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SOME ISSUES OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY IN THE LIGHT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

In the seven decades following the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, relatively few asylum seekers came to the country, and most of them stayed in there only temporarily. The wave of Syrian refugees that started in 2011 hit the Turkish public administration and labor system practically unprepared, and it took until January 2016 for a system meeting international expectations allowing foreigners to work legally to be born. Due to the numerous restrictions, only a fraction of the Syrian migrants were able to find a registered job, and a serious conflict arose between the Turkish majority and the refugee community, both regarding employment and wages.

With the help of mostly English and, to a lesser extent, Turkish sources, this study tries to reveal the system of connections between the Turkish political structure, the role of the European Union and labor trends. With the help of a number of quantitative and qualitative analyses, the multifaceted nature of the problem –including unemployment and conflicts over the wages– can be demonstrated and one can define how it affects the upcoming elections.

Introduction

After the proclamation of the republic in 1923, Turkey accepted relatively few refugees for a long time. However, the Arab Spring and Syrian civil war in 2011 created uncertainty and forced Ankara to make reforms. Initially, Prime Minister Erdogan and his conservative Islamist party, the AKP, wanted to use the situation for political gain. But as the number of immigrants grew to nearly 4 million, they created a permanent employment scheme with Europe's help. Unfortunately, the economy struggled, unemployment rose, and social tensions peaked during the 2013 Gezi Park demonstrations.

The Syrian asylum seekers highlighted problems within Turkish society and economy, leading to legislative action. Employment of Syrians worsened the labor market situation, revealing the issues of illegal employment, job insecurity, unequal opportunities between skilled and unskilled labor, importance of Turkish language proficiency, and wage conflicts. Though Turkey began European integration in the 20th century, laws on asylum and legal employment were implemented later. It wasn't until January 2016 that Turkey adopted new work permit laws, which opened up the labor market to foreigners with restrictions. This study investigates how Europe and new Turkish labor policies impact the integration of Syrian refugees and address prejudices and conflicts between Syrians and Turks.

Growing mistrust in Turkey: the policing of the refugee issue

Since the Syrian civil war began in 2011, tens of thousands of Syrians entered Turkey. Initially, the Turkish public was welcoming due to shared religious and cultural backgrounds and the fact that

many of the refugees were Turkmen or wealthy traders. However, by 2022, 82% of Turks believed that refugees should be returned home, and 71% saw them as a security risk. Attacks on Istanbul's Istiklal Street have been blamed on Syrians. Now, Turkish citizens harbor hostile feelings towards Syrians. (Adar & Puttmann, 2022)

After the failed coup in 2016, suspicion grew in Turkish society and affected the perception of Syrians negatively. A survey showed that 70% of Turks believe that Syrian Arab refugees threaten Turkish identity. Cooperation between Syrians and the Turkish society decreased from 2017, hindering economic integration and increasing unemployment among Syrians. Some Syrians moved back to their home country, but most remained in Turkey with very few leaving for Europe. (Adar & Puttmann, 2022)

The negative changes in Turkish society have affected the political arena, leading to the rise of the right-wing NGO Angry Young Turks. They blame Syrian immigrants for the country's political and economic problems. This has sparked political debates about the role of Syrians in Turkey's economy and society. Umit Ozdag, a prominent political scientist, even formed a new political party aimed at repatriating Syrians. However, the far-right Victory Party has yet to gain significant support. (Adar and Puttmann, 2022:2) Turkey is getting ready for general and presidential elections in May 2023. The latest opinion polls in December 2022 show that the Victory Party has 4% of the vote. This may seem like a significant amount for a new party, but the high 10% entrance threshold in the Turkish political system makes it difficult for Ozdag's party to gain seats in the Turkish National Assembly.

In recent years, Turkish political parties have been changing their attitudes towards the Syrian issue. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) initially supported Syrian refugees as a means of Islamizing Turkish society and gaining more voters. However, opposition parties like the Republican People's Party (CHP) have noticed the negative social perception of Syrians and have begun to distance themselves from their economic integration. As a result, the government has taken action against illegal immigrants, with more raids being conducted and fewer asylum seekers being referred to as guests. (Adar & Puttmann, 2022)

The demographic composition of the Syrian refugee workforce

The demographic composition of Syrian refugees differs significantly from Syrian or Turkish demographic trends. This can be seen in terms of the refugees' ethnic, religious and socio-cultural background, but also in the proportion of people born in different Syrian regions, as northern Syrians are overrepresented, southerners are underrepresented as the latter fled mainly to Lebanon and Jordan. An interesting and important fact from the point of view of employment is that the gender composition of the refugee population is unbalanced, a strong male surplus can be shown, since while only 46.9% of the refugees are women, the majority of them, 53.1%, are men. This means that a higher proportion of Syrian refugees may be potential workers than the average Syrian or Turkish population. (Cakilci, 2017)

Syrian women under international protection in Turkey, who make up a minority of the refugee population, have a unique demographic composition. A survey conducted by Ozturk's research group found that many of these women are young, with 51.5% under the age of 29, and a significant number are unmarried (47.4%), likely due to the Syrian civil war and their subsequent displacement. The survey also revealed that the illiteracy rate among these women is high (19%), with 18% of respondents stating that they have never attended school. (Ozturk, Vildan Selin & Altinoz, 2019)

The influx of Syrian refugees, who are mostly men, has negatively impacted job opportunities for Turkish women. Many Syrian refugees have found work in the informal sector, displacing Turkish women from jobs they previously held. The arrival of Syrian refugees caused a 2.2% decrease in employment among the Turkish population as a whole, and a 2.6% decrease among Turkish women. This decrease in job opportunities has disproportionately affected uneducated and disadvantaged Turkish women, particularly in the southeastern region of Turkey. (Ceritoglu et al., 2015) „Furthermore, socio-cultural barriers in the Turkish society seem to have prompted females to withdraw from the labor market after the Syrian refugee shock. Women’s weak attachment to the labor market is one of the major characteristics of the labor market in Turkey”. (Suzuki et al., 2019:22)

A 2018 survey also showed a significant difference in the employment of Syrian refugee men and women, as well as in terms of how it compares to the employment of native Turks. The research found that in the case of men, the difference between the employment of the two groups, i.e. Turks and Syrians, in paid work is relatively small. In 2018, 68.9% of Turks of active age were working, while the same could be said for 61.8% of Syrian refugee men. In the case of women, 22.2% of Turks had a job, against 6% of Syrians. So, in the case of men, the difference remained below 20%, but in the case of women, only a quarter of Syrian women could work compared to Turkish women. If we look at the difference within the Syrian refugee population, a man was ten times more likely to be employed than a woman. (Demirci & Kirdar, 2021) In addition to the number of employed people, there is also a difference in the type of work refugees find and in which economic sector they are employed. Surveys show that while Syrian men are employed in large numbers in the manufacturing industry, women typically thrive in agriculture and few work in services. All this is strange because the industry in Syria is underdeveloped and few people work in it, and 67% of the population lives on services. (Demirci & Kirdar, 2021) According to the ILO's 2020 survey, there is also a difference in salaries between women and men. While a Syrian refugee woman took home 1,083 lira a month, a man was paid 1,337 lira. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uyasal, 2021)

Ceritoglu's 2015 research on a control group showed that, in addition to gender, there was a significant difference in job opportunities for different age groups. The arrival of Syrians in Turkey decreased the chances of getting a job for all age groups, especially those under 35. Unemployment has increased more for young people than for those over 55. Among young people, women have been more affected than men. (Ceritoglu et al., 2015)

The prevalence of gray and black employment also led to the development of a serious problem, namely the illegal employment of children. Although this phenomenon exists in Turkey regardless of the Syrian refugees, and the AKP governments have not tried to eradicate it, the exploitation of young people among Syrians has reached an astonishing level. According to a survey conducted in 2021, 18.8% of Syrian refugee boys between the ages of 12 and 14 work somewhere. If we compare this with a 2009 statistic that was prepared before the civil war in Syria, we find that this problem has more than doubled, since in the 2000s in the Arab country, 7.6% of boys in this age category worked. (Demirci & Kirdar, 2021)

Turkish government efforts

Turkey signed the international refugee agreement known as the Geneva Convention in 1961, but this does not mean that the necessary legal changes were made after that, since very few refugees arrived in the country for decades. (Unluturk Ulutas, 2016)

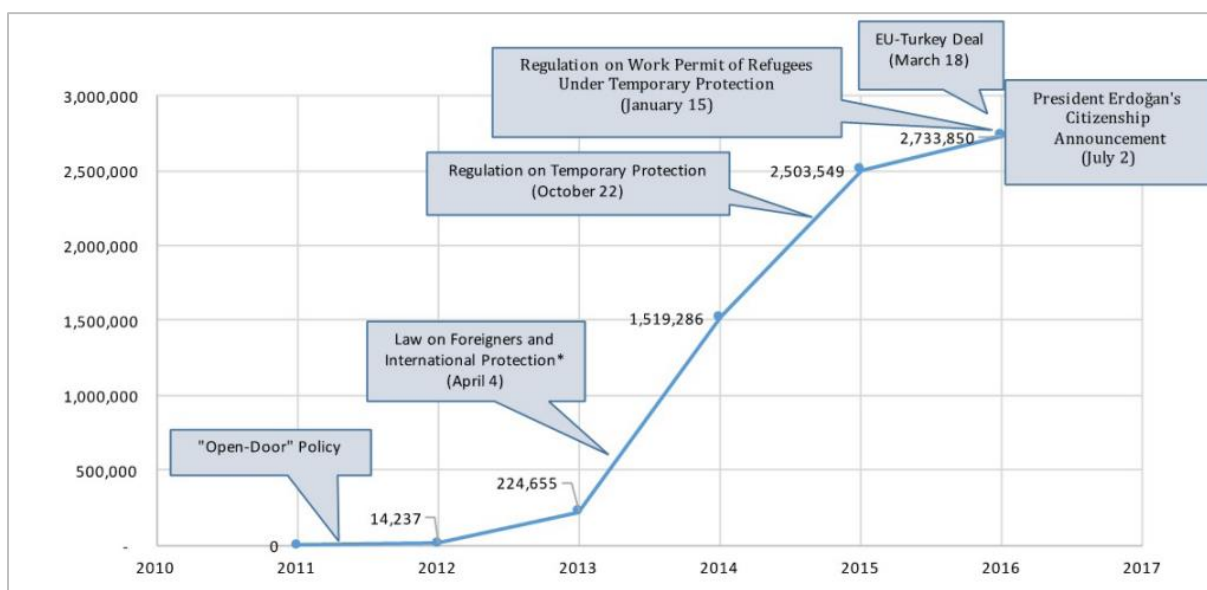
In the days before the Syrian civil war, Turkey was not prepared for the massive presence of foreign workers in the country's labor market. The Justice and Development Party, which came to

power in 2002, perceived the ex-lex situation and took the first steps towards market opening and liberalization. In 2003, the first Turkish law was passed that provided for work permits for foreigners. This legislation was already created in connection with European integration, and regulated the legal situation and opportunities of asylum seekers, legal and illegal immigrants in accordance with international standards. The law reflected the global social reality of the 2000s and did not anticipate waves of refugees in the millions. (Icduygu & Millet, 2016)

Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the AKP governments essentially opened the border and contributed to the massive influx of Syrians. At that time, the ruling party saw the solution to the problem by building more than two dozens of temporary refugee camps in the border region. By the way, stereotypes appeared very quickly in the border regions, according to which the maintenance of these refugee camps is very expensive, and that the government spends too much on the workers there. (Suryantama, 2021)

The legal environment of the asylum case showed no change. By 2014, the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan was forced to realize that a solid solution was needed, since the war would drag on and the refugees would stay. In October 2014, the AKP majority in the Turkish National Assembly passed legislation that would allow Syrian refugees to receive temporary international protection and access to social security and some other government services, but even this law did not introduce the possibility of employment. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uysal, 2021)

FIGURE 1.: TIMELINE OF REFUGEE-RELATED TURKISH LEGISLATION AND NUMBER OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS



Source: Icduygu & Millet (2016)

Before the asylum reform of January 2016, it was very difficult for Syrian refugees to obtain a legal work permit. By the end of 2015, the Turkish authorities had issued such certificates to a total of 7,692 Syrian refugees. The introduction of Turkish Law No. 8375 made it possible for refugees and asylum seekers under temporary international protection to take up work. The law imposes several conditions, so the AKP government tried to limit the employment of Syrian workers on the one hand, and on the other hand to guarantee that only those who have been staying on Turkish soil for a long time can get a work permit. The legislation required Syrian refugees to register with Turkish labor and asylum authorities and hold a Turkish identity card for at least six months. In addition, the work permit also contains a geographical restriction, according to which the refugee

can only work in the county in which his official address is located. They also defined the maximum number of refugee workers an employer can hire. (Demirci & Kirdar, 2021)

Obtaining work permits for refugees was difficult and the introduction of new regulations in 2016 did not lead to a dramatic increase in their number. Since they had to be renewed every year, those who had been working legally for a long time had to go through the procedure again and again. By 2018, the number of permits had risen to 34,573, although even this is extremely short of the real number of Syrian refugees, so it can be concluded that many people continue to find work in the gray and black economy, trying to employ themselves and their peers in smaller businesses, or to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Turkish social care system. (Demirci & Kirdar, 2021)

Due to the hostile Turkish public mood towards Syrian refugees, it has become increasingly challenging for the AKP governments to integrate asylum seekers and promote the participation of Syrians in the labor market. One major reason is that many Syrian immigrants have a lower education level than the Turkish average, and diplomas and certificates obtained in Syria have little value among Turkish employers. The best solution is for as many Syrians as possible to receive formal education in Turkey and obtain university degrees. In six years, the number of Syrians pursuing higher education in Turkey increased from 445 to approximately 15,000, a significant development, but dwarfed by the total Syrian refugee population. Education in Turkey and the Turkish language is key to the success of Syrians in the labor market. (Bariscil, 2017)

The 2016 EU-Turkey statement on migration

Turkey has been conducting accession negotiations with the European Union since 1999, so the the *acquis communautaire* of the EU, i.e. the legal principles accepted by the community, are guidelines for Ankara as well. This means that regarding the legal status and rights of refugees, and especially the issue of women, Turkey should have found an answer long before the Syrian refugee crisis. (Toksoz, 2020) Nevertheless, the European Union has recognized that some Mediterranean countries –including Turkey- are not only victims of the wave of refugees, they do not only accept immigrants and support them with the financial aid of the West, but are active participants in the management of the refugee crisis, thus contributing to the fact that the problem can be partially resolved outside of Europe. (Sahin Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021)

The EU-Turkey agreement signed on March 18, 2016 aimed to manage the migration of Syrian refugees to Europe. With 3.7 million asylum seekers in Turkey, the agreement aimed to mitigate the negative impacts of migration and prevent those deemed unable to contribute to the European economy from entering. Public opinion polls in Turkey showed that the majority of Syrian refugees have no plans to migrate to Europe, with only 4% planning to do so legally or illegally in 2021. Half of those who do plan to move on cite a lack of means of living in Turkey. Therefore, it can be concluded that approximately 50% of Syrians who fled to the West via Turkey were able to find work in Turkey for a period of time. (Elmacioglu, 2021)

Europe did not want to push the problem away from itself, but tried to find a solution that would efficiently organize the lives of these people, partly from European sources, but in a completely different economic environment. FRIT, the EU's refugee support program in Turkey, aimed for the integration of Syrian asylum seekers was initiated in order to promote this policy. Of course, the leaders in Brussels thought that the highly qualified and well-integrated workforce could migrate even further over time, which would also benefit the old continent. (Adar & Puttmann, 2022) In 2018, Turkey and the European Union developed a so-called exit strategy (“Exit Strategy From The ESSN Program”) with the aim that within the framework of FRIT, as many Syrian refugees as

possible can get a legal job, the establishment of which is also supported by Brussels, and that as few as possible depend on the Turkish social welfare system. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uysal, 2021) The Turkish state apparatus tried to realize the goals of FRIT in the best possible way. An independent FRIT directorate was established in the office of the President of the Republic of Turkey, and the state labor organization ISKUR hired 1,000 new employees, mostly language and vocational teachers, to support the Turkish language training and competence development of Syrian refugees. (Kirisci, 2020)

The agreement between the EU and Turkey in the second half of the 2010s created a situation in which Turkey's European partners were able to support the livelihood of Syrian refugees in the country in several ways and at several levels. Turkish and international governmental and non-governmental organizations received EU support, which helped Syrians learn the language and receive vocational training, but there was also a program aimed at providing tax or social security benefits to businesses that employ refugees. The latter had its limits, since the legislation adopted by the AKP in 2016 maximized the number of foreigners employed in one workplace at 10%. (Kale, 2022)

EU-supported projects had limited impact on the Syrian refugee community. Only a small portion of refugees received EU-funded training, which did not greatly improve employment opportunities or integration. The programs were time-limited, lacked follow-up, and did not have a long-term effect. Additionally, many refugees only received cash instead of training, which did not address their integration needs. This is evidenced by the fact that many Syrians trained in EU programs became unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Kale, 2022)

Between 2011 and 2020, the Turkish government spent 40 billion dollars on Syrian refugee care, mostly from domestic sources. Support from Turkish civil society was also crucial. In contrast, the EU-Turkey Deal only granted Ankara about 6 billion dollars, a fraction of Turkey's spending, and had limited impact on integrating Syrian refugees into the labor market. (Erdogan, 2020)

EU-Turkey municipal cooperation on refugees

Turkish municipalities actively integrate Syrian refugees. As the Seyhan District Municipality near the border states, they view Syrians as their townsmen and strive to treat them equally to Turkish citizens. They prioritize social inclusion over just providing social assistance. The municipality does not have a separate migration unit and recognizes that 85% of Syrians will become permanent residents. (Sivis, 2020)

The Turkish government has mechanisms to support employment for Syrian refugees, and Western European settlements have shared their experience with Turkey. Some European entities believe that subsidies should be paid directly to local communities instead of candidate countries' governments. Many Europeans think that euros for job creation should go to Turkish municipalities, which can use the funds more efficiently than the AKP cabinet in Ankara. Direct project financing works better and promotes municipal cooperation, as demonstrated by German and Turkish municipalities. This approach also makes it easier for citizens and civil organizations to connect. (Adar & Puttmann, 2022)

Impact of migration on Turkish unemployment

Turkey historically did not accept many refugees and was not considered a destination country for immigration. In the 70 years after the republic's declaration in 1923, about 1.7 million refugees arrived in Turkey. Many returned home after conflicts and persecution ended, leaving only a small proportion, especially those with higher education and university degrees, to remain in Turkey.

Jewish professors from Germany contributed significantly to the improvement of Turkish universities and research institutes in the 1930s. (Cakilci, 2017)

The influx of refugees caused by the Syrian civil war was different from previous waves of migration. Three times as many people came in a few years compared to 70 years earlier. Most of the refugees did not speak Turkish and had a low level of education. They also came from rural areas and were illiterate. Despite almost a decade passing, the majority of Syrian refugees have not learned Turkish, which is a major obstacle to employment. Only 13% of Syrians said they were proficient in Turkish, which is a requirement for finding a job or earning a decent salary. (Kirisici, 2020)

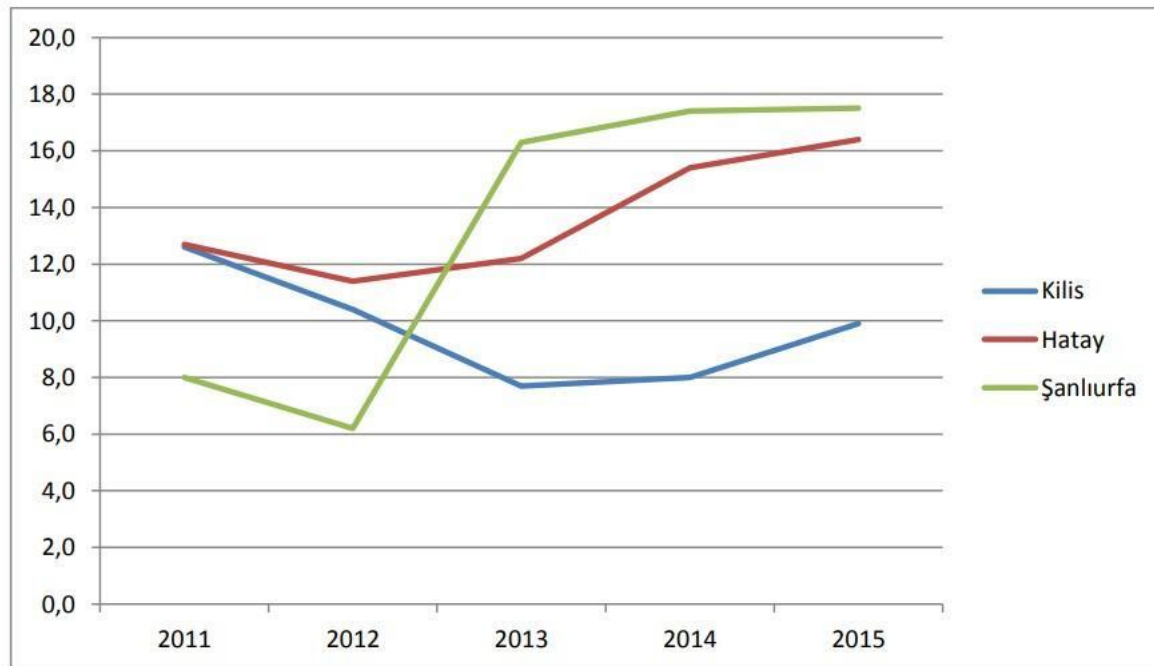
Syria lags behind Turkey in terms of social and economic development. Before the conflict, Syria's economy was mainly based on agriculture, with 16% of the workforce employed in this sector. Industry represented only a small portion of the economy, with 17% of the population working in this sector. The service sector experienced some growth in the early 2000s, with 67% of the working-age population employed in this field. However, Syrian refugees in Turkey struggle to integrate into the labor market due to lower education levels, underdeveloped sectors, and lack of experience in advanced industrial and service jobs. (Cakilci, 2017)

In the early stages of the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkey only allowed refugees to settle in small towns near the Syrian-Turkish border. Kilis had the highest concentration of refugees, comprising 93% of the population in 2016, while bigger cities had a much lower proportion of refugees. This led to high unemployment in the border region, and few Syrians moved to more developed regions of Turkey in the mid-2010s. (Cakilci, 2017) The sudden rise in unemployment in Kilis and nearby Gaziantep came as a surprise to Turkish experts. The area had been experiencing rapid development in the late 2000s, and employment had been growing well despite its relative backwardness. However, according to the Turkish Statistical Office, in 2013, the rate of unemployment started to rise rapidly, which can be attributed to the influx of refugees. (Erdogan, 2014)

After a crisis in the 1990s, the Turkish economy stabilized in 2005 and began to develop. The country's infrastructure improved, unemployment decreased, and the currency remained stable. Despite the 2008 global economic crisis, Turkey continued to develop until 2012 when internal economic and political issues began to surface. Unemployment increased rapidly after 2012 and was worsened by Syrian immigrants. Research by Serttas and Uluoz shows that 10 Syrian immigrants decrease Turkey's unemployment by about 3. (Serttas & Uluoz, 2021:26)

The unemployment statistics of Turkish cities characterized by a significant Syrian refugee population also show similar trends. In the already mentioned Kilis, between 2012 and 2015, unemployment increased from 11.5% to 16.5%, i.e. the number of unemployed people rose above the national average. The most drastic negative change was produced by Sanliurfa, where the proportion of jobseekers almost tripled in one year, while in 2012 only 6% of the residents were in this situation, in 2013 it was already 16%. (Cakilci, 2017) (*Figure 2.*)

FIGURE 2.: UNEMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED CITIES WHICH HOSTED THE HIGHEST PROPORTIONS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY



Source: Cakilci (2017)

The appearance of Syrian refugees on the Turkish labor market did not only worsen the official statistics, but also made it difficult for ordinary Turkish people to find work. Many Syrian immigrants obtained informal work in the gray economy, in many cases displacing disadvantaged and unskilled Turkish workers from casual jobs. A survey showed that the wave of Syrian refugees reduced employment in Turkey by 2.2% relative to the population as a whole. Among the members of the Turkish-born population, those who lost their unofficial jobs due to the influx of Syrians were forced to redesign their employment strategies. As a result, half of the affected people dropped out of the labor market completely, 32% became unemployed and received some kind of pension after losing their job, while only in 18% of the cases they found legal work. (Ceritoglu et al., 2015)

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that in 2017, 813,000 Syrian refugees worked in informal jobs across Turkey. This represented 90% of all employed Syrians in the country. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uysal, 2021) Ozturk's 2019 survey indicates a smaller proportion of illegal employment. 54% of the participants stated that they work in a non-legally registered workplace, while this figure was 74% among the female respondents. (Ozturk, Vildan Selin & Altinoz, 2019)

When evaluating informal employment in Turkey, it is important to consider two factors. First, black and gray employment remains widespread and accepted as an alternative for many untrained and uneducated Turks, despite the AKP government's inability to eradicate it. Second, for a long time, the Turkish government prevented Syrians from obtaining legal work, pushing them to find illegal work instead. Unfortunately, many Turkish citizens also prefer informal jobs over registered ones. This has led Syrian refugees to also find illegal work, reducing the livelihood chances of locals and contributing to the dismissive behavior of the Turkish political elite. (Ceritoglu et al., 2015)

Giovanis and Ozdamar's 2021 comparative survey, which was conducted simultaneously in Jordan and Turkey, showed that Syrian asylum seekers only briefly displace the local workforce from low-paid, informal jobs, as soon as they learn the Turkish language and obtain a work permit, the trends show that they are trying to make use of the competences they acquired in Syria. (Giovanis & Ozdamar, 2021)

In 2015, Caprio and Wagner conducted a survey that found a surprising reaction among Turks who lost their jobs due to Syrian refugees in the border region. Young people, especially those under 35, were more affected than older people. Many young Turks decided to go to school instead of relying on social welfare or legal work. Half of those affected have left the labor market, but some have entered vocational training while others choose higher education. This means that immigration and the refugee crisis forced native youth to seek new education, which will give them better job opportunities and reduce competition from less qualified Syrian refugees. (Del Caprio & Wagner, 2015)

After the initial difficulties, the employment of Syrian refugees was drastically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of Syrians employed in informal jobs lost their place in March 2020 and in the following months. According to a two-time survey by the NGO called Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers, more than three quarters of people in the black and gray economy became unemployed. In March 2020, 89% of those surveyed had this type of work, but in the second half of 2020, only 18% could say the same about themselves. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uysal, 2021)

The refugee crisis in Turkey created job opportunities for some members of society. About 1.2-1.5% of the border region's population found work in refugee camps and organizations dealing with refugees. More educated youth with degrees in the social sphere were mostly selected. While less educated Turkish youth were pushed out of the job market, employment among those with a university degree increased by 0.9%, particularly in jobs related to refugees. (Del Caprio & Wagner, 2015)

The impact of refugee employment on wages

The influx of Syrian refugees and their subsequent employment, both legal and illegal, has impacted not only employment, but also wage trends in Turkey. The government anticipated that the mass employment of Syrians could cause wage tensions, so they liberalized work permits in January 2016. This decision coincided with a 30% increase in the minimum wage, which helped alleviate social conflicts, but made it difficult for employers. (Unluturk Ulutas, 2016)

Restructuring employment for native Turks led to a shift towards hiring more qualified candidates with university degrees. Employment among uneducated workers dropped drastically, causing many to pursue education or retraining. University graduates had a better chance of employment, increasing job numbers by 0.9%. In the early 2010s, relevant graduate monthly salaries rose by 55-107 Turkish lira, representing a net improvement of 7%. While women saw a salary increase slightly below average, those working in fields related to the refugee issue had a spectacular salary increase of up to 180 lira per month. (Del Caprio & Wagner, 2015)

While Turkish graduates, especially those who work in refugee affairs, can count on a significant salary increase, Syrian refugees typically receive much less than their Turkish counterparts. A survey conducted in 2016 in the K sget industrial park in the city of Gaziantep showed that the salaries of Syrian refugees are definitely lower than those of Turks. The Turkish language literature also states that this is not the first time in Turkish history, since the ethnic Turks fleeing Bulgaria at the end of the 1980s were able to take home less than the local Turks in the city of Bursa,

where they were temporarily resettled at the time, and where the Turkish Refugee Museum is located today. (Caglar Deniz, Ekinci & Banu Hulus, 2016) The ILO estimates that Syrian refugee workers earn 7% less than the official Turkish minimum wage. In 2020, this meant an average salary of 1,302 Turkish lira among Syrian refugees, which - due to the galloping inflation caused by the policy mistakes of the AKP governments - is barely enough to live on. (Erdogan, Kirisci & Uysal, 2021)

Kayaoglu's 2020 study found that the employment of Syrian refugees in Istanbul textile factories affected Turkish colleagues' attitudes. Turkish workers demanded a salary increase upon discovering that their Syrian colleagues earned the same amount, indicating that they expected better compensation due to their nationality. Some workers also expressed xenophobic views, claiming that Syrians were less productive than Turks. (Kayaoglu, 2020)

Over time, Syrian refugees in Turkish industrial plants improved their bargaining positions. They gained the necessary competencies for factory work and learned Turkish, enabling more skillful negotiations with employers and higher salaries. This has also led to envy among Turkish workers, who initially felt sympathetic towards them. (Kayaoglu, 2020)

Conclusion

The wave of refugees in Turkey following the Syrian civil war that broke out in 2011 showed the weaknesses and downsides of the Turkish labor market and pointed out that the host nation's economy has undergone a two-faced development in the last two decades and is significantly vulnerable to external influences such as a large number of potential workers that do not speak the language of the country.

In Turkey, unemployment is high and wages are low, and some Syrians living there are not guaranteed access to basic needs. Although the global trends show that refugees are forced to work in worse conditions, in many ways the situation of Turkish workers is not much better than that of those fleeing the war in Syria.

The resentment towards refugees in Turkey, caused by their partial integration and inability to find legal work, has made migration a key issue in the recent Turkish election. The prevalence of informal jobs has led to almost half of native Turks struggling with livelihood problems due to inflation. The winner of the election may be the one who can provide a permanent solution for Syrian employment without harming the Turkish majority's standard of living.

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