... (Interview **WP5TRB006**).

As witnessed in the field research, Syrian female refugees also take the responsibility of the education of their children who have to struggle with the language barrier, peer violence and discrimination practiced against them in school. All these problems, low working conditions without social security or registration, discrimination, stereotypes, language barriers, violence, prejudices, low quality housing, integration problems into society create many barriers for them in using their rights at the workplace. While the Syrian refugee population constitutes cheap labour force for the Turkish economy, the state has become a factor in the creation of this situation by neither exercising control nor granting equal rights to Syrian refugees (Tören, 2018).

¹⁷ For more detail on Sihhat Project see <https://eng.sihhatproject.org/> 21 August 2021.

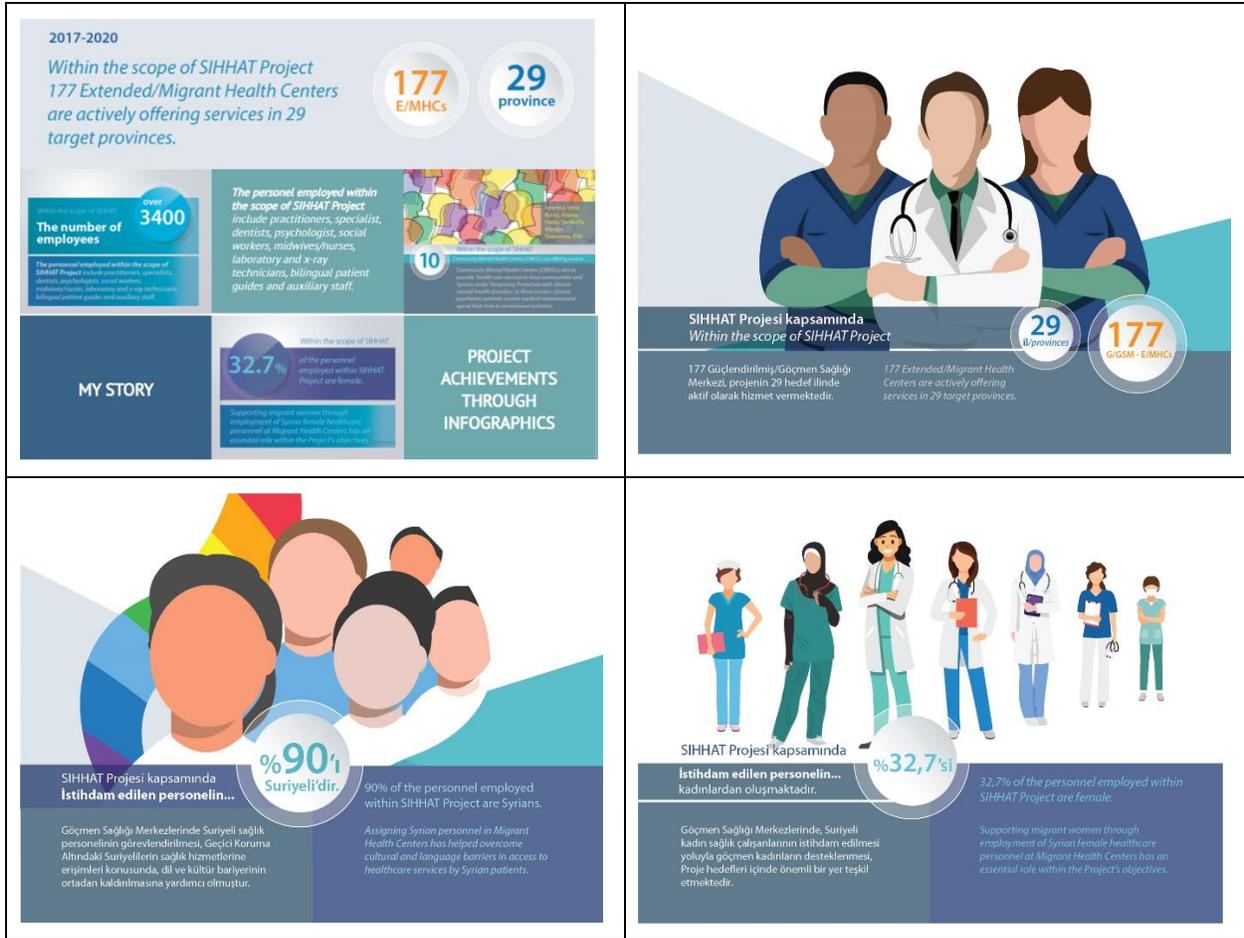


Figure: Some images from the SIHHAT Project, Source: <https://eng.sihhatproject.org/>

The discourse of “cheap labour source” was made even more prevalent by the members of the ruling government during the fieldwork in the summer of 2021. When the Taliban forces started to control larger parts of Afghanistan after the US forces started to withdraw in August 2021, the Turkish mainstream media coverage of irregular Afghan migrants entering the country from the Iranian border alerted the oppositional parties in Turkey to generate a stronger anti-refugee hostility.¹⁸ Such an hostility has been immediately reflected towards the Syrians by a large number of the Turkish population, who were chanting “refugees out”, “Syrians out”, “Afghans out”.¹⁹ The members of the ruling government explicitly stated that Turkey would economically suffer even more if the Syrians were deported. It was Yasin Aktay,

¹⁸ For a review of the anti-refugee hostility raised by the oppositional parties such as the Republican People’s Party (CHP), see <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/05/fleeing-the-taliban-afghans-met-with-rising-anti-refugee-hostility-in-turkey> accessed on 19 August 2021.

¹⁹ For more debate on this see <https://bianet.org/english/world/248842-the-west-will-pray-for-erdogan-s-re-election-as-new-refugee-crisis-looms-says-chp-leader> accessed on 19 August 2021.

advisor to the Turkish President, who said Turkish economy would collapse if the Syrians had to leave the country.²⁰

Our observations and interviews with the local stakeholders in Bursa and the local region, Karacabey, also confirm the widespread perception of Syrians and other migrants as cheap labour contributing to the local economy. One of our interlocutors involved in the occupational training programs provided by the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality stated his thoughts about the employability of Syrians in particular.

Syrians are perceived to be cheap labour. Employers are not willing to go through all that hassle to pay all that money for social security purposes... On the other hand, I also witness that there are many Syrian entrepreneurs who are doing bussiness in Bursa. They have already created a niche economy. Take a look at the Çarşamba district of the city centre. There are many shops owned by the Syrians. They are very organised actually (Interview **WP5TRB002**).

The interview data demonstrate that Syrians and other migrants are aware of the opportunities existing in the labour market in Karacabey and Bursa. The state of temporariness and the lack of interactions between the locals and migrant communities make it difficult for the migrants to contribute better to the local setting that they are in. The data also show that gendered dynamics, intersectional discrimination, low salaries, and instrumentalization of migrant labour remain to be the major problems to be solved.

Our interlocutors also talked about their sense of belonging that they have generated in Bursa and Karacabey under the given circumstances. Bursa is one of the latest destinations chosen by the Syrians mostly originating from Aleppo. As explained earlier, former inhabitants of Aleppo were mainly involved in agricultural production and textile. To that end, Bursa provides the Syrians from Aleppo with a save heaven where they can present their talents. However, this territorial sense of belonging is not without any tension. The locals demonstrate their discontent especially in the downtown centre of the urban space (Çarşamba district of Bursa) where the Syrians have developed diasporic spaces with their shops, stores, restaurants, callshops and jewelers.

Çarşamba [district of Bursa] seems to be completely in the hands of Syrians. You [as a Turkish origin person] may be treated differently when you go to those areas. They actually do not want you among them very much... Suddenly, a society with a different background joined our society. They have difficulties in keeping up with the society (Interview **WP5TRB012**).

The quotation above indicates that there is a growing stream of ghettoisation in the city centre of Bursa a situation as “living as two separate groups”, where the locals and immigrants do not interact to a great extent. This is a surprising phenomenon for a city with a very strong tradition of incoming migration over the past centuries.

Linguistic Elements of Territorial Belonging

The language barrier is among serious obstacles to prompt migrants, particularly the Syrians, generate a sense of territorial belonging as well as to integrate them into education and work environments. It is also one of the factors linked to the increase in NEET rate (see Uyan Semerci and Yilmaz-Elmas, 2021). Public Education Centers (PECs) are among the several channels giving language training, operating across the country and conducting age-specific Turkish language modules for foreigners. At regional level, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality’s Art and Vocational Training Courses (BUSMEK) provides free Turkish language courses certified by the Ministry of National Education, to support the social and economic integration of

²⁰ See <https://newsbeezer.com/turkeyeng/erdogans-advisor-yasin-aktay-turkey-has-to-live-with-syrian-refugees/> accessed on 19 August 2021.

Syrians and increase their chances of finding jobs. Syrians who complete the language training can then attend free certified vocational training courses. From 2013 to August 2020, a total of 1,167 migrants (654 women and 513 men), attended the Turkish language courses.²¹ BUSMEK Courses Department Manager, during our interview, pointed out that there is high interest among foreigners in language courses among others:

Considering foreigners, the language is the field we receive the most applications. We are trying to solve the language problem that is the biggest need of foreigners when they start living in another country. For this purpose, we provide training without distinguishing anyone. In general, we have Syrian attendees. Besides, we have trainees from all nationalities such as Dutch, Brazilian, or Indian (Interview **WP5TRB002**).

For the vocational training, migrants seem to be eager to be involved in courses throughout Bursa. However, the local stakeholder, BUSMEK Courses Department Manager paid attention to the mandatory priority of earning their living for foreigners:

They are actually eager to learn something in terms of improving themselves. Of course, this is related to living standards. How much time can they devote to education? People who have overcome livelihood problems show interest in the courses. In other words, those who have a job and are eager for self-development, or those who work somewhere and need to add something for this job, come to the trainings and they are willing in this sense (Interview **WP5TRB002**).

There is a lack of data to follow the situation afterwards for those who have completed the vocational training. Although, for instance, there is a department called Employment Counselling Service within BUSMEK, established to provide a bridge between companies and trainees, there are no specific record on foreigners. There is also a rare feedback or demand for an employment through the vocational trainings (Interview **WP5TRB002**).

Table 4. The number of migrant students in elementary and secondary education in Bursa

School Level	Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Prep. class	9	10	11	12	Total
BURSA (foreign students including Syrians)	1.095	3.870	4.339	4.571	4.749	4.525	4.116	3.381	2.245	1	1.149	956	734	475	36.206
BURSA (only Syrian Students)	890	3.495	3.848	4.093	4.260	4.054	3.644	2.982	1.828	0	822	584	444	265	31.209
KARACABEY (foreign students including Syrians)	18	43	36	37	40	35	19	11	11	0	11	2	6	0	269

Source: Bursa Provincial Directorate of National Education, March 2021.

Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vocational Training Center has also recently provided an opportunity for foreigners in the local region, Karacabey. Established in 2020, the Vocational Training Center is asked by the Ministry of National Education for recruiting foreigners for this year for the first time. It provides a simultaneous education for both high school-level education and vocational training as well as providing work accident, occupational disease and sickness insurance, at least 30 percent of the minimum wage. The training includes theoretical training at school 1-2 days a week and skills training in business 4-5 days a week. Those graduating from the program obtain both mastery certificate and vocational high school diploma. However, having to document secondary school graduation seems the biggest challenge for foreigners, as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry informed us:

²¹ For detailed information about BUSMEK, see <http://busmek.bursa.bel.tr/> Accessed on 19 August 2021.

Vocational training courses offer important opportunities to everyone including immigrants. The Ministry of National Education has given instructions for the registration of immigrants to the courses this year, but the problem is that those who may attend the trainings must be secondary school graduates. Immigrants do not have their graduation certificates with them. They cannot present their documents. It is a problem (Interview **WP5TRB003**).

Vocational training is one of the important ways to close the labor shortage in Karacabey. Our interviews conducted in both regional and local levels also reveal that there is intermediate and technical staff shortage:

There is no such thing as not being able to find a job for qualified personnel in Karacabey. Technical staff can get more salaries than an engineer. No matter a citizen or an immigrant, the firms pounced on them, so to speak (Interview **WP5TRB003**).

Besides vocational education seems to be a way of increasing schooling rate, overcoming school dropouts and preventing child labor to some extent. The decrease in schooling rate is an obvious fact as the level increases in Bursa region as well. According to the figures, delivered by the Bursa Provincial Directorate of National Education, as of March 2021, whereas an average of 4000 students is enrolled in each grade at the primary school level, it decreases considerably in the upper levels. For example, in Bursa, only 475 foreign students (out of which 265 students are Syrians) are enrolled in the schools in the 12th grade. Contributing to household income is an important reason for dropouts (For detailed figures, please see the Table 4). Thus, the migrant youngsters have a very limited chance to go on their education at the university level or to find qualified jobs in the field of employment.

5. CONCLUSION

This report has concentrated on the social, economic, political, and territorial dynamics of coexistence of migrant and native communities in Bursa and Karacabey. The role of central state actors, local municipal actors, civil society actors and migrants were discussed in detail. The report revealed the challenges, needs and opportunities in relation to the seasonal agricultural migrant workers and other migrants residing in Bursa and Karacabey. It was argued that modernization and globalization has dispersed young locals in Karacabey and made them to migrate to the big cities such as Bursa and İstanbul. This demographic pressure coupled with the fragmentation of inheritances have made the agricultural lands idle for the last two decades.

Many of our interlocutors addressed the need of additional agricultural labour force to sow and harvest the land, a need that could be very well met by the existing migrants and refugees who are very well equipped with the relevant qualifications. This requires planning, support and subsidies by the local and central state actors, who have so far neglected such local demands and needs. Both the locals and seasonal migrants have addressed the potential of migrant labour to close this existing gap in the labour market.

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