

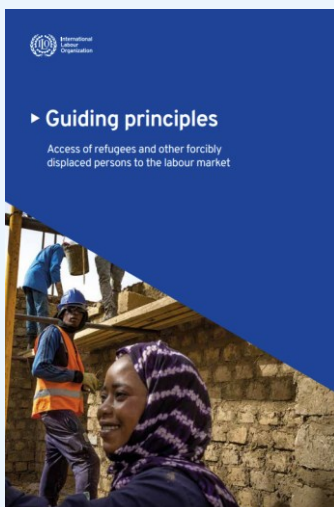
► Labour market inclusion for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

Türkiye: Information Centres for stronger equality of opportunity and treatment

August 2026

The ILO Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market, adopted in 2016 by a tripartite technical meeting, provide a basis for the formulation of policy responses and national tripartite dialogue applicable to responses to forced displacement.

The Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market



The Guiding Principles (GPs) support efforts to improve labour market functioning and ensure the protection of nationals, as well as refugees and other forcibly displaced persons (FDPs), in accessing decent work. The GPs are a set of voluntary, non-binding principles rooted in relevant international labour standards and universal human rights instruments, and inspired by good practices implemented in the field.

The Guiding Principles are structured around six core pillars:

- A. Governance frameworks on access to labour markets;
- B. Economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets;
- **C. Labour rights and equality of opportunity and treatment;**
- D. Partnership, coordination and coherence;
- E. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration of returnees; and
- F. Additional pathways for labour mobility.

This knowledge brief focuses on section C of the GPs, with specific emphasis on Principles 22 and 23 concerning equality of opportunity and treatment. Using Türkiye as a case study, it illustrates how Information Centres (locally known as Bilgilendirme Merkezi, BILMER) can improve access to labour market information and support services for refugees and other FDPs, while reducing barriers to formalization and fair and inclusive participation in the labour market.

Unpacking the Guiding Principles

What does Section C on labour rights and equality of opportunity mean in practice?

Guiding Principle 22 – Members should adopt or reinforce national policies to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all, in particular **gender equality, recognizing the specific needs of women, youth and persons with disabilities**, with regard to fundamental principles and rights at work, working conditions, **access to quality public services**, wages and the right to social security benefits for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, and to **educate refugees and other forcibly displaced persons about their labour rights and protections**.

Guiding Principle 23 (d) – National policies should at a minimum include measures to ensure that refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in the workplace are covered under relevant labour laws and regulations, including on minimum wages, maternity protection, working time, occupational safety and health, and **are provided with information on their rights and obligations**, and the means of redress for violations, in a language they understand.

Case study: Information Centres for stronger equality of opportunity and treatment

Key points



After 14 years in Türkiye, 22-year-old Halid Fahil became a formal business owner for the first time. With support from ILO's BILMER project, he now proudly runs his own barber shop – gaining the rights, security, and opportunities that come with formal employment. ©Bülent Kulfel/ ILO

Key issue:

- Improving equality of opportunity and treatment in labour market access for Syrians under Temporary Protection in Türkiye, while reducing barriers to formalization and ensuring fair participation in line with international labour standards.

Key takeaways:

- Türkiye has developed a service-based model for improving equality of opportunity and treatment through Information Centres, which provide Syrians under Temporary Protection, host communities and employers with access to labour market information, counselling, and support for transition into formal employment.
- By embedding these services in local institutions and trusted community channels, Türkiye shows how targeted outreach and practical assistance can reduce barriers to formal work, improve service uptake, and support inclusive participation in the labour market.

1. Profile of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

Türkiye hosts the largest Syrian population in the world, with Syrians protected under the temporary protection regime established following the outbreak of the conflict in 2011 (see Box 1). The country also hosts refugees and asylum seekers from other countries, including Afghanistan and Iran. As of mid-2026, more than 2.2 million Syrians were registered under temporary protection in Türkiye, while in 2021, at the peak, more than 3.7 million Syrians under temporary protection were hosted by Türkiye. Close to 50 per cent are women, while 50 per cent are of working age, and

around half of the population is below the age of 18.¹ With the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, returns to Syria have accelerated. Data from UNHCR from April 2026 indicates that 630,000 Syrians had returned from Türkiye.²

2. Major developments: Monitoring and adapting policy approaches

Türkiye has established an advanced legal and institutional framework for access of Syrians under Temporary Protection to the labour market, yet high levels of informality persist, and many Syrian workers remain concentrated in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. Overall informal employment is estimated at 27.7 per cent in Türkiye,³ while labour force participation remains very low, especially among women: in 2022, the employment rate of Syrian women under Temporary Protection (aged 15-64) was 20 percent.⁴ ⁵ Several factors discourage Syrians from entering formal employment and transitioning out of informal work, including limited access to information, employer-led work permit procedures, and the loss of social assistance benefits upon formalization. For businesses, high licensing costs, language barriers with workers, labour compliance burdens, and limited access to markets, financial services, public procurement, and business advisory services can limit access to formality. Access to reliable and accurate labour market information and guidance is also essential to address misconceptions and reduce social tensions related to Syrians' participation in the labour market.

Box 1: Turkish legal framework on access to the labour market for those under temporary and international protection

In 2014, Türkiye enacted the Temporary Protection Regulation, based on the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection.⁶ This law introduces the classification of “conditional refugees” for people fleeing persecution in a non-European country, allowing them to reside in Türkiye temporarily until they can be resettled elsewhere. For others who do not qualify for refugee status or conditional refugee status, but who would be subjected to the death penalty or torture in their country of origin if returned, Türkiye does offer “subsidiary protection” or “international/temporary protection” which includes protection from *refoulement*.

The Temporary Protection Regulation (2014),⁷ applying to Syrians under Temporary Protection takes a development approach, providing a number of longer-term rights for Syrians seeking protection in Türkiye, including access to education, health care, legal representation, interpretation services, and social assistance and services, and a framework for their access to the labour market. In 2016, Türkiye adopted the Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection,⁸ which allows officially registered Syrians under Temporary Protection and International Protection applicants and holders respectively to obtain a work permit through their employer six months after registration (employers must obtain work permits, and the work permit is only valid with that employer, meaning one cannot move to another job without losing their work permit). Employers are obliged to pay Syrians no less than the minimum wage and to meet the social security standards.

Over recent years, administrative and implementation challenges were eased with the introduction of:

- the Implementation Regulation of International Labour Law (No. 6735), 2022
- the possibility for Syrians under Temporary Protection and International Protection applicants from different nationalities to find work outside of the city of residence; and
- Since January 2025, work permit exemption forms have been issued to Syrians to facilitate easier access to formal employment.

¹ Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Interior, Presidency of Migration Management, [Statistics – Temporary Protection](#).

² UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 30 April 2026, [Comprehensive Overview of Refugee Returnees](#).

³ International Labour Organization, [ILOSTAT-Türkiye](#).

⁴ Luis Pindeo, 2024, [Next level challenge: Syrian refugee women and the labour market in Türkiye](#), ILO Decent Jobs for Youth Blog.

⁵ Compared to a labour force participation rate of 37 per cent for Turkish women, Turkish Statistical Institute, [Women in Statistics, 2025](#).

⁶ Republic of Türkiye, [Law on Foreigners and International Protection](#), Law No. 6458 of 2013.

⁷ Republic of Türkiye, [Temporary Protection Regulation](#) (Council of Ministers Decision No. 2014/6883), published on 13/10/2014 under Article 91 of Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection: [Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği](#).

⁸ Republic of Türkiye, [Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection](#) (Council of Ministers Decision No. 2016/8375), published on 15/01/2016 under Article 91 of Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection.

In this context, Information Centres provide an important bridge between the legal entitlement to work and practical access, helping beneficiaries navigate administrative requirements and supporting a rights-based transition to formality. The Centres provide a central mechanism for addressing one of the most persistent barriers to formalization: the lack of accessible and reliable information. Through close collaboration with the Directorate General of International Labour Force under the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS) and local implementing partners, including chambers of tradesmen and craftsmen and municipalities, the Information Centres have created a trusted entry point for formalization support. The Centres were strategically established in provinces where demand is high and where local labour market conditions make formalization particularly relevant, including Adana, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Konya, Mersin, Şanlıurfa, Bursa, and Hatay. Their role has been to provide accurate and free information on legal requirements, registration, social security incentives, and penalties for non-compliance to jobseekers, workers and employers, while also referring jobseekers to training and employment opportunities, thereby supporting the transition from informality to formality.⁹

3. Outcomes and key lessons

As of May 2026, the Information Centres had provided more than 10,800 consultations to micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) owners, provided worker counselling to 30,100 individuals, and supported the formalization of 967 businesses. The Centres have also contributed to stronger institutional capacity at the level of municipalities and chambers of craftsmen and tradesmen. The Centres also played an important preventive role by helping beneficiaries to avoid overcharging by private intermediaries and by increasing awareness of legal rights and decent work standards.

These experiences point to several key lessons:

- **First**, accessible information services at the local level can reduce informality and improve compliance when they are paired with clear guidance, administrative support, and communication that beneficiaries can easily understand and trust.
- **Second**, trusted intermediaries and strong local capacity strengthen uptake, especially when chambers of craftsmen and tradesmen or trained municipal staff help connect businesses to available services and support sustainable implementation over time.
- **Third**, effective formalization depends on integrated service models, with information, counselling, and referral functions working together rather than operating as simple one-stop information desks.
- **Fourth**, outreach and implementation must be flexible and targeted, since political sensitivities can disrupt municipal engagement and generic approaches may overlook underrepresented groups such as women-owned businesses.

4. Actionable steps: Roadmap based on experience from Türkiye

- **Establish Information Centres as a bridge to fill labour market service gaps for the target population:** The Information Centres were created to complement government services by providing accessible, locally embedded support for information, counselling, and referrals. They support businesses, Syrians under Temporary Protection and host community workers navigate formalization requirements and labour market procedures more effectively.
- **Strengthen outreach and visibility:** Increasing awareness of the services available through use of digital communication and community-level engagement is key, enabling more users to access support early and reducing reliance on informal intermediaries.
- **Target resources where demand is highest:** Centres in the major provinces of Istanbul and Gaziantep were prioritized for staffing and service expansion, while staffing at lower-demand Centres was reconfigured accordingly.

⁹ For more information see: ILO Evaluation Office, 2024, [Final Independent Evaluation of the programme “Promoting Decent Work for Syrians under Temporary Protection \(SuTP\) and Turkish Citizens \(TC\)”](#)

- **Improve coordination and service quality:** Standardizing data collection,¹⁰ clarifying staff roles, enhancing staff retention, and supporting peer learning across Centres is key to improving accountability, reducing delays, and replicating effective counselling and formalization practices.
- **Reach underserved groups more effectively:** A dedicated outreach strategy for women-owned businesses and other target groups, paired with complementary services such as childcare support, language classes, vocational training, and tailored counselling, is necessary. Specific support services have also been provided for persons with disabilities through provision of tailored employment assistance, including wage subsidies and job matching.

5. Way forward

While the Information Centres have proven effective, their long-term sustainability remains a key priority, requiring stronger ownership, clearer institutional transition plans, and realistic financial models to sustain operations over time. Political sensitivities around refugee programming remain a major risk, especially when municipalities are involved, and recent cases of abrupt closure show that engagement with elected bodies requires careful planning, continuity, and contingency measures. To move toward institutionalization, staffing continuity, clear task division, and standardized operating practices will be critical for maintaining service quality across Centres. If the model is to be sustained and scaled, it will also require stronger coordination with national institutions, greater public ownership, and a clearer pathway for incorporation into Türkiye's broader employment and formalization systems. Integrating the Centres into existing service delivery frameworks and institutional budgets will be essential to ensuring their long-term sustainability.

A second priority is to deepen inclusion and outreach. The current model has delivered strong results, however it still needs a more systematic strategy to reach women workers and women-owned businesses and other underserved groups, including persons with disabilities. A targeted outreach plan for women, backed by practical service adaptations and a more targeted communication strategy would help to address this challenge.

Contact details

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT)
ilo.org/labourmigration
T: +41 22 799 6111
E: migrant@ilo.org

© International Labour Organization 2026

¹⁰ All of the Information Centres use the same consultation forms for business owners and workers, and information is entered into a collective database. Records for financial assistance provided such as work permit and formalization fee coverage are also entered into the database.