



WORKSHOP ON PROBLEMS FACED BY SYRIAN
WORKERS, EMPLOYERS AND
ENTREPRENEURS IN LABOUR MARKET AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLUTION
OVERALL EVALUATION

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OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

Organized jointly by the ILO Office for Turkey and Syrian Friendship Association, the “Workshop on Problems Faced by Syrian Workers, Employers and Entrepreneurs in Labour Market and Suggestions for Solution” was held on June 13th at Holiday Inn Hotel in Çukurambar. The workshop aimed at providing a platform for Syrian workers, employers and entrepreneurs to discuss the problems they encounter in labour market and formulating suggestions for solution with the participation of relevant agencies, employers’ organizations and trade unions.

COURSE OF THE WORKSHOP AND PARTICIPANTS

The opening speeches in the workshop were delivered by Numan Özcan, the Director of the ILO Office for Turkey; Kadriye Esra Aygün, the President of Syrian Friendship Association; Atay Uslu, the Chair of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Sub-commission for the Rights of Refugees; and Ayşe Türkmenoğlu, Senior Adviser to the President of the Republic of Turkey. After opening speeches, the workshop continued with a panel discussion addressing the problems that Syrian workers, employers and entrepreneurs encounter in labour market and suggestions for solution. The speakers in the panel discussion were Deniz Ersöz, Deputy Director General of Labour in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS); Kadriye Esra Aygün, President of the Syrian

Friendship Association; and representatives of Syrian workers and employers under the moderation of Hakan Çelik. Following the panel discussion participants divided into two groups to identify problems faced in labour market and possible solutions as one group focusing on the problems faced by workers and the other by employers. The moderator for the first group on the problems of workers was Associated Prof Emel Topçu from the Political Science Department of Ankara Social Sciences University while Associated Prof Yavuz Cabbar, the Secretary General of Ankara Chamber of Commerce helped the other group to work on the problems of employers. Participants to the workshop included representatives from the following organizations and missions: Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Turkish Confederation of Employers' Associations, Turkish Confederation of Trade Unions, Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions, Confederation of Real Trade Unions, EU Delegation, Norwegian Embassy, US Embassy, Ankara Development Agency, Karacadağ Development Agency, Ankara Chamber of Industry, Ankara Chamber of Commerce, Ankara Commodity Exchange, Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, ANGİKAD, MÜSİAD, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa Unions of Chambers of Artisans and Craftsmen, Syrian Economic Forum, and Syrian employers and workers.

PRESENT SITUATION IN TURKEY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS

According to data supplied by the General Directorate of Migration Management, the Ministry of Interior as of July 2016, there are over 2.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. They are mostly concentrated in provinces of Şanlıurfa, İstanbul, Hatay and Gaziantep and 10% stay in camps while 90% are with host communities.

Syrians Under Temporary Protection By Years



There are three significant developments that have taken place with respect to the status of Syrian refugees: (a) Taking effect of the Law no. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection as of 2014; (b) Arrangements relating to the rights of Syrians in the fields of education, health and employment introduced by the Regulation on Temporary Protection; and (c) Possibility of granting work permit to those without residence permit. Together with the refugee crisis, supporting Syrians in their efforts for self-subsistence and in enjoying decent work opportunities has become as important as humanitarian relief efforts. Accordingly, the Regulation on Work Permit to Foreigners under Temporary Protection was an important step taken to provide formal employment opportunities to Syrians in Turkey.

SYRIANS IN TURKISH LABOUR MARKET

Available figures suggest that there are over 1.6 million Syrians at working ages in Turkey. According to a survey conducted jointly by the Turkish Confederation of Employers' Associations and Hacettepe University it is estimated that presently 300,000 Syrians are employed in Turkey. Their major areas of employment include seasonal agriculture, construction, manufacturing and textiles. 27% of enterprises interviewed in an ILO survey conducted in cooperation with Harran University and Karacadağ Development Agency in Şanlıurfa employ Syrians. There are also some Syrians who started their own businesses in Turkey. According to the "List of Firms with Foreign Capital Active in Turkey" released by the Ministry of Economy there are 2,827 firms in Turkey run by Syrians¹. According to current data provided by the Union of Chambers and Stock Market (TOBB), companies with Syrian partners increased from 30 in 2010 to 1,599 in 2015 while 589 new firms were established in the first quarter of 2016. Investments and enterprises of Syrians in Turkey are increasing significantly year by year, but there are still problems when it comes to self-employment of and formal, decent jobs for Syrian refugees which need to be solved without delay. The following are the major problem areas in relation to Syrians' integration to labour market:

- ✓ Informal employment
- ✓ Employment in low-skill jobs
- ✓ Unfair competition
- ✓ Downward pressure on wages
- ✓ Risk of child labour

¹ TİSK (2015) Türk İş Dünyasının Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler Konusundaki Görüş, Beklenti ve Önerileri (Opinions, Expectations and Suggestions of the Turkish business world on Syrians in Turkey) , <http://tisk.org.tr/tr/e-yayinlar/353-goc/353-goc.pdf>

Common points from two working groups on problems faced by Syrian workers and employers in labour market can be summarized as follows:

PROBLEMS FACED BY SYRIAN EMPLOYERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

- ✓ **Legislation related restrictions on travel:** Restrictions on travel deriving from the existing legislation pose a problem for Syrian businessmen and entrepreneurs in that they cannot leave the country, face restrictions even when travelling within Turkey, and also not being able to invite their clients in various countries due to visa problems. Syrian businessmen and entrepreneurs think it will be better to have the duration of their visas and work permits extended as long as they stay in Turkey instead of applying for visa every year.
- ✓ **Problems deriving from enforcement:** Another problem that Syrian businessmen and investors face is the lack of uniformity in the implementation of legislative arrangements. The lack of sufficient information on legislation and limited nature of services by institutions providing guidance in this field give rise to some problems. There is need to inform both public authorities and servants and Syrians on such issues.
- ✓ **Right to property:** Having no right to property hinders new investments by Syrians. Syrians investing in construction sector in Turkey want to enjoy this right even if granted temporarily.
- ✓ **Problems related to opening bank accounts:** Banks may pose problems in opening accounts for Syrians despite relevant legislative arrangements. There is need to inform banks well on this issue.
- ✓ **Recognition of diplomas:** For the equivalency of diploma, there is need for the approval of universities in Syria that Syrians in Turkey once attended. But this is problematic since there is no communication with these schools. As a solution, teams comprising experts must be set up to certify the educational background and professional skills of Syrians concerned.
- ✓ **Education:** Children staying out of camps in particular cannot adequately benefit from education services. In order to ensure that all Syrian children benefit from education opportunities and services, there is need to increase the number of schools and teachers including the recruitment of larger number of Syrian teachers.
- ✓ **Language barriers in public services:** There is need to employ public servants speaking Arabic in government institutions.

PROBLEMS THAT SYRIAN WORKERS FACE IN LABOUR MARKET

- ✓ **Need for learning Turkish:** Language is one of the most important barriers to Syrian workers access to labour market. There is need to mobilize further support by government to Turkish language courses, to have experts to deliver Turkish language courses to foreigners, and to organize evening teaching sessions for Syrians in employment.
- ✓ **Diploma equivalency and competency recognition:** It is essential to launch initiatives to solve the problem of equivalency recognition for Syrians with their diplomas and to translate relevant competency tests into Arabic.
- ✓ **Need for occupational mapping:** The absence of occupational skills inventory for Syrians creates problems in planning for vocational training and linking this training to labour market needs. Occupational mapping for Syrians and matching it with demand for jobs and workers in Turkey will contribute to the solution of problems faced in labour market.
- ✓ **Problems related to enforcement:** There is injustice and victimization as a result of lack of harmony and/or arbitrariness in the enforcement of legislation. To ensure uniform enforcement, there is need to thoroughly inform law enforcement officials, adopt measures to restore mistakes and to observe the principle of equal pay to equal work. It is also important to introduce measures to prevent informal employment and to have Syrians in formal employment become members of trade unions.
- ✓ **Expanding vocational training:** Given that the educational level and occupational skills of Syrians are relatively low, vocational training courses for Syrians must be expanded and, to the extent possible, trainings must be delivered through modules in Arabic or as supported by translators.
- ✓ **Problems related to child labour and access to education:** There is need to prevent child labour and encourage children's school enrolment and attendance. The number of schools where Syrian teachers teach Syrian children can be increased. This may be helpful in mitigating problems in the fields of education and employment.

APPROACH OF ILO OFFICE FOR TURKEY

The ILO Office for Turkey has been conducting various activities in order to contribute to Syrians' access to income sources and to labour markets for formal and decent jobs. The ILO strategy for Syrians in Turkey consists of five components:

- ✓ Contribution to efforts in developing a national policy
- ✓ Developing institutional capacity for overcoming problems in labour market
- ✓ Strengthening information base
- ✓ Enhancing employment opportunities for and employability of Syrians and local people
- ✓ Building awareness in Syrians and local people

With the workshop conducted under the component “Enhancing employment opportunities for and employability of Syrians and local people” Syrian employers, entrepreneurs and workers had the opportunity of expressing first-hand information on problems they face in labour market and suggesting solutions. The ILO continues its work for providing appropriate forums of discussion for all social parties and public as well.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

10:00-10:30	Registration
10:30-11:00	Opening Speeches
11:00-12:30	Panel discussion: Problems that Syrian Workers, Employers and Entrepreneurs Face in Labour Market and Suggestions for Solution Panellists Kadriye Esra Aygün – President, Syrian Friendship Association Deniz Ersöz – MoLSS, Deputy Director General of Labour Fadi Karzoun – Representative of Syrian Businessmen Selim Alriz – Representative of Syrian Workers
12:30-13:00	Questions-Answers
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	Working Group 1: Problems that Syrian Employers and Entrepreneurs Face in Labour Market and Suggestions for Solution Working Group 2: Problems that Syrian Workers Face in Labour Market and Suggestions for Solution
15:30-15:45	Coffee break
15:45-16:30	Presentation of reports by working groups
16.30-17.00	Overall evaluation and closure
20:15-22:00	Dinner

