



SYRIAN REFUGEE MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF ISTANBUL METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

Istanbul is one of the preferred cities for Syrian refugees as a point of living and transition to Europe. Syrian refugees are sheltering in remote and rash areas in Istanbul. Even the most essential needs like nutrition and housing are not being met. In this case, the importance of local governments is increasing. This study aimed to find out the role of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality how to adapt refugees to the city and how to carry out services for them. This study is designed to improve the general findings and recommendations of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on refugee management. It aims to shed some light on how Istanbul metropolitan municipality react to these new components and their problems. Beside that, this article cannot provide a comprehensive report on the numerous activities and government agencies operating in Istanbul. The report highlights some management mechanisms in Istanbul metropolitan municipalities that look for to meet refugee needs; what remain their point of view for Syrian refugees, what information is available to them, what offer their solution for the crisis. This information is critical to acknowledge the role of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in refugee management.

KEYWORDS: Syrian refugees; Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality; Refugee Management; The Rights of Citizen; Temporary Protection.

Introduction

Turkey opened its doors to refugees from other countries in almost every period and has comprise a country that welcomes them. Turkey befall the country with the most expanded border with Syria and increasingly becoming a global wave of migration has been one of the most affected countries. As the number of refugees extended massive numbers, camps established in cities near the border were insufficient. Therefore, the migration has begun spreading to other cities. In this manner, these migrations caused a refugee crisis affecting the whole country. In this process, it is substantial to prepare the necessary conditions in terms of sustainability and integration of refugees like security, housing, education, health, food, justice and employment. The most essential duty in the integration of refugees to the city and the execution of the services and management related to the refugees belongs the local governments. Migration represents a concept that expresses people's mobility in the world. Humanity has maintained its activity throughout history. The prime causes of these movements are geographical conditions, civil war, hunger, epidemic diseases, population growth, insufficient resources. Anatolian geography has comprise a region where migrants have lived throughout history with both its geopolitical position and resources in the world. It has been seen that the people who come with migration affect the society in many issues like social, economic, political, security and so on.

Migration movements were highly affected Turkey. Presenting with the UN Refugee Agency, 2019 on the world's 70,8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 41,3 million internally displaced people and 25,9 million refugees, 3,7 million of which live in Turkey, the world's

most substantial number of refugees has been hosting country (UNHCR, 2019).

Since Turkey has applied open door policy to the Syrians during certain periods, Turkey has been a country for refugees accommodation as well as transition. Some of the Syrian refugees who entering the territory of Turkey have settled in the camps, some have been scattered in cities and some have moved to Europe. Thousands have forfeited their lives in the waters of the Aegean (ÇAMUR, 2017). The fundamental reason for this is the civil war that began in Syria in 2011 as the wave of the Arab Spring. The war in Syria, by its consequences, has gone down in history as the cause of the displacement of millions of people, affecting an unprecedented number of people. As of March 2019, roughly 5.7 million Syrians left the country and more than 6.1 million people are thrown out (Syrian Civil War Fast Facts, 2019). This intensive migration wave has affected Turkey's migration management and the institutional mechanisms. The size of the Syrian refugee population is continuing to grow in Turkey. As a result of the most crowded migration movement in Turkish history, Syrian refugees distributed to all cities in the country. Awarding to Refugees Community Centre, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey as of December 13, 2019 compared to the previous month it increased by 8 thousand 700 people. In total, 3 million 695 thousand 944 people registered. Of these people, 2 million 2,880 (54.2%) were men and 1 million 693 thousand 64 (45.8%) were women (Refugees Community Centre, 2019).

Istanbul is one of the preferred cities for Syrian refugees as a point of living and transition to Europe. 556 thousand 289 Syrians are registered in the Istanbul (Refugees Community Centre, 2019), with at least an

estimated 100,000 unregistered. Because of the size and complexity of Istanbul, it is remarkably challenging to deal with this growing constituency. Municipal authorities, having grapple with issues and approach process to the problems shows all the similarities in Turkey. In this context, the research has been designed to find out the municipality's approach to the refugees who live in Istanbul. In addition to understand the process management and the crisis management through supportive studies carried out in a comprehensive context.

Literature Review

Recently, studies on the responsibility of the municipalities in the access of refugees to services have been published. In this context, it would be appropriate to mention some studies. To begin with, Erdoğan (Erdoğan, 2017) analyzed the services of the municipalities in Istanbul for Syrian refugees in his study titled Urban Refugees from "Detachment" to "Harmonization", Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: The case of Istanbul. In a similar study, the Role of Municipalities in the Service of Urban Refugees of the Union of Marmara Municipalities (Marmara Municipalities Union, 2015), the status of local administrations in this area was identified and solutions were developed. Another research is examined "Needs assessment report of Syrian urban refugees" receiving help from Tarlabası community center in Tarlabası/Istanbul (Tosun & Powers, 2018). Once and for all Çamur (Çamur, 2017) discusses the situation in Izmir in detail within the scope of "Syrian Refugees and Responsibility of Municipalities: Izmir Case."

The Center of Mediterranean Integration (CMI) held a workshop in Amman between May 30 and 31, 2016 on the topic »Municipalities at the Forefront of the Refugee Crisis« with the support of various international organizations, bringing together 140 participants, including 70 municipal representatives from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Europe. Participants strived to share knowledge and good practices about the role of municipalities acquired by host communities, and to strengthen the coordination network among them (CMI 2016). Awarding to the CMI report, municipalities have been forced to expand the scope of their tasks and provide education, employment, and aid relief, as well as emergency shelter, healthcare services, etc. due to the presence of Syrian refugees. They all agreed that it was necessary to develop resilient approaches and strategies to face future shocks and crises (Cosgun & Ucar, 2018).

The number of studies on local approaches to Syrian refugees' in Turkey is rather limited. The literature which refers to the local aspects of the Turkish case often focuses on administrative aspects of migration. Scholars often start with a given categorization of the policies and practices between national and local governments: social integration with local inhabitants, provision of cultural services, social work, education, and vocational education including employment services, are considered »local« governmental issues, whereas the bureaucratic aspects of sovereignty such as entry into the country, implementation regarding visa and residence procedures, and managing work permits and citizenship processes are

considered to be in the hands of the central administration (Daoudov 2015) (Cosgun & Ucar, 2018).

In this study, which is also inspired by the examples mentioned above, Syrian refugee management of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is evaluated.

Objectives

- To analyse the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's approach to the Syrian refugees after the open door policy in 2011-2019.
- To find out what moderately services carrying out to the refugees by the municipality.
- To understand Syrian refugees problems and needs who live in Istanbul.

Research Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research which was provided by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality' responds via phone calls and e-mail .The study was prepared as a result of long-term, meticulous preparations. For the study purpose both primary and secondary data are used. The primary data collected from Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. General contact number of the municipality was called like an ordinary citizen. Starting from this general contact point, it has been attempted to learn about municipality's approach to the refugee issues. The first stage of the negotiations started on 9 September 2019. Depending on the recommendation of the telephone operator of the municipality, various municipal offices were connected. As a second stage, some municipal units continued to be contacted. These searches were conducted between 16-20 September 2019. As a third and final stage evaluation of this study, based on the answers to the questions asked under the Law on Obtaining Information to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the data obtained from the Directorate General of Migration Management, should be started by considering the data collection process. The questions were submitted by the municipalities' access to information on the corporate websites. As a result, the applications were completed by email from the information systems and requesting information. This research is conducted on 7 October 2019. To clinch the study, the municipality was sought two structured questions within the law of information acquisition by email:

- What services does Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality provide to the Syrian refugees?
- What problems have been experienced with Syrian refugees and which methods have been applied as a solution?

The secondary data collected from books, journals, web pages The primary and secondary data have been collected to cover every aspect of the study.

These research questions will be limited within the scope of Syrian Refugees who live in Istanbul. The issue of Syrian refugee entrepreneurs is an extremely young field for this reason Turkish economy, individuals, policymakers, stakeholders, society and new researchers might have benefit from this study.

Research Findings and Analyzes

It is observed that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and 39 district municipalities are willing to serve and distribute help to refugees and work in coordination with various stakeholders in the city such as association, NGOs. Most of the support provided by the municipalities consists of winter aid (coal, blankets and stove), food/supplies packages, clothes and household goods. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality continues serving in the framework of predetermined common standards regarding the services and activities related to refugees. The municipality provides psychological support to refugees, especially children. The Municipality conducts home visits and field surveys to understand the general demography of refugees and to determine needs. Refugees mostly come to the municipalities for shelter, household goods, food, health services and employment. The primary critical problem of urban refugees is shelter. It is furthermore a fact that the refugees, who are mostly poverty-stricken families with many children, especially when they come to the cities, are very problematic. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipalities directly or indirectly make serious contributions like essential supplies of

goods, carpets, stoves, sofa, beds, blankets, cleaning materials, cookers, washing machine, beds. In addition, “Social Market” and “Food Bank” applications are open to Syrians. Due to uncertainties in the proper, administrative and financial contexts, municipalities are concerned about providing assistance to refugees (Marmara Municipalities Union, 2015). Since April 2011 issue of refugees in Turkey continues. Education, health, language, structural adjustment, social and psychological adjustment presents the main problems.

Table 1 represents age status of Syrian refugees. Syrians in the pre-school (0-4) is are 584,694 in Turkey; compulsory education age (5-18) are likely to attend 1,156,066 people. It is perceived that there are 1,885,576 people (19-64) working age. Proceeding from these figures that the number of Syrian children born in Turkey is observed to be over 500 thousand. The ratio of registered Syrians under temporary protection to the Turkish population is 4.51%. Finally announced by Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey's population of 82 million 3 thousand 882 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019).

Table 1. Syrian Refugee Ages and Population under Temporary Protection in Turkey
Source: (Refugees Community Centre, 2019)

AGES	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	
0-4	302.215	282.479	584.694	584.694
5-9	254.705	239.952	494.657	1.156.066
10-14	199.942	184.845	384.787	
15-18	152.536	124.086	276.622	
19-24	324.692	231.356	556.048	1.885.576
25-29	206.974	146.694	353.668	
30-34	169.555	124.220	293.775	
35-39	119.435	94.511	213.946	
40-44	78.733	69.926	148.659	
45-49	58.358	55.831	114.189	
50-54	47.172	45.378	92.550	
55-59	32.843	33.240	66.083	
60-64	22.921	23.737	46.658	
65-69	14.984	15.749	30.733	
70-74	8.426	9.132	17.558	
75+	9.389	11.928	21.317	
TOTAL	2.002.880	1.693.064	3.695.944	3.695.944

Istanbul is a convenient transit and accommodation place for Syrian refugees because it is close to Europe and has more employment opportunities than other cities. Chiefly, Sultanbeyli, Sancaktepe, Pendik and Ümraniye districts linger the leading places where refugees stay. The fact that house rents are cheap and construction areas are dense are among the reasons for preference.

Rendering to the statistics of January 2020 SUKOM which is a web-based database, the number of families registered in the system is 6,215 and the number of family members is 31,350. Therefore, a family consists of an average of 5.06 people. Figure 1 demonstrates registered families by district information in Istanbul.

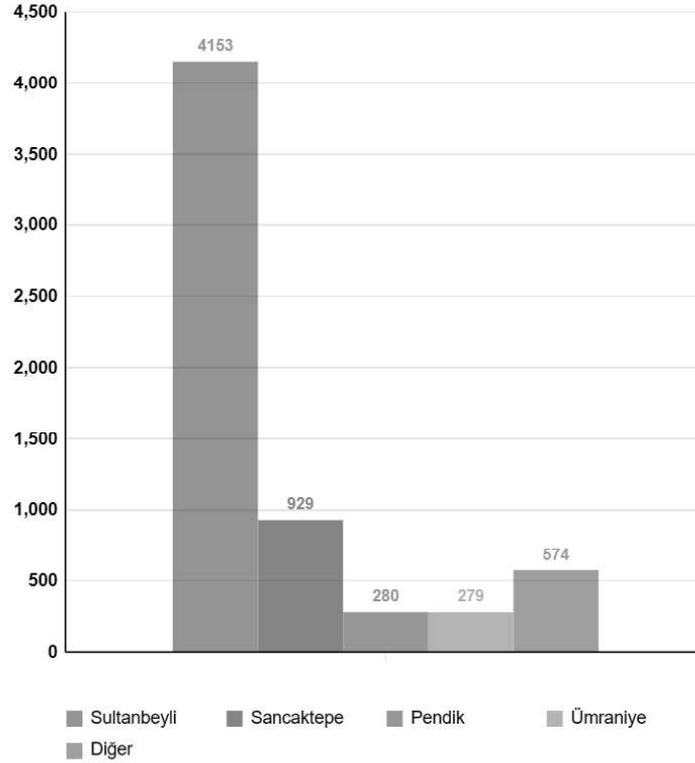


Fig. 1. Registered families by district information in Istanbul
Source: (Refugees Community Center, 2020).

Data from the Istanbul Provincial Administration for Migration show there are Syrian refugee families registered under temporary protection in all districts. The numbers are estimated to be higher, given the thousands of people who did not specify a quarters address and those who did not register. It has been observed that municipalities do not have very good and updated information on the number of refugees. In principle, it is impossible for refugees who leave the province in which they are registered to benefit from some state-provided facilities, especially health services. And yet, there are still many refugees who have incurred this risk and come to Istanbul for many reasons, and these refugees do

appear as unregistered in Istanbul because they are registered in other provinces (Erdoğan, 2017). Cooperation between NGOs and Municipalities are observed. While some of these activities are carried out directly with the municipality's facilities, capacity and personnel, many services are carried out in cooperation with NGOs established by the municipality's initiative. They provide reinforcement either on request or through detections during home visits. Regarding to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's answers, Table 2 represents the services which have been performed for the refugees.

Table 2. IMM Services for Refugees

Source: Data Obtained Under Law on Obtaining Information from Municipalities.

Municipality	Service Providing Unit	Service Provided
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	Directorate of Social Assistance + NGOs	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality provide services to refugees in Istanbul in the context of general need and poverty.
		Municipality has carried out very significant works in terms of emergency management and especially in support of the needy. Food, carpet, bed, stove, cleaning material, sofa,
		Sheltering, household goods, food, health services and finding a job
		Turkish language course
		Women health education
		Clothing aid
		Social Support

It is possible to make the following inferences for Syrian refugees:

- Services and intervention are not regularly.
- Providing services is related to the municipality's political choice.
- Many refugees are unregistered and can not benefit from the services.
- Temporary statuses cause problems in access to the services.
- The first problem experienced by the municipalities on refugees remain the housing problem. Refugees do not have the opportunity to live in better housing. The reason is substantially they do not have enough money.
- It is equally perceived that municipalities carry out a special role in providing vital supplies like food,

carpet, bed, stove, cleaning material, sofa, clothes, etc.

- One of the other problems is the language problem. Lack of Non-Arabic speaker staff in municipality causes massive chaos.
- Refugees need cash money especially unemployment ones. Municipality's responsible unit submits requests for cash needs from refugees to NGOs in general instead of giving direct financial support.
- Many district municipalities distribute aid cards to refugees. In accordance with the conditions affected with these cards, daily fundamental needs like food, woods, charcoals and cleaning materials are met. The money loaded into the cards cannot be squandered in cash.

Discussion

The conflict that has been going on in Syria since 2011 has been recognised after the failed peace negotiation that the refugees who have to abandon their homes will be unable to return to their countries for a long time (İçduygu & Ayaşlı, 2019). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a monitoring group based in

the UK, has estimated the death toll since the start of the war to be as high as 511,000 as of March 2018 (Human Rights Watch, 2019). It is estimated that 11.5% of the country's population, which total 22 million before the war, was killed or injured (Woods & Kayalı, 2017). It is mentioned that there are 3,7 million refugees living in Turkey. During the Syrian crisis, most of the refugees evacuated the camps and settled in cities, which caused the problems of the crisis to a large extent in urban areas.

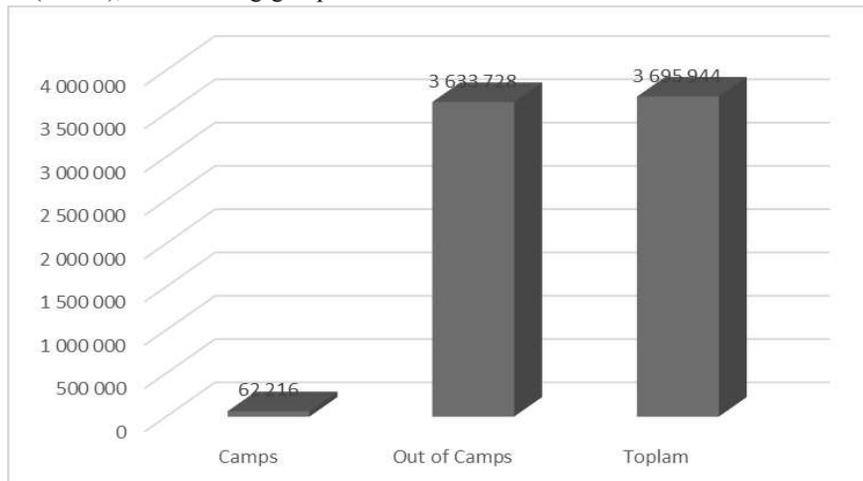


Fig. 2. Temporary Protected Syrians in Turkey Number of Camps and Out of Camps
Source: (Refugees Community Centre, 2019)

As Table 3 demonstrate the number of Syrians staying in camps in Turkey as of December 13, 2019, has been announced as 62 thousand 216 people. Only 1.68% of Syrians live in camps. The number of Syrians living in cities is 3 million 633 thousand 728 people. The number of Syrians living in cities increased by 8 thousand 819 people compared to last month. 98.32% of Syrians live in cities. The Migration Administration decides in which city the Syrians will live. Some considerable cities, especially Istanbul, are closed to Syrian recruitment. (Refugees Community Centre, 2019). Urban areas provide more freedom, employment opportunities and various opportunities than camps. It has been discovered that refugees who can obtain their living by settling in urban areas and out-of-camp areas have improved their self-sufficiency levels higher than the refugees living in the camps by getting better results in the long term (Morand, Mahoney, Bellour, & Rabkin, 2012). Urban refugees struggle to find jobs outside infrequent, informal labor "in the black market". They often find themselves living in poorer areas or overcrowded shantytowns where rents are cheaper alongside other migrants and marginalized people (Woods & Kayali, 2017). The possibility of lasting settlement of refugees in cities remain another concern. The challenges encountered by urban refugees, such as finding a job and access to services presents developmental problems that seek changes in laws, policies and practices. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipalities is attempting strategies in the medium and long term because the rapid increase in urban refugees puts pressure on local governments providing services like healthcare, education, shelter, social support, labor rights, security.

It has been observed one of the most enormous obstacles for the adaptation of the refugees to their contemporary lives is the language barrier. Especially children need comprehending the language of the country where they live and maintain their education. The language problem creates difficulties in the communication of refugees with both the local people and all relevant institutions and organization.

In the last 8 years, the workload and financial needs of refugees in Istanbul are displayed. Apart from the present resources, no other resources are foreseen in the legislation for refugees. This poses an extremely important resource problem, especially for local governments, which accommodate more than 3% of their population (Erdoğan, 2017). The essential criterion of the share transferred from the general budget tax revenues to the municipalities by the central government comprises the population. Social support budgets of municipalities are also calculated granting to the population of Turkish citizens residing within the municipal boundaries. Therefore, municipalities are not provided with further funding to provide support to refugees, and municipalities have difficulties in meeting the needs of refugees due to financial insufficiencies.

Syrian refugees required to register to entry to Turkey. If they are unregistered at the entrances, their needs cannot be fulfilled. The number of Syrian citizens arriving in the country without a passport is considerable and is increasing day by day. Although they are placed in camps, they are unentitled to any rights. Therefore,

mobile registration center was established 23 units to benefit from some of the rights of refugees in Turkey. This way, Syrian citizens can be investigated in any hospital regardless of their city and registration status (Öztürk & Çoltu, 2018). In this sense, more than 50% of Syrian refugees should receive psychological support and help. For this purpose, the number of psychologists in border regions and various health centers should be increased. In addition, various health care problems are raised. In this respect, health services are inadequate and they find it difficult to achieve solutions to meet the needs and do not reach the necessary competence. The demand for fees from the refugees coming to the hospital raises another dimension of the problem. Therefore, this situation prevents refugees from accessing the right to health (Öztürk & Çoltu, 2018).

There are many obstacles to Syrian children attending school. One of the fundamental obstacles is that many Syrian children are forced to lead off on working at a premature age instead of educational opportunities due to economic difficulties. The presence of the Turkish language barrier and structural adjustment problems also place a daunting obstacle to education. There are uncertainties about which schools they will attend, how they will be presented and content control due to curriculum also there are uncertainties and needs regarding the selection and formation of teachers. The supreme difficulty of the municipalities at this point is that, due to the difference in the alphabet, Turkish teachers cannot be successfully applied to the native speakers of Arabic by each teacher and involve an exceptional formation. It is unclear who and how the formation will be provided to them, as well as how to produce teachers (Marmara Municipalities Union, 2015).

During the research security was obtained one of the most crucial issues because every society requires a system. It is possible for communities to survive and perform other activities by providing a protected environment. The concept of security can be defined as not having any fear or danger and enforcing the law. One of the most urgent duties of a state is to ensure the safety of life and property of its citizens (Karagöz, 2002). The lack of educational opportunities and living conditions of the Syrian refugees points to an increase in crime rates in the long term, as well as future social problems. In this sense, the most risky group consists of unregistered Syrian refugees. Therefore, it was observed that these refugees were prone to crime. It has been discovered that informal refugees who commit crimes do not register consciously in order not to be punished. Therefore, it seems likely that refugees who commit crimes and do not impose sanctions constitute the most risky group among others (Ağır & Sezik, 2015). Beside that, the terrorist attacks that occurred along with the security problem necessitated operations on our border with Syria like Operation Euphrates Shield, and Operation Olive Branch in Afrin gave birth to believe for lasting peace in Syria and achieved an increase in the number of voluntary repatriations to Jarabulus and Al Bab, which were cleared of terrorist organizations by the Turkish Armed Forces (The Ombudsman Institution, 2018).

Conclusion

The civil war and the conflict in Syria have been occurred in 2011. During this process, many Syrian refugees have departed from their countries and found refuge in neighboring countries. Turkey has been affected in a negative way from this wave. Syrian refugee problem is different from other refugee problem. The increasing number of Syrian refugees in Turkey imposes other responsibility. Services and resources provided to Syrian refugees have become a topic of discussion.

At the present moment there are in all cities of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Istanbul remains the province that hosts most Syrian refugees. As of December 2019, more than 470 thousand Syrians live in the city. This study examined the role of local administrations in Istanbul in the interaction with Syrian communities. Within the scope of temporary protection status, there are Syrian refugees in all districts of Istanbul. The activities of municipalities and non-governmental organizations towards Syrian refugees in need of backing are observed. Municipalities are responsible for the provision of services as shared above, but different practices are seen when looking at the municipality management. Knowing the number of refugees and the needs of the population in the city is essential for the development of local government in terms of capacities and services planning. Since the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality thinks it will make their work easier, it is planning to explore every region of the district in order to get hold of the exact number of refugees and makes home visit to determine the deficiencies. During the research, e-mail sent to presidential communication center via right to information law. Phone calls were placed to local authorities many times. Because of the lack of relevant personnel information, the telephone was constantly transferred between the municipalities. It seems that local authorities do not have any coordination process to guide the interaction with the Syrians in Istanbul.

The services provided to Syrians impose a burden on the existing infrastructure. Turkey's economy is adversely affected. The problems faced by the local administrations of Istanbul will increase as long as the Syrians continue coming to the city. With a more coordinated work, services can be delivered more effectively. This means fewer burdens on government agencies, municipalities, NGOs. Although national and regional administrations are critical in setting policies, the task of facilitating the integration of Syrians is within the local authorities. In addition, statistics on the number and location of Syrians should be available to all government agencies.

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